

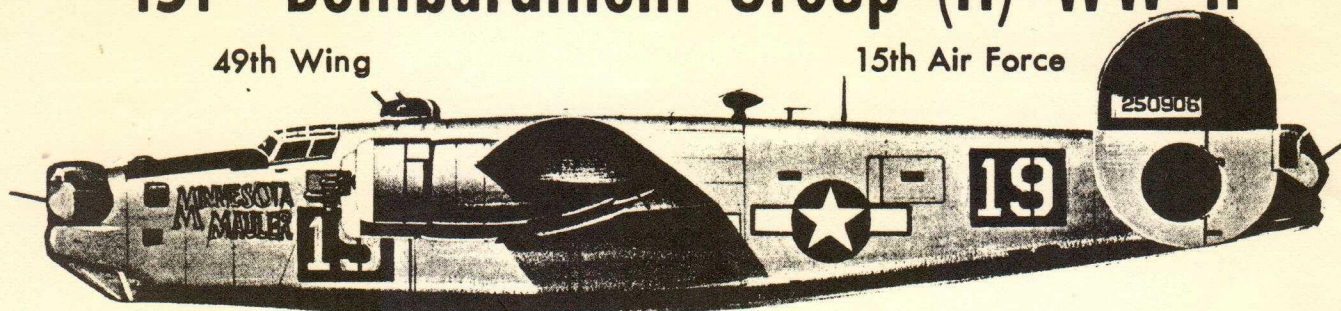


FORMER MEMBERS OF THE

# 451<sup>ST</sup> Bombardment Group (H) WW II

49th Wing

15th Air Force



GROUP HEADQUARTERS

724th

725th

726th

727th Squadrons

78-3

To the comrades of the 451st Bombardment Group;

For the third time I'm placing myself in the cockpit of the reorganized 451st Bombardment Group, preparing for another mission. The target has been defined. The vehicle is ready for take-off. So if the crew will make ready, we'll leave the confinements of the present and propel ourselves into the dim recall of the past. The past, with its millions of memories, its thousands of stories and the two catalyst that drew us all together--World War II and the 451st. The 451st was our little niche in history and history is created by a series of events....and we were the ones who made those events. From ground man to combat man we all had a hand in shaping the fortunes of the Group thereby making it a credit to the 15th Air Force. Our alliance to comrades and tentmates, from the past, has not vanished.....it waits to be reborn. And perhaps as this roster is viewed a name will rise from the past and give you a chance to renew that acquaintance. This we offer you...that chance.

Peter Massare and I have been exploring the possibility of using photographs to enhance our Newsletter--hence the copy you find enclosed. We believe that pictures plus the roster may be well received by our membership. Give us your view on this. I think we will find the potential of unpublished photos inexhaustible. Already, here at our headquarters, we have pictures donated by Robert V. Smith (Grp), Ed Benguiat (725) and Robert L. Taylor (726), not to mention what Pete and I have in our personal files. I'm almost sure I've overlooked others that have contributed--Please excuse me.

I spent a rewarding afternoon with Nick Prato (726th, Photo Section) while he was engaged in the production of a motion picture at the Rock Island Arsenal, Rock Island, Illinois. He gave us the loan of over 40 (4" X 5") negatives. Most of them would have an





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---OPEN LETTER TO PETER MASSARE---

Peter A. Massare  
441 Carlsam Drive  
Rochester, NY 14609

Dear Pete,

Well, I finally got that six-man pyramid tent set up in the mud hole in my back yard--and it don't look all that bad, even with those burn holes in the roof. I located enough canvas cots, B-4 bags, bomb fin crates (for seats) and a homemade table, with one short leg, to fill up all that empty space.

I have sought out some replacements for my original tent-mates, and since they had to measure up to some high basic standards they weren't too easy to come by. I had to find two guys that could argue for hours and resolve NOTHING, and still end up not fighting. One that could sleep at the drop of a comic book and would moan for hours, as he pursued some young female through his dreams. One had to have the ability to tell a shaggy dog story that would take half the night to relate. Course, we had to have one PARTY BOY that could spend half the night at the dayroom sopping up the grapefruit juice and cognac and the other half of the night trying to find the tent. Like I pointed out, his qualification had to be bloodshot eyes and a poor sense of direction. (I found two former Navigators that could have filled that position----ONLY JOKING, PETE----.)

After all my picking, choosing and arranging I finally assembled the background that I thought matched the atmosphere of the wartime 451st. So with pen and paper in hand I draw the mosquito netting aside to sit here crosslegged on the cot to compose this letter to you.

Until I made this setup, to set the mood for newsletter writing, I thought it may be necessary to revisit some of those Railroad Station restrooms that I frequented during the war, just to obtain a few choice graffiti quotes. Some of my best prose is written on the walls of the restrooms across the nation, along with some poetry. But since the mood is set, and my thoughts assembled, I'll go this route.

I think our effort is taking off. Our roster is now over 330 with over a hundred on the updated enclosed pages. The fact that we are growing is due in a large part to those fellows that are offering us viable and current addresses. It's a pleasure to follow up and to get a response from the new contacts and a disappointment when we get no response. Perhaps when fall comes we can do a more thorough job on them, unless those that sponsored them will make an attempt to get them into FORMATION, before then.

Many of those, listed on the roster, are eager to get involved with us in some form or other. Old shipping orders, pictures, addresses and stories regarding members of the 451st are offered and appreciated. And of course those words of encouragement, with the wish for continued success, do a lot to keep up the morale at this end. (Not that it needs any pumping up---but it's well received)

I hope you find the enclosed, "Missions of the 451st", to your liking. We have had many requests for such a complete listing. I did a lot of cross-checking to make it as correct as possible. Thanks should go to Jack Garrison (726th), Stan Malinowski (726th) and Leo Valliere (726th) for the material they offered, such as personal mission journals and Group's 200th mission publication. Without their knowing - they lent a lot of help to assemble the missions and targets.

I have derived a lot of pleasure out of researching some of the FACTS in the history of the 451st. To learn of these incidents and to associate the men that we have on the roster with these incidents gives this job a real plus.....Let me list a couple...:

FACT #1 Major Charles C. Haltom (Lt. Colonel, Retired) was the Flight Commander of the Group when it struck and devastated Regensburg, Germany on February 25, 1944, thereby gaining the 1st Presidential Unit Citation for the Group. Later, on July 14, 1944, Major Haltom became the guest of the Germans when he zigged instead of zagged during evasive action over Hungary. (the other two Presidential Unit Citations came as a result of action over Ploesti, Rumania, April 5, 1944 and Markersdorf A/D, Austria, August 23, 1944)

FACT #2 Captain Kendall S. Young (Major General, Retired) while leading the 2nd attack unit to Bucharest, Rumania on April 21, 1944, pulled off the classic, "Sorry, Colonel, I didn't hear the recall over the radio", and went off to smash the target with his half of the Group. He was later commended by the Chief of Staff.

FACT #3 Early in September of 1944 we saw the return of our comrades from the P.O.W. camps in Rumania. They returned to Group and came back into their original Squadrons for records and to renew old friendships, I looked with envy, as they walked past me, thinking that they would soon be on their way home while I still had missions to do. I thought that they were the lucky ones when, in fact, it was I that was the lucky one. I didn't have to undergo the trauma of IF and WHEN. I have found out that all that were shot down in that area didn't end up in Rumania, a lot were shipped into Germany and Italy to sit the war out. I salute all those that had the misfortune to be so destined. Our involvement with some who were P.O.W.'s has led us into a fine group called, "EX-POW'S OF THE 1944 RUMANIAN RAIDS". As you can imagine, they have been a lot of help in locating members of the 451st and we, in our small way, have tried to assist them in verifying some of the addresses on their roster. They are about to hold their 8th Annual Reunion in Cincinnati, OH on August 23/26, 1978. We wish them the best of good times.

Pete, you may have noticed by now that the FORMER MEMBERS OF THE 451st (A FIRST CLASS OUTFIT) has had to go third class with it's mailing. It's an economy step that we knew had to happen someday, if the growth continued---and it did. I was assured by my local Postmaster that all mail will reach its destination, but it would be a matter of a little longer time. I tried to convince them that we use to write FREE in place of postage in the military and it would be nice of them if we could do it again. No luck, they want LIRA (money). I even offered to run for political office to gain the free mailing status. But since I could not count on any votes, even from them, I forgot the idea.

So you see, it all boils down to money and our time. The time we can find (you and I), since it is now our dedicated hobby. But for the money---I guess we have to count on our friends for that. If they find our effort and this endeavor to their satisfaction, I'm sure they will support us as they have up to now. Some comrades have been most generous and we don't wish to burden them more, but there are some that we haven't heard from since first contact. This would be a good time for them to come forth and let us know if our effort is worth a FIVE or a TEN spot to keep active. You and I will continue as long as we are physically, mentally and (with the help of our friends) financially capable.

Would it be in order to bring up the subject of a reunion? Because, in time, this is the goal that we are striving towards. But, like you stated, first we have to have an established organization that can be the nucleus for such an undertaking. I think we have that, as long as we can keep those that are interested together....And as long as those that are interested can keep this organization together. We find three degrees of interest towards the word, "REUNION". Some have no interest what-so-ever. They are willing to participate only in what we have going so far. Another group would attend if it was held within their area and it fell in a time convenient for them. The third group would travel to the ends of the earth for the chance to attend. So in the interest of forming a reunion we have to assemble quite a few names of those in the last group and educate the others towards this undertaking. A location has to be chosen and a GO-GETTER of a CHAIRMAN from said city will have to volunteer, (I can see everyone taking one step to the rear). Maybe a little feedback, from those interested, is in order.

In going over the roster, one more time, I see I failed to make an address change. Harold Grossmon (#15 on the roster) now resides at 17 Robbindale Ave, his previous street address was 88 College Street, in the same city--Asheville, N.C. Harold has offered to send out, for free, envelopes and letterheads (with our LOGO in black & white) to those that request them. A very generous offer on the part of "Mouse the Mailman from the 725th".

I'm sure I haven't covered all the subjects that should be covered---but enough for now..

Hoping this finds everyone well at your house.....

I remain,

Bob Karstensen