



FOR THE MEN WHO FLY 'EM • FOR THE MEN WHO KEEP 'EM FLYING

ISSUE 13

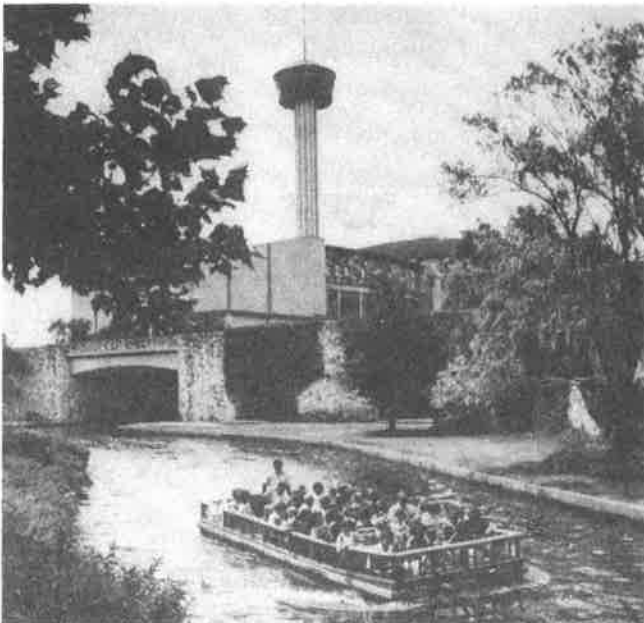
MARENGO (AAFBI), IL

SAN ANTONIO AWAITS 451st BOMB GROUP

Yes Sir-eeee, San Antonio has been given the word and certain measures are being taken to assure our comforts and safety.

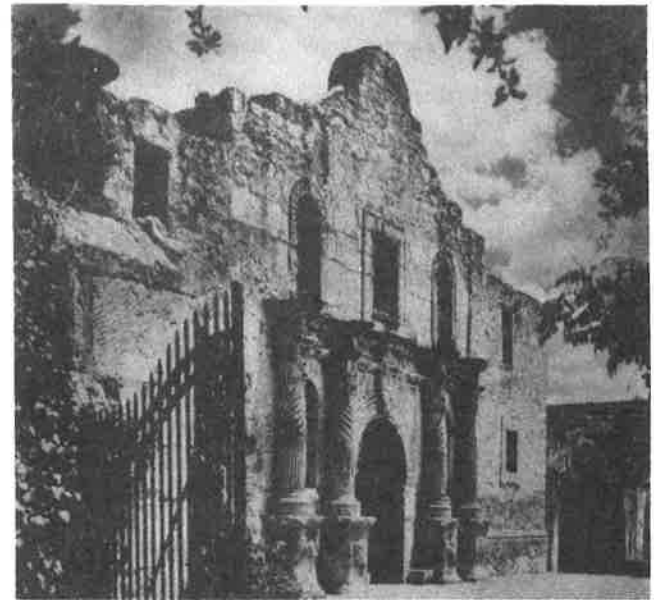
For those flying in; FLAK GUN and ESCORT AIRCRAFT have been put on READY ALERT for 29 May till 1 June to cover our approach and withdrawal. Highway traffic has been curtailed solely to TANKS (heavy and light), and to 451st attendees (also, heavy and light). It would be prudent to have your 451st decal clearly visible to ROAD BLOCK officials.

City streets are being PATROLLED by LIGHT INFANTRY, and the perimeters of the COMMAND POST (Marriott Hotel) are being cordoned off by the M. P.'s.



IP (INITIAL POINT)
ZERDING IN ON THE TOWER OF THE AMERICAS
BRINGS YOU IN VICINITY OF MARRIOTT HOTEL
(ASSAULT BOATS ON PATROL)

Within the Marriott Hotel, the staff is in the process of changing the bedding to COTS and GI BLANKETS. STEEL HELMETS in the bathrooms, are replacing the common sink. In the halls will be found our traditional BUTT CANS. Wash Room signs



THE ALAMO
RALLY POINT FOR THE 451st IN THE EVENT OF
ENEMY ENCROACHMENT DURING DAILY MANEUVERS
(in the public areas) will be removed and replaced with our honored "LATRINE" sign. Further efforts are being extended into the kitchen (now called THE MESS), where the stocking of SPAM, POWDERED EGGS, and CRUSTY BREAD has taken on an air of urgency. Plates and silverware are being
(PHOTOS FROM S.A. VISITORS BUREAU) (CON'T ON PAGE 2, COL 1)

GENTLEMEN:

Have you forgotten your obligation to our cause! We still need your continued financial support if we are to maintain our steady growth and to continue with our series of biennial reunion. With our current membership roster of 1200; it should be apparent we do need your financial help. Over the years we have had to count on many of our GOOD members to carry the load; how's about you taking a bit of that load? As to how to make out the check and where to send it, you'll find that on page two in the MASTHEAD section.

"AD-LIB"

451st Bomb Group, Ltd.
Publication

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and Published by;

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No membership dues are assessed. (A not for profit organization)

The publishing of the AD-LIB; the seeking of new members; and all efforts towards the preservation of our 451st heritage, is funded by your donations and contributions. Checks should be made out to "451st Bomb Group" and mailed to the above address.

CONTRIBUTION
TAX EXEMPT #36 307 0772

On the "River Walk:" BARGES are being readied for our ASSAULT FORCES. All loose seating has been removed--replaced and refitted with new BOMB FIN CRATES. Individual ASSAULT BOATS (Paddlewheelers) are being MODIFIED with AUTO-PILOT and have recently had their COMPASS' SHUNG. This is for the benefit of NAVIGATORS and PILOTS. BOMBARDIERS have only to concern themselves with the DRIFT.

Things to remember.

Laundry facilities will be provided on the banks of the San Antonio River. GI SOAP and scrub boards can be checked out from the C.Q. on duty in the lobby.

NUDE BATHING will not be allowed in the river without proper authorization. If proper authorization is granted, films will be shown on the 10 o'clock news.

No PASSES will be issued for more than the customary 4 hours. Extensions will not be granted without written consent of your 1st/SERGEANT... or wife.

All TROOPS will STAND RETREAT (repeat, STAND) to show the local populace our ability to do so.

The act of FRATERNIZING with the natives of the area will be condoned, expected, and in some degree, "embraced" by the organization. This is to enhance our image and to upgrade our WW-II character.

All LEAVES will be canceled until the termination of this exercise. You may be RESTRICTED TO QUARTERS if any infractions of the above ORDERS are noted.

* * *

If you accept, or believe, any of the above copy, then you've got a lot to learn about its writer, Bob Karstensen. With "tongue in cheek" I (Bob K.) have tried to give you a variation of the standard PROMO that is meant to generate you into considering attending a 451st Bomb Group REUNION. In whatever manner I employed, I hope you will make every attempt to be with us at this event.

If you are still a believer in my grand illusions... then let me show you a span of bridges on the Mississippi that I have up for a QUICK sale. (Appointments only)

* * * *

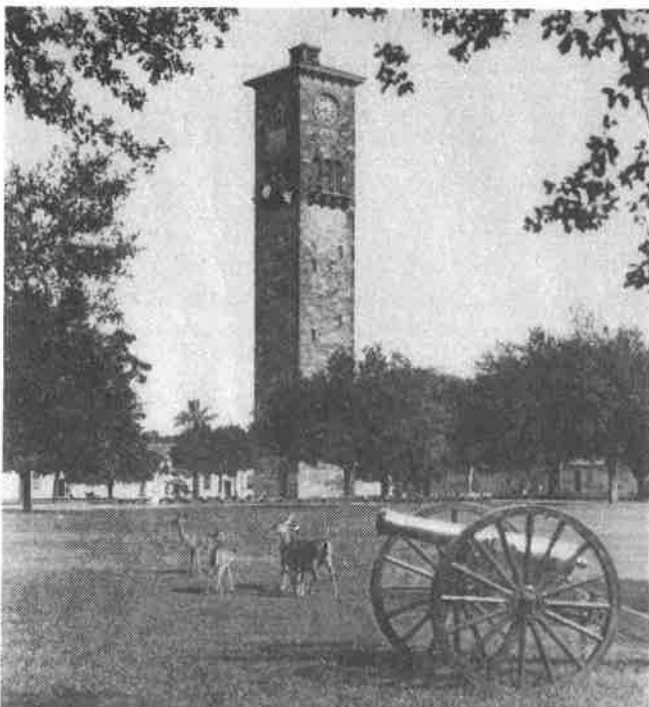
OLD NEWS CLIPPING
STIRS MEMORIES

A small clipping out of one of the Maine newspapers (circa 1944) arrived at this office, compliments of Jim O'Malley, former 727th Mess Sergeant.

It reads as follows:

Maine Airman Ices Cream
U.S. Liberator Base, Italy (AP)
--A bomber of the squadron which attacked Munich Thursday made this report: "Flak heavy and intense. Ice cream frozen."
It seems that Mess Sergeant James F. O'Malley, of Congress Ave., Portland, ME.

stored, and in its place the GI TRAY and MESS KITS have appeared. Now too, the waitresses are undergoing extensive "one on one" training in how to avert "THE ROVING HANDS," as had been the reputation of the 451st during the war years.



QUADRANGLE AT FORT SAM HOUSTON
FORT SAM, HEADQUARTERS OF THE U.S. FIFTH
ARMY, COHORTS IN OUR WAR EFFORTS IN ITALY

had a Thanksgiving menu calling for 40 gallons of ice cream and no way to freeze it.

Since bombers sometimes fly in 30 below zero weather at five mile altitudes at this season, he talked a crew into carrying the ice cream along to Munich.

Just before Bombardier Lt. Arthur D. Devlin, Lake Placid, N.Y., called "bombs away," the waist gunner announced over the interphone: "She's froze, fellers."

Jim's packet also contained several photos (personnel and aircraft); the menu of the 1943 Thanksgiving Dinner, which even now makes my mouth water.

Get a load of this; Fruit Cup, Roast Turkey in Dressing, Brown Gravy, Cranberry Sauce, Mashed Potatoes, Creamed Corn, Buttered Peas, Crisp Celery, Tomato and Lettuce Salad, Assorted Pickles, Pumpkin Pie, Hot Rolls, Butter, Apples, Grapes, Coffee & Cream.

All this took place in Fairmont Army Air Field, Geneva, Nebraska, where many of those items were fresh and in abundance. But we'll all have to admit, that even when we were overseas, the Mess Sgts did as good a job with our Thanksgiving and Christmas Dinners. And, too, most of the products had to come from the States, just to make their job tougher.

I'm sure some of you will feel that 90% of the enlisted mens fare consisted of Luncheon Meat, Stew, Hash, Chipped Beef on Toast (SOS), Powdered Eggs, Powdered Milk and Powdered Lemonade. It may well be that because of these rather mundane staples that the Special Meals tasted so much better.

If it wasn't for the shooting (and getting shot at) the Mess Sergeants could have made NW-II acceptable.

* * * * *

15th AIR FORCE ASSOC.
CONDUCTS 2nd REUNION

Dateline: 25 July--28 July 1985
Seattle, Washington

Gentlemen, the 2nd 15th AFA Reunion is a thing of the past. For those of you that had heard of it, but didn't bother to attend - you really missed a good one.

There were some excellent plans and entertainment offered to those attending. As is typical of most Reunions, much camaraderie and fellowship were evident. A good cross section of the 15th, by way of the different the Groups attending, made this a very diverse but cohesive gathering. Diverse in the sense of different types and styles of aircraft flown during the war, but cohesive in the purpose to which we were all directed during those turbulent years.

The B-17 boys; the 2nd, 97th, 99th, 301st, 463rd, and the 483rd were there in

numbers. And it was well they were, for part of the celebrating was in respect to the 50th Anniversary of the B-17.

Thursday, 25 July, had what would be called SERIOUS Registration Time. Everyone milled around, hoping to put a pair of eyeballs on someone from the past. In many cases the wait was worth it. But even if a familiar face didn't appear, it was easy to strike up a conversation, and in short order a new friendship.



THREE STALWARTS ATTENDING 15th AF REUNION
(L-R) BOB K. (724th), DICK GOULD (725th),
ARCHIE PIIRAINEN (727th)
(AIRCRAFT IN BACKGROUND NOT A B-24!)

Friday, 26 July, put us on the way to the Boeing Plant for their Commemorative Program. Five B-17s were parked in the area for all to see, inspect and to reflect upon. I'm sure all of us, at one time or other, had something to do with the Fortress. In my case it was Gunnery practice (shooting tow targets from its waist positions). We had the privilege to hear General LeMay address the crowd, and to see some of the Medal of Honor winners, and to hear of their exploits.

Friday evening had us aboard Charters Cruise Ships, heading for one of the Islands to enjoy a Salmon Barbecue. The return trip was truly memorable, due in part to the late hour and to the colorful lights of the city.

Saturday Evening, 27 July. The Gala Banquet is held. Those from the 451st managed to sit together for a fine presentation, as conducted by Executive Director Ben Franklin and President Murray Bywater. The 15th Air Force Band worked closely with excellent narration as films of the 15th AAF were being shown. Nostalgic moments were shared as M.C. Ben Franklin offered us readings from various sources. The AD-LIB being one.

Sunday Morning, 28 July. Departure day and one final event to attend - Farewell Memorial Brunch.

From my vantage point, I was surprised to note the absence of the local 451st members. This event was to be one of the Seattles' premier 1985 grand happenings, and it would have been hard to

(CON'T PAGE 4, COL 1)

miss the promotions gendared by TV and the Newspapers. Although our Group was represented, it could have been better.

It will be the plan of the 15th AFA to consider having their next "go-around" somewhere in the Mid-west. Their plans are to conduct Reunions every ODD year, thus if we are having ours in the EVEN years, there should be no reason that those looking for an annual get together won't find some satisfaction in what the 15th AFA has to offer.

Membership in the 15th AFA can be obtained by sending \$15 annual membership fee to:

15th Air Force Association
P. O. Box 6325
March AFB, CA 92518

Be sure to indicate that you are a member of the 451st Bomb Group.

* * * * *

LITTLE BOYS.....LITTLE TOYS
BIG BOYS.....BIG TOYS

As the below photo shows, there is no limit to the ways that you will see reminders of the 451st Bomb Group. In this case it's the New York license plate of Francis Russell's "1977 Corvette."

Also evident is the Group's colorful decal (third from left, bottom of rear window).



F. RUBBELL'S RESTORED "77 CORVETTE"

Francis Russell will be remembered as the co-pilot for one of the Group's original aircraft "Wolf Wagon," piloted by Capt. John A. O'Connor, 724th.

But the Group's history will recall that Fran didn't spend all his time flying in the right seat on "Wolf Wagon." For on 7 July 1944 Fran was called upon to fill the LEFT seat for a crew that was missing its regular pilot.

The mission that day was Blechhammer Germany. The aircraft assigned was nicknamed the "Jesse James" (#42-94808).

Crewmembers aboard;

- Pilot: F. S. Russell
- Co-pilot: W. L. Thieleke
- Navigator: W. O. Cox
- Bombardier: J. W. Davis
- UG: E. A. Burness
- BG: P. F. Vanderpool
- RWG: H. R. Thompson
- LWG: G. Vance
- TG: E. C. Leistner
- NG: E. W. Kolakowski

I'm bringing this particular mission to your attention for the bravery, daring and resourcefulness that is typical of the 451st attitude, and that Fran has earned the right to display the 451st BG numbers as his memento of the past.

The mission started off well enough; take-off; joining the formation; climbing; flying, and holding formation. But before the target was reached the Group became involved with repeated enemy fighter attack. ME 109s hammered the Group and did extensive damage to the "Jesse James."

Garland H. Jarvis, eyewitness to the incident, gave this statement at debriefing;

On 7 July 1944, I was flying as Pilot in aircraft #236 in #4 position, 2nd Flight of the Group formation. I saw ME 109's attack aircraft #808, (in # 5 position) causing large holes in the right and left fins and one wing. At about 46 degrees North by 17 degrees, 5 seconds East, I saw 10 men bail out, and 10 chutes open. A few minutes later, after another attack, the plane burst into flame and explode.

In a statement by Emil C. Leistner (tail gunner) given to the Intelligence Officer on 7 Sept 1944, upon his return to Squadron, the incident was described as such;

The plane crashed on 7 July 44 about 1230 hours near Zagreb, Yugoslavia. The ship was badly shot up with the right wing on fire and burning fiercely when we bailed out. I bailed out at about 10,000 feet. Ten chutes were known to have opened as I counted them. According to information received from the other accompanying ships, upon my return to Base, the plane exploded in the air just after we bailed out.

Of the ten crewmembers aboard, luckily, none suffered serious injury. Four managed to evade capture and returned to Base and finished their prescribed tour of missions. Those evading capture were;

- Lt. Francis S. Russell, Pilot
- Lt. Walter L. Thieleke, Co-pilot
- T/Sgt Edward A. Burness, UG
- S/Sgt Emil C. Leistner, TG

Of those captured, all returned to

the Zone of the Interior, upon release from POW camps.

From this little recapping of one of the many incidents of our Group's formidable history, you can understand the importance that some put into their past association with our famous Group. So to Francis Russell we all wish him, and his "77 TOY", "Buona fortuna!" (Good Luck)

* * * *



D. PODOLOFF'S RESTORED "66 'T' BIRD"

Not to be outdone, a voice can be heard from the other end of Castelluccia Air Base telling his adventure into the licensing of ones favorite toy. Doran Podoloff, 727th, offered the photograph of his "68 'T' Bird," licensed in the state of Connecticut. The "MYB-24" shows the interest that Dick has in HIS past.

Though Dick's military adventures do not reach the ferocity as did Fran Russell's, they were nevertheless an experience that has, and will always remain with this youthful Nose Gunner. As part of Orrin Feiertag's crew, Dick joined the 727th Squadron in November 1944, and did 29 of this prescribed 35 missions before the war ended and he returned to the Zone of Interior.

Podoloff never said his tour was a "piece of cake," but there were enough adventures that when offered to choose a license number, his thoughts reverted back to his B-24 days; and thus you see his choice.

* * * *

LT. COL. HOPPOCK SUFFERS RANK DISCRIMINATION WITHIN FAMILY

LTC John S. Hoppock, USAF retired, now wears a much longer face around the house than most of us have ever known him to show. For years Jack Hoppock has worn his Silver Leaves with pride and honor, both within the confines of his home and as part of his public life. Jack holds a warm spot in his heart for all things that are Air Force, or remind him of the Army Air Force in which he served.

Lieutenant Colonel Hoppock will be remembered by many of our Group as the

C.O. of the 727th Bomb Squadron. Jack came down from the 49th Wing Hdqs. as a replacement, at about the same time as Colonel Stefen came in to take command of the Group.

But fate, or should the blame be put on the office of the Secretary of the Air Force, can easily change the "rapture of rank" to the "gloom of being out ranked."

Here it was, forty years later, a lifetime of know how and experience being swept under the "rug of technical bureaucracy," and in favor of ones very own wife. Such is what Jack has recently experienced. But in relating this tale, let us start at the beginning.

Jack served his tour with a purpose and dedication that was above reproach. He wanted to get back home. For back in the States awaited the "joy of his life." Jack had, in the old tradition, been wooing, and winning the hand of a one Miss Katherine (Kay) Crabbe. This romance between the dashing Colonel and the lovely Red Cross Driver had been active for some time and Jack wanted to make swift work of the enemy and get back to the job at hand.



KATHERINE CRABBE
(HON. COLONEL)



JOHN S. HOPPOCK
(RET. LT. COLONEL)

It may be remembered that Jack did mix his love life and his Air Force dedication in the naming of his B-24. He called his favorite aircraft "42-KAY." The "42" signifying his year of graduation from pilots training, and the "KAY" in honor of his betrothed.

During this time Kay was not only doing her duty as a Red Cross Volunteer, but was engaged in learning the finer aspects of art work (painting and illustration). With this talent she filled her lonely time in doing watercolors of the different aircraft that her beloved was currently flying. By the end of the war, and with their separation from their respective services, Kay had amassed quite a number of excellent pictures.

Over the years, while Jack engaged himself in the Air Force Reserves and in other endeavors, Kay continued to perfect her artistic skills.

Now I'm not saying that Jack had be-

(CON'T PAGE 6, COL 1)

come stagnant in his field of endeavor... Jack had really become very proficient in all of his abilities. He was always exploring newer fields to challenge his enthusiasm. But...during this same period Kay was starting to showing her works at various art galleries in the Chicagoland area, and in no time at all gained a fine reputation as an artist of rare and exceptional ability.

This artistic talent was perceived by others in the field of art, and it was not long before her works were seen by members of the United States Air Force Art Program.

Now, here's where the long face on Jack Hoppock begins to show - Kay Hoppock was recently accepted into the U.S. Air Force Art Program. Not alone that this should cause concern, but in taking that appointment Kay was given transportation priority on any military aircraft while going to and from these Air Force Military Art Showings. O.K., so that isn't so bad...Jack had similar privileges, due to his retired Lt. Colonel's rank. But Kay's priority is that of a full Colonel, and that's one step above what Jack now holds. So, while Kay is always accommodated, Jack has to await "space available" seating. AH! the privileges of rank.



KAY AND JACK HOPPOCK (CIRCA 1985)

To those that attended our first Chicago (1980), and our Dayton (1984) Reunions will remember (Lt. Colonel) Jack Hoppock as our eloquent and congenial Master of Ceremonies.

And Mrs ('privileged' Colonel) Kay Hoppock will be remembered from our Dayton Reunion as the presenter of one of her masterpieces (B-24 IN FLIGHT) to our 451st Bomb Group. I accepted the "work of art" on behalf of all of us, and the picture now adorns a special spot in this office.

* * * * *

OLD MAGAZINE SHOWS
451st IN TECHNICOLOR

For those of you that have a desire to locate memorabilia of our 451st past, allow me to steer you in the direction of one of our nations more prestigious magazine; THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC.

In relating the following, I will without a doubt send you scurrying into your attics (or any such place you have stored your old copies); to your local library; to your book resale shop; or to any garage sale that shows the traditional yellow color of the "Geographic."

But before you go off in the search, let me describe what you will find. In the February 1946 copy of the Geographic are two COLOR pictures of our overseas Group, and one black & white. The two color pictures (somewhat rare to find) are as follows:

Photo #1 (page 151) shows two of our ground crew painting outlandish colors on a couple 1000 pounders. They are engaged in this task while under the tail of aircraft #61 (tail #450466), parked in the revetment of the 725th Squadron. The caption beneath the photo indicates the sense of humor often displayed by the ground crews in preparation to bombing such targets as German factories, and especially the Ploesti Oil Refining Center. And from the vividness of design and color, are painting the "eggs" in anticipation of Easter.

Photo #2 (page 168), again in color, shows our Group flying over the Alps. In this photo we can see about 14 aircraft, in different degrees of formation flying. Though the caption does not give identity of the Group, (nor the date) it is clear from the photo that the Red Ball markings (accepted by the 49 Bomb Wing; mid-April till disbandment at end of war) is definitely that of our own Group.

Photo #3 (page 140), is the often published black and white picture of our Group coming off the Ploesti target, 31 May 1944. This photo is often used by historians to show the awesome destruction that the NW-II bomber can endure while undergoing a severe enemy flak barrage. Though often used, seldom is credit given to the 451st BG for its part in its filming. But to verify its authenticity you only have to contact the head of the Photo Department, Major William M. Dwyer, or any of the Lab technicians that worked on the final printing. (To date the actual photographer has not been located, or identified)

The text of the article was written by the late General of the Army, H.H. (Hap) Arnold. It was written in a NW-II retrospect, and does not list Groups, nor Squadrons--only Air Forces. His comments cover the involvement of the Air Force as he was viewing it from the position of a Five Star Commanding General of the Army Air Forces (1946). He projects his views, seeing the time when space will be conquered for the benefit of mankind, and hoping that Atomic Warfare, and threats of such action, can be avoided. All in all, the 57 pages, with text and 28 color pictures, (highlighted, of course, by our Groups participation) makes it extremely good reading.

The facts pertaining to this "lost"

article were brought to light by DeWitt (Bob) Macey (724th) in a recent letter. His letter sent me searching through my back issues of the National Geographic, and sure enough, there it was, wedged between my Superman Comic Book and my Basic Field Manual/SOLDIER'S HANDBOOK (FM 21-100).

So, for those that have an interest in such memories of the past, you had better start searching. If not within your own home, then perhaps you may find a copy by contacting a "Rare Book" store. There are also Mail Order companies that deal in locating back issues of what you may be seeking. The names of these Mail Order houses are generally found in the BOOK SECTION of the Sunday papers.

I bid you happy hunting.

* * * * *

YUGOSLAVIAN FREEDOM FIGHTER
SEEKS AIRMEN AIDED IN WAR

During the hostilities of the 1943-1945 era, of which we took a big part, many combat crews had the opportunity (indeed, were required) to fly over enemy territory and under conditions that gave serious thought and concern as to what type reception could lay below. Was the area populated with enemy soldiers that would pounce on you if you had the misfortune to "bail out or crash land?" Would the native population be hostile and aggressive towards us for what grief our bombings had caused? Or, on the other hand, could you land freely and take your own sweet time in getting back behind friendly lines? These questions bothered many of us, and for more than a thousand of us 451st'ers (not including me) this became more than a question in academics. "Bailing out," for those that saw the need, gave them the "draw of the lot" as to what they may encounter, once they were safely on the ground.

During briefing our Intelligence Officers gave us the latest "poop" as to what would be the best procedure if such a circumstance should overtake us. His information was based on bulletins and first hand reports that showed what other evadee's had encountered as they made their way back.

Some instructions were as simple as "...hide by day, walk by night." Other means were to seek out friendly (hopefully, friendly) peasants and ask for aid. One plan that had us all confused, had to do with "DEAR OLD WIEN'." For those of us that bombed Vienna, towards the end of the war, you may recall the procedure for non-capture: "Gather up your parachute and get aboard the first trolley car and ride to the end of the line; at that location you would find a camp. Go in, make yourself to home and await the Allied Troops that were soon to arrive." Many a "raised eyebrow" came from those instructions. To date I have no knowledge of anyone that took that advice, but a lot that recall that advice.

But for those that became victims of our earliest aerial encounters (with loss of aircraft): 25 February 1944, (crews of E. Pries, R. Coleman, E. Johnson, R. Kimmel, N. Zender and N. Wiersema) there was not all that much choice. As my records show, only 4 men evaded capture and made it back to Group. Some enemy areas, that fell within our bombing range, were almost certain capture zones. It was only those that were extremely lucky, or had outside aid, that managed to wend their way back.

Outside "aid" came in the form of the UNDERGROUND PATRIOT, who risked his life, and perhaps that of his family, for the safety, and possible liberation of the downed airman. In France, Italy, and Greece it was known as the "resistance." In Yugoslavia we had two groups that aided our men. One was called the CETNIKS, under the leadership of General Draza Mihajlovic (1893-1946), and the other called the PARTISANS, under the command of Marshal Josip Tito (1892-1980). Though there was friction between the two leaders, nevertheless many of our men owe their escape to the actions of the brave men that soldiered under the command of either commander.

I . O . CARD CARRIED BY MIKOLA KOVACEVIC
(MIKE KOVAK)

One such "soldier" has been in contact with this office and is interested in finding out if any of our EVADEE'S came through his region, while he was active. His most recent letter seems to describe his activities far better than I can;

DEAR BOB,
THANK YOU FOR ANSWERING MY LETTER AND OFFERING YOUR HELP TO ME. SORRY, I DO NOT REMEMBER ANY NAMES OF THE SAVED PILOTS, AT THAT TIME I DID NOT SPEAK ENGLISH.
DURING 1943 I WAS IN THE FORCED LABOR CAMP IN BOR (UNDER HUNGARIAN AND GERMAN COMMAND), FROM WHERE I ESCAPED IN MARCH 1944 AND JOINED THE YUGOSLAVIAN FREEDOM FIGHTERS, THE CETNIKS. IN THE AREA SURROUNDING

BOR WAS THE FIRST BRIGADE (BORSKA BRIGADA) AND OUR MAIN DUTY WAS TO DISRUPT THE FLOW OF THE GERMAN SUPPLY TO THEIR UNITS IN SERBIA AND ALSO TO LOCATE AND SAVE THE DOWNED AMERICAN PILOTS. I PERSONALLY REMEMBER THAT MY GROUP, IN THE SURROUNDINGS OF BOR, SAVED OVER 20 PILOTS AND AIRMEN, AND THEY GAVE US CIGARETTES AND HANDKERCHIEFS TO SHOW THEIR APPRECIATION. THE HANDKERCHIEFS WERE MADE OF NYLON, VERY COLORFUL, AND EACH HAD A MAP OF THEIR DESTINATION PRINTED ON IT. I GOT SO MANY THAT I HAD 2 SHIRTS MADE OUT OF THEM, WHICH BECAME MY MOST VALUABLE POSSESSION. BEING ESCAPED FROM THE FORCED LABOR CAMP I HAD HARDLY ANY SHIRTS.

ONE OF MY DUTIES WAS TO BRING THE SAVED PILOTS SAFELY TO THE NEXT UNIT, WHICH WAS QUITE FAR: ABOUT A TWO TO THREE DAYS WALK THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS. FROM THERE THE AMERICANS WERE BROUGHT TO OTHER UNITS, THROUGH SERBIAN MOUNTAINS TO THE "MONTENEGRAIN COAST," OR TO THE "DALMATIAN COAST," FROM WHERE THEY WERE PICKED UP BY THE AMERICAN OR BRITISH SUBMARINES.

AT THE END OF 1944 I DID LEAVE THE CETNIKS AND JOINED TITO'S PARTISANS AND STAYED WITH THEM UNTIL THE LIBERATION OF YUGOSLAVIA FROM THE GERMAN OCCUPATION TROOPS.

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR OFFERED HELP AND I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING FROM YOU.

SINCERELY,

NIKOLA MIKE KOVAK (KOVACEVIC)
6119 SW 42nd STREET
MIAMI, FL 33155

It should be noted that BOR, Yugoslavia lies almost in a direct line with our infamous Ploesti, Bucharest, and Pitesti targets.

Mike has, since entering this country and becoming a U. S. citizen, been engaged as an electrician at the University of Miami. Mike is now retired and active in both stamp collecting and reflecting upon his wartime experiences. His plea, I hope won't go unanswered. I know there are a few of you guys that undertook escape, or in the very least, were part of what Mike is seeking.

* * *

As a recent follow up, and without prior knowledge of the previous article, a newspaper story was published in the East and sent to this office. It noted the considerable contributions of General Draza Mihailovich towards our downed and escaping airmen.

The article, written by Alan Fram and sent out on the Associated Press Wire Service, outlined the efforts of General Mihailovich in the rescuing of more than 500 of our comrades.

The efforts to pay tribute to the General are being championed by Congressman Philip Crane (R-IL), who last January 1985, offered a bill in Congress, H R 77. (This will be the fourth time since 1974 that such legislation has been offered) The purpose of the bill is to set aside land in the Washington D.C area so that an appropriate monument can be placed to commemorate the past efforts of this unsung patriot that helped many of our escapees.

A call to the office of Congressman Crane informs me that the Bill is now in Committee, and has been stymied by the need for other, and more urgent legislation.

* * *



PASSING IN REVIEW

(Bob K.)

Throughout the years we've see them pass,
In ranks both straight and true.
To close each day as soldiers will,
By passing in review.

We watch our friends come marching by,
And note their thinning ranks.
We see them march in perfect step,
And salute in silent thanks.

The bugle sounds it's clarion call,
For all of us to hear.
The sound of "TAPS" means all is well,
Day's end is drawing near.

WORDS FOR "TAPS"

Day is done
Gone the sun
From the lakes
From the hills
From the sky
All is well
Safely rest
God is nigh

To the memory of:

JOHN SMELSKI (727th)

Considerations by:
Sedgefield D. Hill family (727th)
Carmine J. Paceleo family (727th)
* * *

THOMAS H. SWEET (726th)

Considerations by:
Loving wife, Bernadine; and son, Patrick
* * *

WALTER E. FLANNELLY (724th)

ELDON M. BURNETTE (724th)

Considerations by:
J. Austin Wood (724th)
* * *

We commit our thoughts and prayers to these departed comrades.

* * * * *

CREWMEN PEN STORY OF AERIAL COMBAT

Remember those "stand down" days when all your mail had been answered; you had reviewed the "movie" to be played at sundown and decided against seeing it -- AGAIN. Perhaps you had finished evening chow and were looking for something to do, other than play cards, visit, or do the "Day Room/Officers Club" scene. Under those circumstances a mind, and occasionally a couple of active minds would turn to something creative.

Some enjoyed their creature comfort, and spent a lot of time in making "early depression" type furniture (book racks, cabinets, and the ever-present "middle of the tent" table). Others took a deep interest in the Squadron rumors and would spend their hours in trying to make out what it all meant. To many of the combat crews this was the time to refine their journals of personal missions and get the count to match that of the Operations Clerk.

But to one crew, that of Peter Massare, 727th, it gave time to spend in writing and refining a story of the feelings and experiences of a veteran combat crew. For these men it was an exercise in journalism that would help wile away those hours before "lights out." Offering himself as a subject, Pete Massare allowed himself to be depicted in the lead roll. Under the pen of two crew members, Peter Dufault (co-pilot) and Henry Houkal (navigator) they managed to extract some of the thoughts of Massare on his combat experiences. Massare never thought, when he passed this manuscript on to me, that 41 years later this material would resurface for the AD-LIB publication.

I'm sure, as you read the following lines, you will feel a sense of what the writers were attempting to convey. It's not meant to glorify any person, or time; and particularly not to glorify WAR.



MASSARE'S ADOPTED CREW
(FRONT ROW, L-R) TG, WALDT, BG,
AMDERBONI, UG, W JONES, RADIO, BURNS,
NG, J JONES, ENGINEER, ATKINS,
(BACK ROW, L-R) NAV, LT KETTI BOMB,
LT DICKEY, CO-PILOT, LT DUFAULT,
PILOT, CAPT HOPKINS

It was an earnest effort to put into prose the feelings that most combat crews had regarding their experiences. This story could be about you, and your own adventures.

A WAR STORY

You want a story of combat flying. I wonder if the way I am going to tell it is the way you want to hear it. I remember what THAT word meant to us when we were all fledgling pilots back in the States. It named a world and a way of life that was unreal. There were ribbons on the heroes' chests; there were blood and thunder stories in the magazines; but behind and beyond these the essence of the thing wore a shroud of silence. No one knew how it feels to be a combat man, No one knew how it is to sound yourself for a last ounce of fortitude or resolution; how it is to toss all night in certitude that you'll die tomorrow; how it is to have sudden death only another domestic topic, to make a joke of death at meal times when it sits beside you; in an empty chair. Reconstruct the most intense experience in your life; prolong it for days, months, years. That is what "combat" means to me now. It is vastly exhilarating, vastly terrifying, abysmally depressing.

Our new Bomb Group shipped to Italy in the winter of 1943. We began flying missions right away. The first were "milk runs," and could have been training missions. Still, they were longer, and it was a tougher job to keep in formation with full loads making the ships sluggish in that thin upper air. Even then, when we had landed and stowed our gear and slogged through icy mud to our tents, we were glad for warm "C" rations and a "sack" to flop into. I'd like to add that there have been times since then that have seen me less grateful for that dish. In fact, it would not disturb me to see that cursed letter deleted from the alphabet entirely. It was, however, hot and welcome in those days.

Combat began for me on a Padua raid. I guess they had been storing cards in their kimonos for some time for they sure laid a hand on the table that day. That day I saw "MOLTO" flak for the first time, and, in a sense, felt it. A series of shells exploded so close to our bomb bays that the concussion hurled us clear of the formation, and before we had regained control, we had lost five thousand feet of altitude. We got back intact, but the glory of combat was fading fast away.

Up to the time I spoke of, I had been flying as co-pilot for various new crews. Soon after that run I was checked out as a first pilot and given a crew of my own. From then on the rough runs came pretty thick and fast. I don't recall a great many of the details of those missions. But I remember that for a long time my mind was dried up like an unwatered plant. I never did anything, but eat, fly and sleep. I guess I joked some, but - except when flying - I didn't exist mentally. Probably I didn't dare

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do much thinking because the first thing I would have considered was that I was on an unusually hazardous assignment. I had been made an instructor pilot, and my job now was to fly with inexperienced crews, to break them in on combat flying. That's not easy. It takes ten men to fly a mission, not one. A month of this wore me down I guess. Anyways, I began to look around, and get scared. Right about then my own and nine other lives were thrust into my hands by an accident, of the most dreaded by a B-24 pilots - a blow-out on take off.

This old B-24 has been given many names, not the least applicable of which is the "flying coffin." On take-off, carrying a full load of bombs and 2700 gallons of gasoline, it were best called a flying crematorium. In this instance everything was running smoothly. We were half way down the runway with everything "in the green," so to speak, when the left tire blew and the ship lurched toward a ground-loop - and disintegration. There must have been a Third Presence on the flight deck then. I cut the starboard throttles, jammed the port throttles, slammed the right brake, hauled the nose high, and straightened her out. We came to a slow, lopsided stop, cut all the switches and tumbled out of there like a pack-pot. Nine of us were unharmed, but the bombardier had been struck by flying steel when our Number 2 prop had splintered on a stone.

I thought a lot about that accident. Of a long series of narrow squeaks, that was the climax. In the air I knew that death had passed nearby, but there on the ground I had felt the cold clutch of it and had squirmed away. I can still hear the question my mind framed in that instant of burning intensity; "Is this how I have to end?" That shock opened up my mind again; willy nilly I began to think of the game I was in, the chances I was running. I began to reflect that Luck had been good to me, and I began to watch the inscrutable brow of that phantom for a sign. I wasn't long in waiting.

One August morning the Group took off for Markersdorf, Austria. On the bomb-run it looked as though we weren't going to meet any opposition. Then, abruptly, the top turret was banging over my head and all around us were the white puffs of Jerry 20mm's. In a matter of moments we had gone from the relatively secure tedium of a sound ship in close formation to the hopelessness of a crippled ship falling back into isolation in a sky teeming with enemy fighters. Let it be said here that in the case of one bomber against several enemy fighters, the ship's ten guns are a deterrent, not a determinant. They may stall off the inevitable, but they won't forestall it. We were on two engines and falling back, shuddering under blow after blow from those relentless fighters. We were a straggler, and fighters wait for stragglers. Somehow we slugged through the target, utterly unprotected now, and dumped our bombs. Then we were ready to do what we had every right to do some

minutes before -- bail out of that ruined ship. I say I had been watching, so to speak, for a "sign." I guess, up to that moment, my luck had been teasing me -- in her grim fashion; anyways, she relented now, to produce one of the most soul satisfying sights I have ever seen -- that was the spectacle of sixteen P-38's coming back from covering the withdrawal of the main force. They were flying in flights of four, and when they saw our plight they peeled down into those Messerschmidt, like the blades of a mower and sheared our attackers out of the sky in one devastating pass. About this time we had lost enough altitude to allow our Number 3 engine to cut in again. The turbo had been shot out, but the rest of the engine was still sound. I told the crew to stand by and we would try to take her home. I was so relaxed with indescribable relief then that I felt equal to anything. We did, in fact, make a decent landing out of it. Ten of us walked, dazedly, away from that riddled hulk.

I had felt that cold clutch again and in the air this time. In the same period I flew several more rough missions. It began to look as though this plot was all climax -- with a foregone conclusion. Soon after that Markersdorf raid, I asked for and was given a crew of my own again. They are helping me now in the telling of this tale. Peter K. Dufault, my co-pilot, is turning what I grind out into respectable English, and Henry C. Houkal, my navigator, will apply his shrewd appraisal to the result. While I'm on that subject I'd like to name off the rest of my crew. I want their friends and families who may read this to know that each of those boys is one ninth of a top-notch combat crew -- a crew that I'm proud and grateful for. Better still, to tell the whole story I'll recount the last raid we made over Vienna, Austria, which in my mind clearly demonstrates the value of clear, cool and coordinated thinking on the part of each member of a combat crew.

I have never seen flak that was comparable to that Vienna Flak for accuracy and intensity. And it seemed we would never turn out of it. "Chunk! Chunk! Chunk!" went the German steel pounding through fuselage and plexiglass. Fragments crashed into the flight-deck, bounded off my helmet and off the co-pilot's. Every station was hit. The bomb-sight was hit while 1st Lt. Roy White, our bombardier, was bending over it; the nose was filled with flying glass. A huge lump of flak whizzed into the ball turret. Paul Anderson, armorer, and ball gunner said later, "When that thing came in, I came out!" His pant-leg was torn by the missile. A jagged hole was torn in the fuselage just over S/Sgt James Burns' head. He is our radio man but doubles on the waist gun. Then over the interphone the tail gunner, S/Sgt Frien, said calmly, "I've been hit." That's when we began to realize, through all the blind terror and tension, what we were going through. That Sgt Frien could sound so unruffled, alone back there,

cold, frightened and in pain, even then struck me with amazement. The co-pilot directed Sgt Burns to break a first-aid kit and apply first aid. Amid all that holocaust without and within, Sgt Burns, later helped by the bombardier, performed his task so coolly and efficiently that the flight surgeon later claimed that their first-aid had saved the gunner's hand.

As for T/Sgt Earnest Atkins, our engineer, he deserves a story of his own. I don't see how one paragraph here can do him justice. Briefly, he patched up a severed control cable that, if left unattended, would have forced us to abandon ship. He plugged up a riddled hydraulic system giving us enough pressure to lower flaps and apply brakes on a landing that otherwise would have destroyed the airplane -- perhaps lives. Sgt Atkins is now in for a D.F.C. and if anyone has it coming it is that boy.

I haven't mentioned the "Jones Boys," in our nose and top turret gunners. S/Sgt Jack E. "little" Jones fills the former post and S/Sgt Winson "Big" Jones is in the latter. I haven't mentioned them because they did nothing "outstanding" on that mission. But I mention them now to say that if it doesn't take outstanding guts to sit in a glass dome exposed on all sides to a sky full of flying steel, this is a perilous world indeed.

That Vienna run brings me pretty well up to date. Shortly thereafter my crew went to Capri for a rest. I was so near to finishing my fifty missions that they kept me scheduled to complete the tour. But in conclusion, at the risk of being trite, I want to say that the war isn't over. While my own crew was on Capri our squadron had the roughest week in its history. We came back on guts and safety wire again that week.

When the Jerrys retreated they drew in towards a common center -- and they brought their flak guns with them. Flying against those big Festung cities is wading into a maelstrom of steel. I want to take my hat off to the boys that are carrying on. Me -- I'm glad I'm going home.

Thus we see what the fertile mind can conceive when the tedium of war zone living has to be endured. We all underwent some form of involvement, when not active in our duties, that kept our minds occupied. In this case it was the ability to take a subject at hand, and to create a story, not too far from fact, and make it meaningful.

* * * * *

GROUP RESEARCH REVIVING UP

With the advent of computerization, we are now able to incorporate many areas of our Group's history into easily accessible and detailed format. At this point in our effort we have arranged our categories in the following manner:

AIRCRAFT: In this attempt we are working to locate all the aircraft that made up the "hardware" of the Group. In that direction we are seeking to put together aircraft nickname; serial number; new name, if it was renamed; Squadron assigned; its original Pilot; its last Pilot, and his Squadron; how it came into Group (original, by transfer, or replacement); what was its finale (combat loss, condemned, or transferred out); and on what date did we lose it. All these different categories will make for a very detailed profile of our Group's aircraft inventory.

On this particular endeavor I am not working alone. I have two allies that are deeply interested in its completion.

One is Karl Eichhorn (726th), who, during his time with the Group, kept a detailed accounting of the aircraft of the 726th. His journal has been extremely important in putting together that aspect of this effort.

My other collaborator is Mike Hill, son of Sedge Hill (727th). Through his Dad, Mike has developed a thirst for research, and has willingly accepted the challenge to examine miles of micro-film, for the details we are compiling. Many of you pilots, and other informed members, have been plied with letters of inquiry by Mike on the subject of AIRCRAFT. So, to those of you that were concerned by these letters "out of left field," be assured that Mike and I are working together, and the information, and copies of your letters, are being forwarded to this office.

Credit too, to all the Pilots, Crew Chiefs, Line Chiefs, and Flight Chiefs that have been contacted and have offered their remembrances relating to their own special aircraft. We could stand more such input from the pilots and mechanics that have recall about their aircraft, or even the one in the next revetment.

On my part, I have been soliciting different departments of the government for information. In some of the cases the information we have at hand is not complete, thus we have to seek another repository for our needs. It's all quite a challenge, and to some it would be considered a hobby - but to me its an obsession. The obsession has paid off to the tune of more than 315 A/C accounted for. And from comments by Mike--more to come!

Killed in Action (KIA): Since our Dayton Reunion, wherein we attempted to compile a total listing of our Honored War Dead, I have been amazed to find that our listing was so incomplete. It seems that the deeper one researches, the more items come to light. Working with 115 Missing Air Crew Reports (MACR), it is possible to gain a sizable listing of our KIAs, but as the AIRCRAFT research is developing, more and more of our dead and wounded are being revealed.

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In our KIA file I am attempting to ascertain the Name; Rank; Serial Number; Sqdn assigned; Place of burial; Date of death; Home state; and if the death was combat related - the name of the Pilot.

To date we have accounted for close 390 of our dead. That includes those Killed in Action and those that died from wounds or illness while serving with the Group.

MACR: For the most part this information has already been achieved. Prior to the Dayton Reunion I sought out the National Archives, Washington, D.C., to gain the names of our KIAs. This would have proved to have been an exhausting and time consuming task, had it not been for the interceding of some of our more ardent members. To access the Archives, I was only allowed to have six MACRs at each request. I needed to have some 113! Developing out the time allotted, I would still be making my requests, even now. What I did was to ask some of our retired Colonels to request, in blocks of 6 each, the MACRs needed. It seems that with the affixing of the rank to these requests, a bit more CLOUT was generated and a goodly number of the reports were forthcoming. What happened, during the period of our requests, was that the Archives were transferring all their paper documents to microfiche, thus was their excuse for the delay. It should be noted that no matter how hard we try to find all the MACRs, there are still some reports missing. Through diligent and constant research, it will be our aim to account for all our people.

MISSIONS: This file is just now being formulated and compiled. Much of the information is at hand. It's just a case of finding it -- placing the priority -- and allocating the time. One area not covered by my research information, are the pilots that participated on each of these various missions. I have placed a special category for these names, and hope to be able to compile those names -- with your help.

CREWS: How many hundreds of crews were involved in/with the 451st? That is a good question. Again, I'm willing to launch a campaign to find out. I have much information, already in house, that can be assimilated into this effort. But to be as accurate as possible I am finding some inexact entries as to possible replacements, and fate, of crew members. And in some areas - no designation as to what position that person flew.

One thing we all had as crews... a CREW NUMBER. It would be great to be able to place that information in file, thus making it an easy access feature to other related information.

AWARDS: Some of you have already offered copies of your GENERAL ORDER EXTRACTS, giving evidence of your right to wear such medals as the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Soldier's

Medal, Bronze Star, Air Medal, and Purple Heart. But in order to continue this file, I need a lot more input. If the copy of the GENERAL ORDER is not readily at hand, then give me the date and conditions under which the award was issued.

All this proceeding information has been to inform you as to the status of our research. It is hoped it will stimulate you to examine some of those war-time papers you have been storing, and to have copies made for our benefit. As has been my intention all along, we have a commitment to our past that should be regarded as our legacy to the future. To the men that so unselfishly offered their lives, we should compile as accurate and complete a file as possible. Thus future generations will be able to note the accomplishments and recognition that our Group earned and richly deserved.

* * * * *

WAYS OF WAR

The President declares it
The Congress subsidizes it
The Generals assign it
The Colonels design it
The Majors allot it
The Captains plot it
The Lieutenants refine it
The Sergeants define it
The Corporals begin it
The Privates win it.

WAYS OF THE AIRCREWS

The Pilots fly it
The Co-pilots try it
The Navigators find it
The Bombardiers grinds it
The Engineers switch it
The Radiomen transmit it
The Nose Gunner calls it
The Top Gunner eyeballs it
The Ball Gunner tracks it
The Waist Gunners attack it
The Tail Gunner counts it

WAYS OF THE GROUND MEN

The C. Q. will wake'em
The Mess Sarge will steak'em
The Medics will pill'em
The First Sarge will drill'em
The File Clerks will list'em
The Mail Clerk will twist'em
The Supply Clerk will tag'em
The PRO Staff will brag'em
The Cameramen will pose'em
The Photo Lab will expose'em
The Chaplain will preach'em
The Instructors will teach'em
The Riggers will pack'em
The Ordnance will rack'em
The Refuelers will top'em
The Prop Men will prop'em
The Line Chiefs will goad'em
The Armorers will load'em
The Crew Chiefs will devout'em
The Tower Crews will reroute'em
The Radar Crews will jam'em
The Weatherman will damn'em
Us guys will always recall'em
For they were us, and we were them.

(by: Bob Karstensen)