



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

ISSUE 19

WINTER 1990

FAIRMONT ARMY AIR FIELD EXCURSION TOPS 1990 REUNION PROGRAM

REUNION IN REVIEW

(This article is directed toward those that did not, or could not, attend our 6th National Reunion in hopes that they will reconsider when we announce our next gathering. But, too, it is for those that did attend and would appreciate rereading some of the significant happenings as they occurred.)

Who ever said, or even thought, that Nebraska wasn't a good place to have a military reunion? If they weren't in attendance during our September bash, then they missed the best and most humbling experience that we, since our post-war renewal, have ever undertaken.

Picture, if you will, entering the plush and lavishly decored Red Lion Hotel/Omaha, and being greeted by a hotel staff that is courteous, congenial, and receptive to our every need; then for the registrant to turn around and be greeted by one or more of his WW-II buddies who has been waiting, and awaiting, this moment. Layers of "missing years" melt away as you try to get all that you've wanted to say into those first few moments.

To some it was a planned get together. To others it was so spontaneous that emotions were hard to hide. And then again, there were others that found no immediate tie with comrades or

friends. These members wandered around aimlessly till they were engaged in conversation with other members of their own Squadron. Then it seemed that an incident was related, and from that starting point, remembrances were fully recalled and/or accurately substantiated. Not too long after, what had been a feeble first involvement, blossomed into a more meaningful dialogue that had each member and wife calling the others by first names.

Wednesday, September 5th, when many arrived, they found time to settle into the hotel and then to explore the city of Omaha. There were still some identifiable landmarks that the original cadre could probably find, but in the case of the O'Connor Crew (724th) that wasn't their goal. Here was the chance to revisit the old Union Pacific Railroad Station and bedevil the current station agent.

If I got the story right, and John will correct me if not, it seems that during the tenure of Crew #11 at Fairmont Army Air Field, the crew got together and purchased an old, but reliable, car. This was to be sharing operation, so that when a day off came they could easily go and visit their spouse. All the wives would be living nearby, but not necessarily all in the same house, or even the same town, but all within driving distance.

As the end of their training drew near they had to consider
Reunion Continued Page 2



B-24 and P-51 "BUZZ" the old Fairmont Army Air Field September 7, 1990 (Photo M. Hill)

"AD-LIB"

451st Bomb Group, Ltd. Publication

Written and Published by; Bob Karstensen, Sr.

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REUNION Continued

what would become of this "contraption for human transit." It didn't seem that they could agree on selling it, nor could they agree on whose true ownership it should befall. It was finally agreed at the last minute that the wives, accompanied by one or more of the husbands, would drive the car to Omaha and see the women off on the train for their respective hometowns. Upon arrival at the depot, they simply decided to abandon the vehicle in the railroad parking lot; and with the women boarding the train and the men returning by military transportation - they figured they had written the last chapter of the "worthy, but forsaken car."

Now it seems, in a glow of nostalgia, John O'Connor and some of his crew members revisited the old station to confront the depot agent with the question, "Where is our car we left here in December of 1943?" Caught completely off guard the station manager could only gulp, stammer and profess to the fact that really he didn't know. Since O'Connor and the crew felt sure that the car wasn't on the property, they didn't press the issue. But out in Omaha there is one perplexed station manager that wonders if all the troops that returned from WW-II came back with all their "marbles," or if it was only these few that were scattered.

On Thursday morning, the 6th, amidst hotel check-ins and members greeting members, the Reunion Committee got down to work. The registration team of Harold and Dorothy McWilliams (727th), Leonard and Maxine Meyer (725th), Wilbur Fowler (725th), and James and Doris Casperson (727th), all got down to the business of signing-in and handing out pre-packaged registration envelopes. They had their hands full in signing up walk-ins, plus trying to explain the prearranged

seating plan that was being instituted for the first time for the Saturday Night Banquet. On the whole, when viewed by the members the seating plan was well received. And, as it later proved, caused less confusion for Saturday night than at previous reunions. Don and Phyllis Milligan (724th), because of Don's recent illness, begged off any strenuous involvement. M/General James Knapp, and his wife, Mary Emma, (Hdq) accepted the duties as roving ambassadors.

Sedge Hill (727th) and his co-editor/writer son, Mike Hill (Honorary Member), had a table set-up that positioned themselves to meet and greet those that wanted to thank them for all their efforts in putting together their magnificent tome, "The Fight'n Four Fifty First Bomb Group, (H)." Several cases of books were sold on the spot to those that, either hadn't purchased one before or wanted to buy an extra one or two for their children or grand children. The efforts these two have made in putting together this book was certainly not overlooked by those attending. They were besieged by well-wishers who wanted to get the authors' signatures on the flyleaf. Sedge and Mike were getting arm weary by the end of the day.

Also on hand, but not as part of the Local Committee, were Tom Rotello (724th), with his fine array of caps, T-shirts, and other memorabilia; Art & Carol Morin (727th) with their colorful and topical display of decoupage lithograph art work that was to be raffled off after the Saturday Banquet; and a new concessionaire, Archie Piirainen (727th), that showed and sold a beautiful corded necktie (of his own design) made up of polished stone with a scaled metallic B-24 adhered to its surface. Each of these concessionaires pledged their profits to the 451st Bomb Group, Ltd. in order to keep it solvent and growing.



B-24 at Sky Harbor, 6th September 1990 (Photo L. Miller)

Throughout the registration day, buses were being shuttled to the Sky Harbor section of Eppley Municipal Airport; there to view (or, review) the Collings' B-24 ("All American"). The cost of bringing in the "All American" was underwritten by a select corps of our membership, that when informed the aircraft COULD be included in our Reunion, fulfilled the cost requirements with pledges and commitments. Our contract with the Collings Foundation called for the B-24 to be on public display Thursday, September 6th, for the benefit of all interested

persons, and on Friday, September 7th to be at Fairmont AAF. Our Group worked together with the Omaha Convention and Visitors Bureau to publicize this event so that the public would be made aware and would be welcome to take part.

The media (newspapers, radio and television) were quick to jump in and take part. We even received a couple lines in the USA TODAY, 5 September, page 9A. Interviews were commonplace as reporters "buttonholed" some of our members for a first-hand accounts of their adventures with the aircraft at hand.

It was with dismay I found out that the interview that made the 6 o'clock news was not with a 451st member, but with another B-24 veteran that resides in the area. I encountered the man later and related the fact that it was our Group that had underwritten the cost and it should have been us that did the interview. He tried to counter by stating that he was aware of this fact and that he tried to incorporate that fact into his interview, but apparently the newsroom cut it from the tape. (He never did try to sell me the bridge over the Missouri River)

Thursday Evening Opening Ceremony was all that we normally expect - and more. The flag presentation was made by the South High School ROTC unit from the city. As is becoming the custom, these young people are becoming more and more a part of our reunions.

The Strategic Air Command Band gave us a stirring "Glen Miller" program, replete with uniforms of our era; "Officers Pinks." Several fine vocalists were featured and were warmly received by our people.

A few moments were spent as I briefed the attendees of our plans for the "Fairmont AAF Invasion." Since timing was essential to this operation - the theme was "hit the mark, and BRACE!" And what finally evolved, due to this exchange, will be elaborated on later.

The evening concluded with the "River City Ragtime Band" playing some spirited tunes that all of us could relate to as we sang along.

Friday morning, 7 September, brought 12 buses on line - and about 570 persons "to the mark." (Many traveled the route by private car.) From all previous planning the 451st Committee and the Fairmont/Geneva Committee thought they had a pretty good program lined up. But what we encountered all along the line was "mind bogging."

First off, due to the instructional Thursday briefing, all participants were not only on time, but a little ahead of time. The buses were quickly loaded and on their way. The first stop was at the Lincoln American Legion Club; the BIGGEST and finest in the nation. Here we were to partake in brunch. The Club Manager's face turned a bit ashen as he looked to his watch and announced that we were more than 20 minutes early. But in the tradition that sets all the Nebraskans apart, he quickly regrouped and told us to "sit down and have a cup of coffee," while he hurried up the kitchen. What could have been disaster turned out to be such a delicious and well prepared

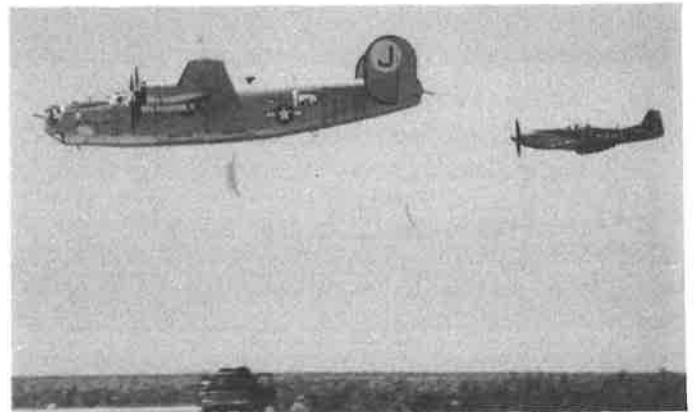
meal that we were all grateful to the Legion for putting up with us.

But now we seemed to be gaining on the clock, so a plan was implemented that would give us a small tour around Lincoln, the Capital of Nebraska. A brief stop at the Capitol Building for photos; a drive past Lincoln's renowned "Sunken Gardens;" and a drive past the Veterans Hospital. All managed to draw our interest and kill a little more time.

Back on the road, and on time, we entered the Village of Fairmont, there to be accompanied to the Base by an on-bus guide. For a small town, without much resources for our type of intrusion, they went "all out." Flags festooned the lamp posts, much like a 4th of July celebration; citizens that weren't out on the base, made an effort to look us over and to give us a welcoming wave. We drove the mid-road route to the airfield; one that perhaps was not used in 1943, but helped cut off a few miles traveling out. Our guides gave us warm welcomes and explained some of the things that had changed since our initial stay.

Once in view of the "flight line," we were pleased to see numerous single engined aircraft. Everything from an L-3 and L-5 (Cubs), a PT-17 (Stearman), and three AT-6's (Texans). The inclusion of these aircraft was due to the efforts of B/General Reg Urschler (pilot/owner of the P-51, "Gunfighter"). He induced his flying compatriots to join us. His involvement was greatly appreciated.

The old field, though barely recognizable to this old cadre, still brought a lump to the throat. One only had to think about the hours spent laboring on that line, or any line, on any base, to be reminded. But even before that lump had a chance to clear itself, a mighty roar put the lump back into the throat. The easily recognizable sound of a B-24, with a P-51 in escort, came roaring in with one of the slickest "buzz jobs" that you could ever imagine - and right on time. They (the B-24 and P-51) came out of the East without so much as a fair-thee-well, and had people scrambling from under cover to see the most spectacular event that had happened to this old base since the end of WW-II. Again, it was not only hard to swallow but more difficult to see beyond the tears that moistened ones eyes. After a graceful landing the B-24 and P-51 taxied up to within a few yards of the speakers platform.

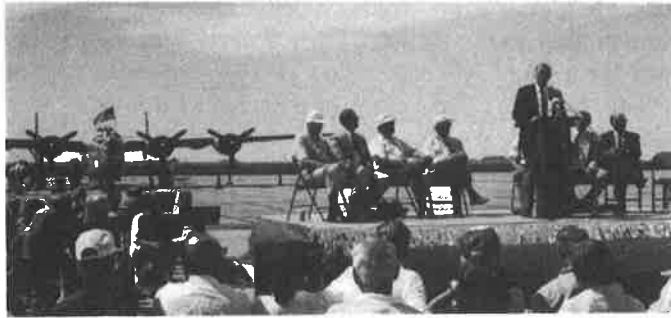


Dramatic Entry to Fairmont AAF Thrills the Crowd (Photo M. Hill)

(Below Photos Courtesy Mike Hill)



Parking the B-24 and P-51



Bob Karstensen, Reunion Organizer Addressing Crowd



M/General (Ret.) Bob Eaton, Featured Speaker



All Stand for Special Tribute to Fallen Comrades



Public and 451st Members View Rare B-24 (Liberator) Bomber

Again the media was in evidence, and numerous photos and interviews were taken.

With more than 1,200 people in attendance, our "Homecoming Program" started. Reverend Paul Johnshoy (724th) undertook the duties of Chaplain and offered our Invocation. Mayors Larry Hilty and Gaylord Songster, from Fairmont and Geneva, respectfully, welcomed us back into their communities. State Senator George Coordsen, on behalf of the State of Nebraska, also bid us welcome. Retired Major John Sattler (Base Supply Officer, formerly stationed at Fairmont AAF) offered us still another welcome.

I had the honor to introduce our Principle Speaker, Group Commander, Robert E.L. Eaton. General Eaton not only expressed his joy at coming back, but reminded the crowd that patriotism was once again on the comeback. He equated our determination in the present Iraqi crisis to what we endured back in 1943. True to form, Bob Eaton got his point across.

The ceremony that closed our program was absolutely outstanding. Prior to the program I put John O'Connor (Bugler), Paul Johnshoy (Pastor), and the Fairmont American Legion Color Guards head to head and had them thrash out a fitting conclusion. What they put together in just a few minutes time was worthy of all the praise that can be sent their way and perhaps an Emmy, or even an Oscar.

The words that Reverend Johnshoy delivered in tribute to our departed comrades; to those that lost their lives in training and in overseas action, were most eloquent. At the most fitting moments (upon entry of the flags, and during their retirement) John's bugle sounded like the clarion call of all past buglers put together. Again, at the precise moment, John not only played "Taps" but added in his own "echo." If you've never heard a bugler give "Taps" and add his own echo, you ain't heard nothing yet. Then to snap the audience back to reality, the Rifle Team fired the fitting three salvo salute. Between the arrival of the B-24 and the conclusion of our Program, it was hard to keep a dry hanky.

At the conclusion of the afternoon, we saw an aerial display as each of the aircraft left the field. First off were the single engine aircraft. Each added a flourish to their departure that thrilled the crowd.

When the B-24 departed there was a sense of loss. Perhaps this type aircraft will never again set wheels on this airfield again. Perhaps the people that saw what we tried to accomplish in this effort, will never see the likes of us again, either. Together, we the old soldiers of a highly decorated combat unit, and the B-24, a relic long since passed by as a combat aircraft, may never be together on this same field as we were now. But we left the community, leaving our mark on its people forever. Both in the era of the early "40's" and now again in the "90's." Perhaps what will be remembered by us, and the people of Fillmore County, will be the involvement of the workhorse of our wartime profession - the B-24 Liberator. The lasting impression that was made as it "buzzed" the field upon leaving was spectacular. Coming in low over the old



Final Salute by B-24 Thrills Crowd as it Leaves Fairmont Army Air Field (September 7, 1990)

hangers; leaves on the trees being rustling by the prop wash; a group of diehard viewers watching the ship as it headed west over the ripening fields of milo and corn. Certainly reminiscent of the days when we trained as combat crews and ground crews to perfect our skills.

All this nostalgia; all this pontificating on my part, would not have been possible without the amenities that were offered by those that worked so hard to make it possible. We owe dearly to the Fairmont Chamber of Commerce, and its President, Don Pieper, for allowing myself and our 451st Committee access to their monthly meeting and put forth our program. When the outline of what we wanted was clear to this body of business people, they accepted our challenge and you became the recipients of their effort.

I'm sure all of you were treated to the "cookies and drinks" that the Legion Auxiliary made available in the nearby hanger. These came about when a remembrance of Karl Eichhorn's Journal (AD-LIB, page 18) was repeated to the Chamber of Commerce at one of our first meetings. The project was accepted by the Auxiliary and no further discussion was needed, except, "How many - and where do you want us set up?"

The field itself was not ours just for the taking. Since it was the property of the State of Nebraska, certain procedures had to be followed. But rather than being difficult, the Superintendent of State Owned Airfields, Mr. Mike Blacksher at Lincoln, Nebraska, pledged his support and guidance to our project. Together with his Airport Manager, Tim Krienert, they saw to making this old airbase accessible, and fully useable to our needs. They even removed portions of barb wire fences so the public could have access to the aircrafts. They worked to make the runway functional to the requirements as relates to landing four engined WW-II bombers and numerous smaller type aircrafts. They were very diligent in getting the job done before our invasion.

The Fillmore County Sheriff's Department, under supervision of Sheriff William Burgess worked throughout the later stages of our effort to coordinate and oversee traffic control. Another

case of my saying, "I wonder if . . . ?" --and the job gets done.

The various city fire departments and paramedic teams that flanked us on the north and south side of the flight line, didn't just happen to be driving by. Various community members worked to bring them into our endeavor. Even the "follow me" truck that positioned itself at the end of the runway for the benefit of the B-24 was considered and added by the community.

The Historical Society that had a table set up for our indulgence was there for a twofold purpose. First they wanted to pass on any information that you may want to know about Fillmore County and the old base. Secondly, they wanted to get from you any bits of information that was relevant to their historical quest. I hope there was time enough for you to visit and to help them out. If not they can be contacted through the Postmaster, Fairmont, NE 68354. Any reference on the envelope to the Historical Society, will be forwarded to the responsible party.

Without a doubt you saw the Mobile Post Office that was on the field. This unique van was brought in through the courtesy of the Fairmont Postmistress, Georgia Schropfer. Georgia, at an earlier Chamber of Commerce meeting, introduced us to the possibility of having a "one day" cancellation stamp made by the United States Postal System in Lincoln. We were quick to accept this innovation to our overall mission, and worked diligently to get it perfected. Those that attended the reunion received their "cancelled envelope cache," as a further gift from the 451st, via the Fairmont Post Office.

On hand, too, was the Fairmont Public School Band (Conductor David Phillips). They gave us some pleasant musical moments as we prepared to get into our Homecoming Program. Curtis Prater, (vocalist, par excellence) together with the Fairmont School Band, offered a stirring "Star Spangled Banner." This, along with the American Legion Color Guards gave us a truly patriotic salute to our opening.

As you can see we didn't have to go too far afield for talent and ability. Some came from within our ranks, while the bulk of the effort came from the people of Fillmore County. Norene

Fitzgerald, Executive Director, Fillmore County Development Corporation, Geneva, NE, and Loretta Korbelik, Fairmont, NE worked hard to bring some of the loose ends together as our visiting day drew near. I, and the rest of our 451st Committee, feel humbled by all the effort that was put forth by these good folks. Our visit will always be remembered.

Back at Omaha the following day, Saturday the 8th, confusion prevailed as those signed up for the SAC Tour found that their numbers exceeded what the bus company had envisioned. Confusion turned into a semblance of order as the bus company accepted "all comers," and tried to work out the problems "on the fly." After all the tours were back home, only petty complaints were heard. Like from our past, "the 451st can adjust to almost any circumstances."



M/General James Knapp -- Master of Ceremonies

Filet Mignon was on the menu for our Saturday Evening Gala. (A first class outfit deserves first class chow.) General James Knapp accepted the task of Master of Ceremonies, and routed us through our program agenda. General Knapp introduced Sedge Hill who wished to make a presentation to me, in behalf of the Group. What he handed me went along with the 1st class reunion that had been conducted up to then. He presented the 451st Bombardment Group (H), Ltd. with a check for \$6,400. This was the profits, to date, from the sale of the history of the "Fight'n 451st Bomb Group." Needless to say I was flabbergasted. But not only was a check presented, but he offered this office the bulk of the unsold books, some 12 plus cases. Sedge and Mike were true to their word when they said that the 451st would realize whatever profit was generated. We are indebted to them for their generosity.

(Further input to the 451st treasury came from the raffle that Art and Carol Morin held. We netted some \$1,250 as a result of their efforts. Archie Piirainen's B-24 ties netted another \$320.)

After I recovered, General Eaton came front and center and offered a few comments. It seems that I always take the honor and responsibility of introducing Bob Eaton. I suppose its a throwback from the days when I sat in the nose turret and proceeded Bob across the target by just a millisecond in time. In this case, whether he appreciates it or not, I'm still accepting the challenge by bring him up to - and over still another target. I hope this will continue for many more reunions.



Sedgefield D. Hill Makes Check Presentation to Group

Our Guest Speaker, Lt. Colonel Ed Bethart, an officer well versed in the recently retired aircraft, the SR-71 ("Blackbird"), gave us films and antidotes about his experiences with that aircraft. Colonel Bethart served as Senior Navigator/Pilot on board that type aircraft before it was retired from the U.S. Air Force inventory. He took questions from the audience and explained many of the intricacies related to the operational use of the aircraft. The questions that related to national security he skillfully averted.

Although we had Reverend Johnshoy written into the Banquet Program, we passed the chore of Pastor to John Pafford (727th). John had recently been released from the hospital near his home town of Waycross, GA, and wasn't all that sure what obligations he could assume. But his spirit, and stamina, were so improved that Reverend Johnshoy excused himself in favor of Reverend Pafford.

Sunday Church Services were conducted by both Reverends' Johnshoy and Pafford. Their messages were timely and well taken. Special music was furnished by our resident vocalist, Bill Bihn (726th). His selection of music is uncommon - truly beautiful. He was accompanied on the piano by Lois McNerney. Our hymn singing was augmented by John O'Connor, trumpet; Bill Jackson (726th), clarinet; James Caspersen (727th) base horn. The last two named, Jackson and Caspersen, were new to our musical Sunday format. I hope they felt at home and we can count on them to take part in future events.

Thus closed our 6th National Reunion. Its highlights and pitfalls, all part of such events, will soon fade into memory. To those that accepted our invitation, we hope that the highlights will exceed the pitfalls. To those that chose not to attend, we hope this will create some interest and that when we call upon you the next time to "HIT THE MARK; -- AND BRACE ---- SOLDIER," you will be there.



(Received this letter from former Major John Sattler, who, during the 1943/45 activities of Fairmont Army Air Field, was the Base Supply Officer. John was kind enough to make the effort to join us, coming from New York State with his daughter, Sandra Lee Jones, who by the way, was the first child born at the Fairmont AAF Base Hospital. Our thanks to John and Sandra for attending and taking part in our Reunion Program.)

October 10, 1990

Dear Bob:

Please pardon me for taking this long to acknowledge that great program you put together for the 451st Reunion. It was without a doubt one of the very best I have ever attended, thanks to your careful planning and attention to detail.

Everything went like clockwork, and I'm sure most people there gave little thought to the endless planning and coordination that went into it. I was not one of them who took it all for granted. Having been involved in scheduling, planning and carrying out a wide range of public relations events over the years, I know better! You are to be congratulated and thanked for a great performance.

I don't think there was a "dry eye in the house" when that B-24 came out of nowhere and flew over the hanger. I couldn't speak for a minute, I was so caught up in it.

You were right on target in taking your Group back to Fairmont, even though many of them didn't go through there. It was a wonderful, memorable experience, and thanks for including me. I hope I didn't take the press play away from anyone. Tom Huddleson introduced me to the reporter for the Lincoln paper, who talked to me at some length, and his story apparently went on the State AP wire, in addition to the two Lincoln papers. The local Sheriff took a photo of my daughter and me, and then took it to the Signal. Nice guy.

Thank you, again, Bob. You did a superb job and you can be very proud of the results.

John Sattler (Former Fairmont AAF Supply Officer)
20 Clairedale Drive RCP
Hampton Bays, NY 11946

(This letter I add in toti, although not addressed to this office, it gives in essence what I wanted the attendees to do regarding thanking the communities of Fairmont and Geneva.)

The Communities of Fairmont-Geneva
c/o Don Pieper, President Fairmont Chamber of Commerce
Fairmont, NE 68354

Dear Mr. Pieper,

As a member of the 451st Bomb Group, I wish to commend your community on all of the efforts made in our behalf during our recent reunion.

Our particular crew was not at Fairmont in 1943, we were a replacement crew to the 451st after they had arrived in Italy. I had never been in Fairmont-Geneva before our reunion, and let me say that our reception there on September 7th, 1990, felt as if we were coming home again. All of your efforts, concerns, and kindnesses were the same as we remembered at the end of World War II.

Many an eye was wet with emotion from your displays of patriotism and friendship towards us. Thank God that concern and love for our country is still alive today, as exhibited in Fairmont. For all the negatives about America that we hear from some of our citizens, your wonderful reception and patriotic attitude was deeply moving to us all. Again, we salute you, and thank you for making such a wonderful day to remember.

Thanks as well to Bob Karstensen, President of the 451st Association, and to all of you good folks on the committees working with and for us to make such a wonderful and memorable day. And thanks to all of the great ladies who took time to make the home-made cookies and refreshments, they were extra special.

Sincerely, Gates P. Christensen
Pilot, 724th Bomb Squadron
371 Wilson Street
Midvale, Utah

NTV television, out of Hastings Nebraska, interviews Chuck Paddock, 725th Pilot while crewmembers, Giasson and Waggoner look on.
(Photo by A. Karstensen)



IN HONORED MEMORY

In homage to his father's passing, Gary McQuaid put into context some of the thoughts and musings that had been passed through their father/son relationship. It bespeaks an honorable tie, between man and machine, that many experienced as they fought the battle, both within themselves, as to their own valor, and to the machine they had learned to trust.

I offer you Gary's eulogy to his dad, and to all our recently deceased members listed below. May Gary's words act as a ringing bell to herald these departed, to an arrival in a place where all rendezvous are in the arms of the Almighty and where all landings are as smooth as an Angel's flutter.

IN REMEMBRANCE

This young pilot first met the gallant lady after a long flight over the Atlantic. So began a love affair born of necessity. For the two were to share many hours together over many weeks fulfilling a common purpose.

In the early days of their relationship, the young pilot would learn the feel of the gallant lady's response to his every command; she would in turn learn the sure hand of his touch. From the beginning there was a chemistry of the pilot's training and skill and the gallant lady's metal and instruments.

Almost daily the young pilot, the gallant lady, and crew would surge into the sky with the song of the lady's four thunderous engines thrashing the wind. Together they would fly into the jaws of death and out again.

In spite of ferocious fighters attacking like sharks in a feeding frenzy and the deadly blossoms of flak, the pilot and the lady faithfully delivered their deadly salvo. Their flights into calamity took them to such places as Bucharest, Bologna, Lyon, Ploesti, Szony, Blechhammer, and Munich.

As suddenly as the affair had begun, it ended. The young pilot, now not so innocent after the tragedy of war, completed his last mission. The gallant lady, herself war-weary, seemed to groan a sigh as she settled to the ground for the last time with her young pilot. They had served together well, and now they would part. The young pilot and his crew, which had braved such terrible danger, would return to safety of home west of the Atlantic. The gallant lady would remain, and another young pilot would begin anew this perilous love affair of man and machine.

Eventually, both the young pilot and the gallant lady would die. She would make the ultimate sacrifice. The young pilot, now no longer young would follow after another fight of a different sort.

It is tragic that so many young pilots and gallant ladies made the ultimate sacrifice, but it is nothing short of miraculous that many, such as my dad, returned to live full

and peaceful lives. For all who gave so much, I say, "Thanks!"

Through the providence of God, this young pilot was my dad, Frank H. McQuaid, and the gallant lady was "Calamity Jane." Many months after dad returned, "Calamity" was lost over Vienna.

After what he described as "an interesting battle," dad died of cancer on June 26, 1990 and was buried with full military honors at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery on July 6, 1990. "Thanks, dad, I love you."

Now, I bow my head in thanks to God for all the young pilots, crews; the men that worked on the gallant ladies; the GALLANT LADIES themselves, and to my dad.

Other comrades that we find have made their "Final Flight" since our last newsletter:



The "Young Pilot" with his crew and the "Gallant Lady"
Pilot Franks McQuaid second from left

*Lynn J. Bartlett, Hdqs;.....Wilmer D. Brashear, 724th
Bernard H. Clay, 727th;.....Harold C. Henschel, 727th
Don X. Kessel, 724th;..... Paul E. Krueger, 725th
Charles A. Miller, 727th;.....Meliton G. Montelongo, 725th
Marion F. Moyer, 726th;.....James C. Rogers, 725th
John W. Rutter, 727th;.....Frank L. Shanks, 724th
Edmund J. Smith, 725th;.....Carless C. Spencer, 726th
Vinton S. Stevens, 726th*

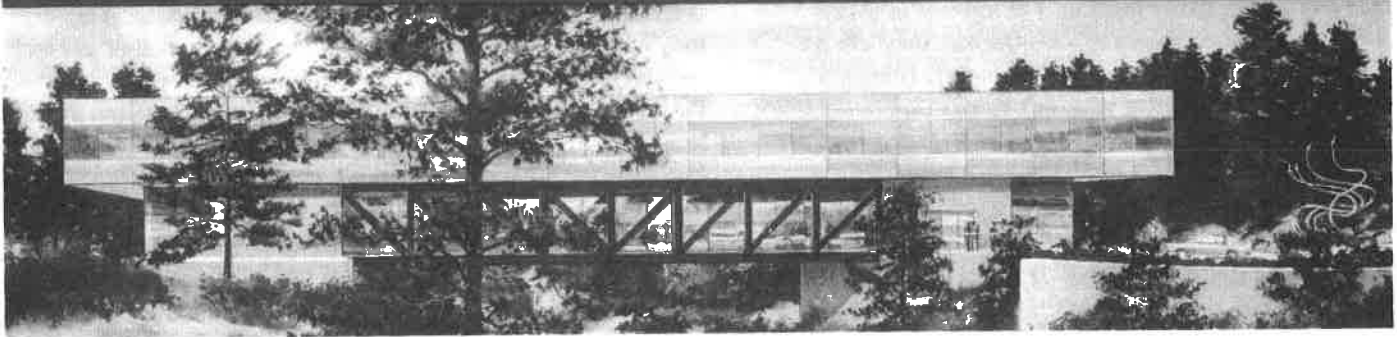
(A special tithing was offered by Ann Rutter in tribute to her husband, John W. Rutter. It was offered as support towards the Group in which he was proud to have served.)

To these men and others that have left our ranks we bid thee:

Hail and Farewell



Headquarters/Alumni House
 Association of Graduates of the United States Air Force Academy
 Capital Campaign



**JUST
 HELPING
 A
 FRIEND**

As a publication that reaches more than 1,500 military veterans, and interested persons, the AD-LIB is frequently asked to aid in one venture of another. Many of these organizations, though worthy, have to be screened and eliminated from our efforts, just for the simple fact that if we accepted them all, they would fill our newsletter with information that is of little importance to our rank and file.

But in the case of what we present in the following, we have an interest, if by nothing else, at least by our past involvement. In 1982 we prevailed upon the United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado, to assist us in putting on our Reunion. They were most cooperative, and in small payment to their kindness I have agreed to publish the following article:

The Association of Graduates (AOG) of the United States Air Force Academy has embarked on a campaign to construct a headquarters/alumni house on the Academy grounds. Unlike West Point, Annapolis and other major universities, the Air Force Academy does not have a center recognizing and serving its alumni. The new building will not only serve the alumni, but



General James H. "Jimmy" Doolittle
 Former 15th Army Air Force Commander

it will provide a gathering place for cadets, families and friends of the Academy. The proposed building will house conference and seminar facilities, a library lounge, board room display and entertainment area along with administrative offices for the Association. The AOG has already raised three million dollars for the project.

One of the prime considerations in the project is the appropriate dedication and naming of the building. The graduates wanted to commemorate an individual who played a key role in the history of the country and in the tradition of the Air Force. They wanted to honor someone whose name is synonymous

with leadership, courage, and dedication; someone who encompasses the traditions of both the Army Air Corp and the Air Force. No one fits this description better than General James

H. "Jimmy" Doolittle. A committee, headed by M/General (Ret.) William Lyon and M/General (Ret.) Wendell Sell, has taken up the challenge to raise the necessary funds to name the building in General Doolittle's honor. Units, associations and individuals who served with General Doolittle are encouraged to support this worthwhile project. Donations or requests for additional information may be forwarded to the Association of Graduates, Building Fund, USAF Academy, CO 80840-5000. Ph. (719) 528-4136. Commemorative opportunities are available to corporate and individual donors.

LETTERS HOME CAN MAKE GOOD READING

Whether you were Ground Crew or Combat Airman; whether you joined the Group originally, or even if you joined the Group long after it had arrived in Italy, you all harbor an experience that comes easily to mind. The manner in which these stories are recalled comes in many forms. Some are by memory alone. Some are substantiated by loosely compiled journals kept while undergoing your day by day experiences. Some members did a post-war reminiscences with little more than memory and old military orders to work with.

In the case of one, James T. Casperson (1Lt, Copilot 727th BS), who did almost the inconceivable - he sent a letter home detailing one of his mission experiences, AND TELLING (ALMOST) all. It is a known fact that the Enlisted Men had their mail censored by the officers of the Squadron (and a lot of chopped up letters came about as a result this directive), but the Officers were on their own in regards to censorship. True, it was understood that a "spot check" could be made on the Officers' mail, but during my tenure I never heard of a reprimand being sent down. Whether the following letter infringes on that doctrine, I leave that for to you to judge. As for myself - I m glad he did it. He (Casperson) gave me an insight as to what happened on that November day, back in 1944.

Italy, December 11, 1944

Dear Folks,

Since I last wrote I have been on my fifth mission (Dec. 6). We thought it would be an easy "milkrun" into Yugoslavia, but it turned out quite differently. We started through the flak bursts on the bomb run but couldn't see the target through the clouds, so they held their bombs and took them up into Austria where we went through the ack-ack a second time and dropped our eggs on the railroad yards at Graz, Austria. Coming home we lost our formation in the clouds and came home alone.

Alone we would have been easy meat for fighters, but none appeared. Navigation was difficult in those clouds but we took a general course for home until we found a hole in the undercast.

We dove through the hole, identified our position and came home. It's no fun to be lost when you are short on gas. It is better to be lost when you have gas to look for the field, but even then it is an uncomfortable feeling.

For trouble, thrills, excitement and danger my fourth mission (November. 20) probably never be equalled. That day our target was the oil refineries at Blechhammer, Germany. Blechhammer is a heavily defended target north of Czechoslovakia. It is a long haul and one which you sweat out every gallon of gas on the way home. We dropped our bombs on the target, going through intense, accurate flak. One piece of shrapnel put a hole in the window about a foot from the pilots head, or about three feet from me. That made us laugh, but I can't see anything funny about it now. We were safely on our way home when some isolated flak guns at Gyor, Hungary opened fire and we got our first real taste of it. Our gas tanks had been hit and we lost a lot of gas, number one engine quit, the electrical system failed and along with it everything dependent on the electricity - including the radio interphone, fuel pumps to transfer gas from reserve tanks, prop pitch and turbine controls, engine instruments, gun turrets, etc. We fell back and lost sight of our formation; below was a complete undercast of clouds so that we could not tell where we were. We flew in that crippled conditions until the gas was so low that it became apparent we had to do something. We were over clouds and the last glimpse of land we had were the snow covered Alps. We let-down through the clouds and I held my fingers crossed, fearing we might smack into an unseen mountain while flying blind through that soup. But we broke into the clear over the Adriatic Ocean. The coast of Yugoslavia was visible in the distance and we headed for it. By that time we were prepared to bail out, or ditch into the water. Everything that was loose we threw out to lighten the ship. I had my parachute snapped on and the escape hatches were opened ready to go.

During the excitement our engineer, Ray Hughey accidentally opened his chute and the silk rolled out in the airplane. We frantically looked for the extra chute, but there was none in that plane.

We were flying with three engines all of this time as one had quit a long time ago. Another engine quit but we quickly changed fuel valves so that it would run from another engine's gas tank and it started again. The fuel gages were bouncing on empty by this time and we were still over water, but nearing land.

Just as we crossed over the coast another engine ran out of gas and quit. The pilot



Ed Doherty's Crew

Top L-R: C. Shuster, ROG; W. Gill, AG; R. Caldwell, AG; R. Hughey, AEG; A. Fazio, AG
Lower L-R: Ed Doherty, P; J. Casperson, CP; A. Sercombe, N; W. Kennedy, B
(Missing from Photo; S. Plummer, AG)

gave the order to bail out. We still had two engines but were losing altitude, and those engines would not run long.

The upper turret gunner, Robert Caldwell, was standing ready to jump from the front bomb bay but was hesitant to go. The navigator, Arthur Sercombe, and I were behind him waiting for him to get out of the way, shouting at him to jump and pounding him on his back. He hesitated a moment and then dropped out. The slipstream carried him out of sight. The radio operator followed him out the rear bomb bay, then the bombardier from the front nose section. The rest of the crew were going out the waist, I thought. The pilot, Eddie Doherty, was doing a heroic thing. He was going to crash land the plane with the engineer who had accidentally opened his chute earlier.

I hated to bail out leaving the pilot and engineer to possible death, but was ordered to go. I crouched over the open bomb bays, looking out that gaping hole towards the earth which was flashing by several thousand feet below. My heart was in my throat. I tried to swallow but couldn't. I lingered another moment and jumped. I pulled the ripcord and watched the clean white silk blossom open. It gave me a terrific jerk. My hat and sunglasses blew off when I left the plane. One of my gloves fell out of my pocket, filled with air and slowly fluttered down beside me, like the hand of a ghost waving it at me. I was slowly floating downwards, swinging gently in the breeze. I noticed the unusual silence which felt strange after being accustomed to the drone of the airplane for eight hours steady.

I took a look about me and there was the airplane humming away in the distance. I watched it for a while and saw someone jump. I was surprised as I thought I had been the last man out. He went down. Down halfway between the plane and the ground and still his chute hadn't opened. I looked away in horror, but sneaked another glance and was greatly relieved to see his chute opened now. Nose gunner, Armand Fazio, landed in the water. He touched down before I did. On my other side I saw three chutes descending. I waved at them and hollered. My voice seemed to echo and carry for miles at that altitude. The man in the closest chute hollered and waved back at me. They were landing now and I could see the chutes on the ground strung out in about half mile intervals forming a straight line,

As I neared the ground the earth seemed to rush up at me with increasing speed. I was drifting slightly and it looked to me that I was going to smack into a rock wall. I had heard you could guide your chute by pulling on certain shroud lines, so I tried it. But I didn't have time to see if it worked for then I hit. I landed on my feet, then collapsed backwards and made a four point landing hitting next on my rump then my elbows, then my back, and finally my head. I lay there a second regaining my wind and senses after the jolt, thinking I must certainly be wounded, but I couldn't feel any pain. I stood up and flexed my muscles to see if anything was broken, but all was intact. I looked around me and breathed a sigh of relief for less than two feet to one side of me was this rock wall - all around me were rocks. I had hit in a small patch of soft earth in which I had left the imprint of my body. My feet had sunk nearly to the ankles in the mud.

I removed my parachute harness, rolled the silk into a bundle, climbed the rock wall to get a view of my surroundings and hiked off carrying my chute with me. I still have it. It will be illegal to send it home, but I will bring it home with me. It is Air Corps tradition to be married with your wife wearing a dress made of the silk that saved your life. I will keep it for that purpose as it will make a beautiful dress. I had a lot of adventures during the next few days, but I am sworn to secrecy as to how I got back. Our whole crew is back alive.

Your son, *Jim*

Post Script by Jim Casperson; circa 1989

We bailed out on the island of Hvar, Yugoslavia. It was north of the Allied lines. German troops visited it on weekends for rest periods as it is a beautiful mountainous resort island. Natives turned us over to Toto's Partisan Army who were friendly to the Americans. They put us up in a resort hotel where the whole crew assembled. We were invited to tea with the town Mayor and assigned an interpreter, Tom Barbovich. We communicated friendliness with smiles and handshakes. They sent us by mail boat to the Isle of Vis, Yugoslavia where the Allies had an emergency airfield. We had a turkey dinner on Thanksgiving at Vis. An Army Air Corps C-47 flew us to Bari, Italy on November 24th where we were debriefed. Standard procedure was to delouse us with white powder. While we were showering they put our clothes into a steam vat. Wool underwear, socks, uniforms, etc, shrunk due to the steam and nothing would fit again so the army had to issue us all new clothing. Most of us were back in combat by December 3rd.

Caldwell broke his knee parachuting and was sent to the States. Charles Schuster cut his head parachuting - but it was not bad. Pilot Eddie Doherty, and the engineer, Ray Hughey, made a ditching in the water along side the mountainous island. The nearly new B-24 was destroyed but they survived. Hughey strained his leg and was limping for awhile. Fisherman picked them up. Later Doherty was awarded the Silver Star for his bravery in ditching the plane and to save Hughey. Back in the States, after the war in Europe, and during a debriefing I was classified as an "evadee" for avoiding capture and given a lot of points towards discharge. It was enough that I was out early and enrolled in college in September 1945, at South Dakota State College

Post Script by the editor:

Jim failed to note that the partisan interpreter, Tom Barbovich that worked with the crew to clear them from Yugoslavia was an acquaintance of the late Ray Hughey's family from Alton, Illinois. Tom kept his identity hidden from the crew, and from Ray Hughey, for fear of uncovering his U.S. military background and becoming less effective for the downed allied airmen. Barbovich had been parachuted in by the Allied forces to work with the Yugoslavian underground. When the war was over and Ray was back in Alton, he by chance discovered the

Continued Lower Section Page 12

BOMBARDIERS OATH

"Mindful of the secret trust about to be placed in me by my Commander-in-Chief, the President of the United States, by whose direction I have been chosen for bombardier training of my country's most priceless military assets, the American bombsight ... I do here, in the presence of Almighty God, swear by the Bombardier's Code of Honor to keep inviolate the secrecy of any and all confidential information revealed to me, and further, to uphold the honor and integrity of the Army Air Forces, if need be, with my life itself."

As part of the last AD-LIB (Issue 18), I wanted to include this Bombardiers Allegiance to his cause. But space limited its inclusion. Colonel Ned Humphreys, founder and president of THE BOMBARDIER, INC. was pleased to see we had included the infamous poem, "The Last of the Bombardiers" in tribute to the diminishing ranks of the infamous Bomb-Aimers.

In his newsletter, "Crosshairs," Colonel Humphreys bemoans the fact that Bombardiers, as such, are a vanishing breed. But he fails to note that Bombardiers, unlike Pilots, Navigators and Gunners, have been around since prehistoric man. Ever since man (and even women) started dropping rocks on bugs, snakes and small animals, there have been Bombardiers.

Pure piloting came about long after it was decided that no good comes from jumping off cliffs and flapping your arms. Pilots had to wait for the Wright brothers to come along.

Navigation may have been used by the cave man to travel from here to there, but for the most part Navi- Guessers, as is still true today, follow the herd.

Gunners may have perfected some skills in gunnery (stone throwing) back then, but little was made of it. A rock of some size could change the mind of a neighbor, if you hit the mouth of the cave - dead center. But that was a Gunner forte then, and not truly perfected till we (mankind) decided on using gunpowder and waging war.

So with Colonel Humphreys indulgence, I'll finish my tribute to all Bombardiers by offering you, (Bombardiers only need apply) the current address of THE BOMBARDIERS, INC. It is: 200 Van Buren Street #2109, Daphne, AL 36526. (See page 22 for picture of earliest "Bombardier.")

AMERICAN LEGION HELPS WITH YOUR MILITARY RECORDS SEARCH

(Editor) From the August 1990 Issue of the American Legion Magazine comes this article about seeking YOUR MILITARY RECORDS.

You can be dead sure that the record of your military service is on file. According to the Department of Defense (DoD), your service record is kept for your lifetime, plus 25 years. If you've ever dealt with VA, you're on file there, too.

Both the DoD and VA will let you see and correct your files. Both insist outsiders can't invade your file. "They don't give out records," Said William Cavaney, director of the DoD's Defense Privacy Office. "Try to get one for someone else and you'll find out."

Once you leave the service, your military records go to the National Personnel Records Center, 9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63172. For a free copy of your file, write the center, give your name, Social Security or service number, date and place of birth, branch of service and date of separation. Be specific about the relationship if you want information about a deceased relative.

To correct an error in your file, contact the Board for the Correction of Military Records for your branch of service. Use Form 180 to speed your request for records, and Form 149 to have records corrected. The nearest Department Service Officer or your American Legion Department headquarters can locate the forms for you.

To check out your VA file, write the VA office nearest you. If there's an error in your file, Marjorie Leandri of VA's Records Management Service said to submit proof to back your position. Even if VA doesn't agree with you, you still can put your version in your file.

Letters home Continued from Page 11

role that Barbovich had played in getting the prompt release and return of the Doherty Crew.

We are indebted to the Casperson family for saving Jim's mail. I have to assume that there were a lot of proud parents, and other family members that did much the same thing. Upon my return my parents presented me with some of my mailings, plus a savings account into which they had scrupulously deposited my extra overseas cash. It is strange to reread those

letters, and to now interpret into them, all the hidden thoughts you tried to pass along with special wordings or phrases. Then, too, beside boredom, we tried to relate a sense of daring to our readers. Ah, we were all so young!





WORDS
FROM THE
FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

UPCOMING REUNION? -- PLUS MORE!

At this point in time we are all concerned with the situation in the Mid-East; namely Iraq. As of this writing the United Nations Forces and the Iraqi Army are in a "stare-down" posture.

Why do I engage you international news when our newsletter should be aimed towards our own past history? Well, in this case it pertains to where we should hold our 1992 Reunion. At the Omaha Reunion we fielded the thought that since we had been around most of the United States, we had, so far, had not been to the West Coast.

Had the times been "normal" we would have gone ahead with securing our 1992 location, out on the "left" coast. But with all the uncertainties that this crisis brings up we are somewhat at a loss as to what would be the best for majority of the members. Gasoline costs for a motor trip may be too costly. Air fares, also due to the escalating fuel costs, may make it difficult, for those that are too distant, to afford.

So, with this uncertain economic condition and an uncertain world situation, we'd like to take a "fall-back" position. *What we want from you is your input.*

Should we proceed with our investigation of the California area? Should we reevaluate the mid west as a more central location, accessible to the majority? Should we go with a location we're familiar with from past experience? Should we choose a completely new site, but still in the mid west?

We realize if we left the decision solely in your hands, you'd pick the nearest sizable town to your immediate location. That would be great, except, as you may know from past reunions, we do have some needs that are necessary to our operation. Of prime importance is the size and location of the hotel. We normally book 300 rooms (in the case of Omaha, 300 was not enough) and expect a banquet facility that can accommodate 600 plus people. All this under one roof. Attractions within the area (military and public) are also needed. Are there enough interested 451st people in the area to make a working committee? There are so many details that we require, that not all proposed cities fall within our required parameters.

Of the cities that have proven worthy of our return, due to past turnouts, are: Chicago, Colorado Springs, Dayton, and Omaha. Cities that are vying for our business are: Tucson, AZ; St. Louis, MO; Niagara Falls, NY; and Nashville, TN. Contacts by others cities have been rejected because of inadequate hotel size, and not enough interesting amenities for our purpose.

Let me have your views. Go with California? Return to one of our past host city (previously listed)? Or go with a new location (also, previously listed)?

We need your views as soon as possible so we may start the "ball a'rolling" towards our 1992 selection.

THE ART OF DONATING

Perhaps I should have titled this section, "The art of ASKING for donations." As you are aware - and in each AD-LIB I've covered the same ground - we are a non-dues paying organization. I have been mildly chastised, over the years, by some members as to why not charge dues to belong to our organization? Each time I counter with how many I figure would drop from our roster, should we institute that policy. As it is there is some difficulty in keeping all our members' addresses updated, without expecting them to take financial responsibility to stay within the fold. Sure some are "riding along" on the generosity of others, but we have expected that throughout our existence. I'd rather that we have a guy listed, even though he isn't carrying his fair share, just so his name and address will be available to his comrades, when requested. It has been my contention, that in time, these members will realize the value of our organization and will eventually "cough up" a donation to keep it going.

To those that read earlier of our benevolent and generous benefactors at the Omaha Reunion, namely Sedge and Mike Hill; Art and Carol Morin; and Archie Piirainen, their contributions have helped to upgrade our computer facilities in this office. I did spend a portion of their tithings for a laser printer (Hewlett Packard Laser Jet III). So now I am not bound to have this, and other materials needing to be type-set, sent out from this office. Now I can, compose, review, correct, and have the majority of the newsletter ready for the printer, right here in my office. No more hot summer, or cold winter excursions to see what the finished product will look like from another laser printer. Now through the kindness of Sedge, Mike, Art, Carol, and Archie, my efforts are made much easier.

But contributions by these kind folks doesn't mean that we can exist forever. We still have to have an on-going effort by you folks to maintain our financial stability. Their donations are just "shot's in the arm" to bring this office up to speed. Postage, stationary, printing of newsletters, and day to day expenses are still demanded of this office. Plus, we need to fulfill our goals of enlarging our current capabilities, and that's where your donations come in. I look forward to hearing from new contributors.

(Footnote: My apologies to those that contributed before, and during, the Omaha Reunion and have not received a letter of thanks. I hope you understand my situation. Working on the Reunion, and all the aspects that are involved, including post-reunion correspondence, made me slip from my normal duties. You guys know who you are - please accept my profound thanks for kind words and donation.)

KARL EICHHORN'S 726th JOURNAL

(We Continue with the Third Installment of Karl's Memoirs)

VOYAGE TO THE WAR

We were now embarked on our mission overseas, but what of the Group's aircraft? Actually, we in the ground crew had no knowledge at that time as to the whereabouts or routing of our planes, which we would not see again for almost seven weeks. The aircrews and planes started leaving Fairmont AAF the last week of November, through the first week of December. Each plane crew was on its own - they did not fly in any sort of formation. The route they took was generally first to Miami, then down the Caribbean Island chain to South America. They then flew along the South American coast to Natal, Brazil, then across the ocean to Dakar in French West Africa, and finally to Constantine in Algeria. The Crew Chief for each plane flew with the air crew to provide service when needed. After they reached the field at Constantine they flew more practice missions from there until they finally joined us at our assigned base in Italy.

Our ship was a Liberty Ship constructed in April, named the S.S. JOHN S. PILLSBURY. She had two convoy trips and three enemy aircraft to her credit. The crew was Merchant Marine and there was a Navy gun crew aboard to man the armament which consisted of several 20mm anti-aircraft guns, a five-inch gun on the bow and a three-inch stern gun. The ship was 441 feet long and could carry a cargo of nearly 11,000 tons. Our ship had some deck cargo but most was in the holds.

We were assigned our quarters in the No. 2 hold forward. An iron stairway led down to the hold, which was a large square area, clear in the center, with bunks lining all sides. These "bunks" were simply canvas slings mounted on a steel framework and were stacked six high to the ceiling. There could have been no more than about 18 inches between bunks and one had to climb up and swing one's body horizontally to get in. Of necessity, all of our gear was piled in the center of the hold. The floor consisted of removable hatches, under which cargo was loaded down to the ship's bottom. I cannot recall how many men were in one hold, but probably between 75 and 100. There was a rumor that we were sleeping over tons of ammunition, but no one really believed "they" would do that! We were to learn later that "they" would and did!

There was only cold salt water for washing, and we had some "salt water soap," which was almost useless. The supply of fresh water for drinking was no problem. The officers, of course, couldn't mix with the enlisted men and the entire aft half of the ship was reserved for them. A large sign was placed in the companion way on each side of the bridge which said "Officers' Country," and we were not allowed beyond that point. No doubt they had comfortable quarters with hot water and probably ate in the ship's Officers' Mess.

Our ship left the dock at 1300 and moved out into Chesapeake Bay where we anchored. We were surrounded by scores of freighters and tankers that would be part of our convoy, which, we were told, would be the largest yet to cross the Atlantic. A Wasp-class carrier and two cruisers, one light, one heavy, moved slowly past us into open water. It was fascinating and exciting experience for a nineteen year old kid! That night on the ship was my last in the U.S. for 18 months. We remained at anchor in the Bay all day on 4 December. Most of us spent all of our time on deck, since the ventilation in the hold was so poor. I stood in the line about an hour to get a couple candy bars at the ship's small P.X. We were served only two meals per day and they were not memorable. We finally weighed anchor at 2300, but did not move out into deep water until 0200 in the morning. It had been very foggy all day and we had seen little of the other ships.

We arose on 5 December to a sight I will never forget. There, spread out from left to right and as far back towards the horizon as I could see, was our convoy, mostly Liberties and oil tankers. Our ship was in the second row from the front and about in the middle, as far as I could tell. A navy blimp followed us out to sea for half the day, then left for land. Our escort consisted primarily of U.S. Destroyers and light cruisers. We were joined in the afternoon by a number of Canadian corvettes, as well. These were so small by comparison with the larger warships and they bobbed about like corks and seemed to be always rolling, even in a mild swell. The sea this first day was choppy with a light swell and the sky was clear and blue. That night the Gibbous moon turned the sea to silver and the ships beside us and to our stern loomed out clearly, though no lights showed. Occasionally we could see signal lights from the escort vessels but there were no sounds other than the constant throbbing of our engines. It seemed an ideal night for a U-Boat skipper to earn his Knight's Cross!

I was one of the last group to be assigned to Hold #2 and, as a consequence, I ended up in a top bunk, much to my disgust. However, as soon as we reached the open sea, with its constant swell, I was very glad to be on top! For within 24 hours probably more than three quarters of the men in the hold had become seasick, and many of them would remain sick for the entire voyage. When they got suddenly sick in their bunks it was the guys lower down who were "in the line of fire," so to speak. Being on top, I escaped that! However, the mess and smell in that hold was something I could never adequately describe. The efforts to clean up everyday were largely in vain. After to or three days I took to sleeping on the deck, in spite of the cold wind and spray. I found a spot between a couple packing crates of deck cargo and ventilator where I could curl up in my blankets and overcoat and be fairly comfortable. To assure that I would not be washed away by a large wave, I had

a piece of heavy hemp rope which looped around my waist and then tied to a deck fitting. I also had a sharp knife to cut the rope just in case some U-Boat zeroed in on us! All this was quite against regulations, of course, but no one ever caught me.

On our second day out, our Executive Officer, Major Raymond N. Marshall, told us we were going to Algeria and that the trip would take three weeks. Thus, my guess that we were going to Italy was correct, since we certainly wouldn't be operating against Germany from Algeria. That had to be simply the first stop. Late that afternoon we had a submarine alert. The entire convoy abruptly changed course and the Navy destroyers charged off to the south. One corvette almost disappeared in the waves. I was amazed at how quickly the destroyers turned, banking sharply as they went. So far as we could tell, nothing of any significance resulted from this alert.

Pearl Harbor Day dawned cold and windy with a very rough sea. Waves crashed over the fore deck and there was constant spray. I stood at the bow much of the day dodging waves in my raincoat and topcoat. The worst of the storm passed by evening and the sky was beautiful with a near-full moon. Even with the moon the sky was so dark that stars were very visible. The next two or three days were relatively calm with clear or only partly cloudy skies. During the day we were fascinated by the dolphins which played on our bow wake for hours on end. I remember being worried that the ship might hit one but the dolphins were far faster and more maneuverable than our plodding Liberty, which was probably doing about eight knots. I could never understand a lot of the guys who seemed to spend all their time in the hold playing blackjack or poker, without ever seeing what I thought so enjoyable.

By 10 December the small ship's P.X. was all sold out and on the same day someone stole my mess kit which I had kept on my bunk. Without the mess kit I could not eat and actually missed all my meals for the next day until a friend let me borrow his after he had eaten. The usual procedure in the army, in a case like that, was to simply steal someone else's mess kit, but that was something I would never do.

The next two days continued very rough and windy. At nights I watched the moon come and go behind the rapidly moving storm clouds. The night of the twelfth some of us decided to investigate our hold after supper was over. We lifted a couple of the hatches and I, being smaller and lighter than the others, let myself be lowered into the top of the cartons and cases I could see at first contained canned foods and "K" and "C" field rations. There were cartons of canned pears and peaches and we passed one of each, along with some "C" rations, up to our area to be enjoyed for evening snacks. Most of us were getting rather tired of our kitchen chow. Thereafter, these evening "Pantry Raids" became a routine exercise and we had something different to eat almost every night! The evidence, in the form of cans and boxes, were cast overboard during the night. The following night I and another fellow made a different sort of discovery while we were searching around in the hold. Around the edges and under the mound of food boxes were what must have been hundreds of wooden crates filled with

75mm howitzer shells! We were quartered over a veritable ammunition dump! We realized then that our lifeboat drills would be no help if a well-placed torpedo found its mark on the PILLSBURY.

We all had some natural concern about U-Boats even though ship losses in the North Atlantic were very much reduced by the end of 1943, over what they had been only eight or ten months earlier. What we did not realize at the time was that the Allies had essentially won the Battle of the Atlantic in May when Admiral Donitz recalled most of his submarines from the Atlantic because of high losses. Those great losses in the wolf-packs were the direct result of Britain's ability to read Donitz's enigma-encoded messages to his ship's commanders. These facts, of course, I learned only long after the war from reading histories of those days.

On 14 December the Navy crew held some gunnery practice, test-firing the 20mm A.A. guns and the larger bow and stern guns. Very impressive!

Every clear night, during the period of the waning moon, I enjoyed sitting on deck watching the stars. At home father and I had often sat in the yard to stargaze - he had taught me many of the constellations. I was especially impressed with the darkness of the sky and the consequent brilliance of the stars in the middle of the Atlantic. I noted in my journal that I observed many meteors on the night of the 14th. The following night I saw something even more dramatic - and ominous, as well. While sitting on the foredeck I suddenly heard the wail of a siren coming from an escort destroyer stationed in front of the convoy. I stood up to see what was going on and saw two destroyers charging off to the southwest at flank speed. Then way back on the horizon I could see a ruddy glow which increased steadily and reflected from the low hanging clouds. At about the same time the entire convoy made a sharp turn to port. I watched the glow for some time, but it gradually faded as we moved away. I never learned exactly what happened that night - though, of course, I suspected that a ship in the rear of our convoy had been torpedoed. Several other fellows on deck saw the event also. The next morning I asked several of the merchant seamen about it, but they claimed to know nothing. A sailor from the Navy gun crew gave me the same response. We had noted earlier that the ship's crew was very close-mouthed and seldom discussed more than the weather with the G.I.s. I suspect that they were under instructions never to discuss convoy matters with their military passengers.

It continued to be windy, with a very rough sea. There was another gun practice on the 15th, and on the 17th we had a submarine alert. That same day we were ordered to wear our steel helmets at all times while on deck, along with our life jackets, as usual. On the 18th I recorded that the water was unusually phosphorescent in the bow wake. On the 19th the convoy slowed its speed significantly and many of the ships shifted their relative positions. Ours ended up in the southernmost column some distance back from the leading row of ships. That afternoon I saw the first gulls wheeling over the ships and knew we were close to Africa. It was very dark and cold that

night with the stars again brilliant - I searched the horizon for lights, in vain.

On the morning of 20 December there were many gulls in the air and at noon we first sighted a faint outline of mountains on the eastern horizon. Africa, at last! It seemed that we moved very little all that day as the coast never appeared to get appreciably closer. We passed through the Strait of Gibraltar early in the morning of the 21st. I was on deck, as usual, and peering into the darkness, I could catch no glimpse of the rock itself. We sailed along the African coast all day and could see only mountain ranges which loomed dimly on the horizon. That night we anchored somewhere off-shore and could see what appeared to be lighted buoys near the coast.

On 22 December we remained anchored all day outside the breakwaters of Oran. It was a truly spectacular view - one which is still sharp and clear in my memory to this day. The Mediterranean Sea was a beautiful blue-green color with a frosting of whitecaps. The buildings of the city were a brilliant white against the blue sky. To the east of the city steep cliffs rose to what appeared to be a high escarpment, while to the west rose a rather rugged and high mountain with some sort of building at the summit. A ship's rumor had it that we would not land at Oran, but would go on to Sicily.

However, on the morning of the 23rd we moved into the easternmost harbor of Oran and were berthed to a wharf by two tugs. There were several warships in the harbor, including a French battleship, three torpedoed ships in dry dock and the beached half of a tanker. While waiting to leave the ship, we threw candy and cigarettes to natives who were working on coal barges nearby. About noon we disembarked and were taken by truck convoy through Oran to a staging area about 12 kilometers from the city. The ride through the city was something of a shock. Instead of clean, bright and beautiful image it presented to us while anchored off-shore, the city was quite dirty and gave off an aroma which I could never adequately describe! It was fascinating, however, with crowds of people representing probably a score of nationalities and uniformed men from virtually every Allied nation and colonial outpost.

At our staging area we were assigned to large pyramidal tents on a hillside which overlooked a beautiful valley. There were Arabs wondering about everywhere, many of them herding goats. Ever after we referred to this rather miserable place as "Goat Hill." We were issued G.I. cots and two extra blankets. Since we already had two blankets per man, we could not understand the issue of extra blankets until later that night when the desert cold settled upon us. It was really frigid and we spent a miserable night - I recorded in my journal that I could have used six blankets! It rained all day on the 24th and the whole area turned into a sea of sticky mud. That night was a Christmas Eve to be remembered. We huddled around an open wood fire in our overcoats and raincoats, wet, cold and miserable, while we heated "C" ration stew and beans over the fire and sang Christmas carols. I am sure there wasn't a man there who didn't think of family and home, with a lump in his throat.

On Christmas we had no formations and a number of men went into a local village, St. Luis, to buy wine. Many of them were more used to beer than wine, with the result that there were a bunch of sick, drunk soldiers by evening. During the day we noticed a lot of Arabs wearing curious white robes. It turned out that these were G.I. muslin mattress covers which soldiers had sold to the Arabs for the equivalent of ten or fifteen dollars. The new owners cut arm and head holes in the covers and wore them like desert sheiks - it was a strange and wondrous sight! We had turkey for supper on Christmas, but it was not a great meal, as the cooks had to work over an open field kitchen in the rain and the food was soggy and cold by the time we got it. That night I had to serve on guard duty from 2000 to 2200 and from 0200 to 0400 the next morning. We had to watch the Arabs very closely, especially at night as they would steal anything they could carry off. Fortunately, just pointing a carbine at them would send them scurrying off and there was never a need to fire at them. On 26 December we were told that we would depart on a three day voyage the following day - obviously to Italy, though we were not told our destination. We spent most of that day and evening packing our gear.

The morning of 27 December we were up at 0400, packed our blanket rolls and packs, turned in our extra blankets and cots and left on trucks at 1000. We again drove through Oran but this time we passed through a long tunnel in the mountain which rose immediately to the west of the city and entered the western part of the harbor which, it turned out, was operated by the British. We got off the trucks at a motor pool and had to walk about three kilometers to our ship. We passed by the French battleship Lorraine which, I remember, had curious gun mounts in the side of the hull, as well as in the usual deck turrets. One sight I still remember was of a French sailor walking along the wharf with a long loaf of French bread under each arm. The bread was not protected by any sort of wrapping and was probably fresh from some bakery.

Our new ship was a Dutchman, the "Johann DeWitt," a two-stacker of perhaps 12 to 15 thousand tons. She must have been a passenger liner on the Atlantic run before the war. We shared the ship with a group of Combat M.P.'s, some infantry troops and about half of the 449th Bomb Group. The ship was crowded. Our group was assigned to hold E-5 where we would sleep in hammocks which were rolled up and stowed during the day to make more room. That evening we were detailed to carry our extra duffel bags and all the officers' bags from the dock, where they had been dumped, into the ship, where we tossed them into a deep hold amidships.

We left our dock early on the 28th and anchored in the harbor until our convoy could form up. The convoy consisted only of four large troopships (all former liners), two of which were towing barrage balloons, and a fairly large escort of British destroyers and corvettes. There were no freighters or tankers in the group. We left Oran harbor about noon and sailed along the coast of Africa all day. As soon as I could I started exploring the DeWitt. She was very large, compared with the Pillsbury and even had a barber shop. The crew were all Dutch and

Dutch money was used to pay for any services. I still have some Dutch coins from that trip! There was also a British Army contingent aboard the ship and we learned that they were there to prevent the Dutchmen from trying to run the ship into a port in the Netherlands in an attempt to rescue fellow citizens from the German occupation. The British, of course, did not want to take the chance of losing a valuable troopship as the result of some such desperate venture. During my exploration of the ship I accidentally walked into "Officer Country" and saw the luxurious cabin accommodations and the liveried Indian flunkies who were scurrying about waiting on our fellow soldiers of higher rank and more gentlemanly demeanor.

The meals on the DeWitt were fairly good, except that we had to get use to a lot of mutton and tea. We quickly discovered that the English crackers served were well populated with weevils and so we fed these to the Mediterranean fish.

On 29 December we passed Bizerte in the afternoon and then turned from the coast towards Sicily. During the late evening we passed Palermo and could see searchlights and tracer shells coursing across the sky, apparently in search of some German intruders. The following morning we were passing coastal Italian islands and soon passed the Isle of Capri and entered Naples harbor about noon, where we remained anchored all day. What a lovely view, in spite of the gray misty day! The harbor was crescent-shaped expanse of blue water with the city of Naples spread out in the center. Behind the city rose the great bulk of Vesuvius, its upper half almost totally obscured by clouds. That evening we stood on deck and watched the lights of the city, surprised that there was no blackout in effect.

Again on the 31st, we remained at anchor in the harbor all day. It was cold and raining with a strong chop in the harbor. We hauled our duffel bags from our hold onto the deck. In the evening we celebrated New Year's Eve with ginger beer from the ship's exchange. On New Year's Day the weather cleared and it was somewhat warmer. All of Mt. Vesuvius was visible, its peak covered with snow, and a curling plume of smoke drifted off with the breeze. The volcano, the city and the bay spread out before us was a glorious vision - just like the travel posters. The delay in landing, we were told, was caused by a fouled anchor chain. During the day numerous small boats, each with several people aboard, were rowed out to our ship for the purpose of begging food and cigarettes. We could see in the distance that there were at least a dozen ships sunk in the harbor near the wharf area.

After lunch on 2 January the ship weighed anchor and moved towards the dock area. Our "dock" turned out to be a ship which had been sunk and was lying on her side near the wharf. Across the ship's hull the engineers had constructed a temporary gangway to the wharf. The entire wharf area was littered with the wreckage of war and many buildings nearby were in ruins from bombings. Since the ship could not lower a gang-plank, we disembarked via large cargo nets over the side. It was a bit tricky with full packs, helmets and weapons. We moved to the wharf area where we left our personal gear under armed guard, then returned to the ship to unload all of our duffel and

barracks bags and our TAT (To Accompany Troops) equipment.

We worked until 0100 unloading baggage and equipment. A small winch was used to remove the equipment from the hold, after which it was loaded into a large cargo net, then lowered via ship's crane to a lighter, or barge, that was tied alongside the ship. It was during this operation that we managed to get a bit of soldiers' revenge against a few of our officers who were particularly obnoxious. When we saw a piece of baggage which belonged to one of these fellows, we simply heaved it over the side without benefit of the cargo net. They made an awesome sound when they crashed into the deck of the lighter! The guys on the lighter reported that after several such impacts they detected the distinctive aroma of whiskey. The breakage of those illegal bottles must have imparted a heady scent to several fancy dress uniforms! Naturally, I made certain that Lt. Harry Luhrs' bags, one of which contained my camera, were carefully lowered via cargo net. We enjoyed a peaceful sleep aboard the DeWitt that night.

Early on 3 January we started to load all of our gear and equipment on trucks. I was assigned as a guard on one of the first trucks to leave, while the other fellows remained on the wharf to continue loading. We drove through Naples, past many bombed-out buildings, to a former orphanage in the town of Bagnoli, north of Naples.

This complex consisted of several buildings, most of which were heavily camouflaged with elaborate paintings of natural scenes, such as woods, fields, etc. It was probably done by the Italians, rather than the Germans, both of whom had used the buildings before the Allies captured Naples. The buildings were bare concrete inside, cold and damp, and not at all inviting as a place to live. The latrine was the most incredible facility I had ever seen. It was a completely barren room, long and narrow, with no fixtures of any sort. Running the full length of each was a tiled gutter, or channel, perhaps 18 inches wide and two-and-one-half to three feet deep. A stream of water flowed along the bottom of each channel. I assume it went directly out into the sea without any treatment. I could not but think how easy it would be to lose one's balance and fall in! Outside the building were a number of tiled sinks for washing in cold water.

Fortunately, as it turned out, we did not have to spend even a single night at this facility. After we had unloaded all of our trucks, we were told that we would be moving out that same night. More trucks arrived in the afternoon and we started reloading. We were interrupted once by an air raid alert. After supper we were issued additional ammunition and at 2300 we loaded into the trucks and the convoy started off. It was a dark, rainy and very cold night. We drove in an easterly direction on back roads, using only the blackout lights on the trucks. These were almost invisible little blue slits of light which were located in the tail and parking lights of each truck.

No more than an hour after we had left it became apparent that our truck was weaving about the road more than was

justified by the terrain. Sure enough, at the first rest stop we found that our motor pool driver had already finished one bottle of wine and was working on the second. The officer in charge of our truck immediately put him under arrest and asked if any of us could drive the truck. It turned out that I was the only one who had driven one of those large 6 X 6 cargo trucks, so I got the job.

It was a miserable night. With the rain and blackout conditions it was next to impossible to see beyond the vehicle in front. In addition, the roads became extremely bad. We were driving somewhat just behind the front of the Fifth and Eight Armies, as I could hear artillery in the distance and see occasional flashes against the mountains. The road in places were so muddy and soft that we had to use low range and all-wheel drive. There was bomb or shell damage in many places and the repair work had been hasty. We crossed a couple mountain ranges and the road in places was nothing more than a trail. Once the lead driver must have departed from our planned route and we were redirected by the combat Military Police. I not only did not know the route but I did not even know our destination, so I didn't dare lose sight of the truck ahead.

We drove all day, 4 January, through rather picturesque farming country. Some of the towns we passed through had been badly bombed and shelled. All were poor and shabby and had the same depressing appearance. For meals we ate cold "C" and "K" rations along the way during rest stops. About noon we passed through Foggia where we picked up new drivers. Finally at midnight, after being on the road over 24 hours, we reached our destination, a little crossroads town called Gioia del Colle. Its location is at the very upper part of the "heel" of Italy's "boot," almost due south of the port city of Bari. It was cold and raining hard when we arrived. In the darkness we had no idea where we were except that we could see that we were parked in a sea of deep mud. We had no choice but to get what sleep we could sitting up in the trucks.

It was still raining the next morning - one of the coldest, wettest and most dreary days I have ever known. Our kitchen equipment had become lost in the move and we had to eat with the 724th Squadron, all of us sweating out the very long chow lines. We found we were located at a former Italian, and later German, airfield which was now being used by an R.A.F. Hurricane fighter squadron. In the afternoon we started to set up our tents on a very muddy slope. It was an impossible situation. Our tent pegs were missing and we had no hand tools at all. Our Executive Officer, Major Marshall, took one look at the mess we were in and told us to wait while he scouted for a better tent area in a Jeep. It was just about dark when he returned and led us to a far better site. He had found a former German Barracks area where there were three dilapidated wood buildings, some stone huts and several unfinished stone barracks. Though there were no windows in the wood buildings and no roofs on the stone barracks, all had stone floors and the place looked like the Waldorf to us! Major Marshall was a stern and gruff officer but he did his best to take care of his troops. Searching for this tent site caused us all to miss supper that

night and we went to sleep hungry and in the rain, lying on the stone floors of the old barracks, sheltered only by our raincoats. For some reason the Army never issued ponchos to troops in World War II, and a simple rain coat wasn't much help under such conditions. But at least we weren't sleeping in the mud, as were the Fifth and Eight Army troops at the front.

For the next three days we all worked on squadron details getting equipment unloaded, setting up a mess tent (though our kitchen equipment was still missing), and an orderly room tent and other necessary chores. It was difficult, cold and muddy work, but no one complained, as we had to get our camp area set up and organized. In our spare time we started to set up our living tents inside of the unfinished stone barracks. We were still sleeping on the ground in the open.

On Sunday, 9 January, our Armament Section had to pull 24 hour guard duty, but we managed to move into the three tents we had set up that evening. There were nine men to a tent. On the 10th we finished the mess tent and began to spread gravel around the area to make walk-ways through the mud. We had supper in our own mess that night. It got dark at 1800 and since we had no lights all there was nothing much to do in the evening except crawl into our tents, out of the weather.

The weather cleared on the 11th and we got one more tent set up so we would be less crowded. Major Marshall flew to Algiers that day to confer with our Group Commander, Colonel Eaton. It continued very cold, with the night time temperatures in the 20's.

I recorded 13 January as a Red Letter Day in my journal. Our P.X. was opened; we were issued straw for our mattress covers to make the ground feel a bit better. I was paid 4577 Lira in invasion currency (the exchange was one lira = one cent); and finally at our first mail call. I received 29 letters and four packages, one of which contained two rolls of film. That evening I went to a movie at the Service Club in Gioia.

On the 14th I was on guard duty in the morning. We were told that we had to be all ready for arrival of the air echelon within 48 hours. All of us were on some sort of squadron duty doing our best to get the camp and line areas in order. I was on a crew that had to construct a latrine. We dug a pit three feet square at the top, five feet square at the bottom and about ten feet deep. Over it we constructed a rather substantial "two-holer" structure with the usual half-moon cutout in the door. Wiring was strung to all the tents but as yet your portable generator had not been located among all the unopened crates.

The weather continued to be terrible. We had rain, snow and sleet all intermixed from day to day and the mud was beyond description. It turned out that the winter of 43/44 was the worst in Italy in over forty years, and it was particularly bitter for the troops at the front, fighting over some of the most difficult terrain in Europe. At the first the only warmth we had was from open wood fires made from the packing crates in which our equipment was shipped. That soon ran out and there was no other wood available anywhere near our field. I don't know who came up with the idea, but sometime during our stay at

Gioia del Colle we began to construct stoves for our tents which burned - not wood - but 100 octane aviation gasoline! We took 50 gallon oil drums and cut them in half with a torch. A circular hole was then cut in the closed end for a stove pipe which was cobbled together from pieces of scrap aluminum and food cans. The pipe extended through an opening in the top of the tent. The burner was made of a piece of ordinary one inch iron pipe, about eight inches long, one end of which was hammered and welded closed. A long copper tube, brazed to the other end of the burner, was run outside the tent where it was brazed to a smaller steel drum mounted on a wood support, which served as a fuel tank. A shut-off petcock was installed in the fuel line and five or six very tiny holes were then drilled through the burner tube on the top side. To operate the stove a small amount of fuel was allowed to run into the stove where it was ignited to preheat the burner. This was the critical time - if too much fuel ran in we risked a mini-explosion, not to mention the possibility of burning a tent down, which did happen on a couple occasions. If the priming fuel was insufficient the burner would not be heated enough to vaporize the fuel and the entire operation had to be repeated. After pre-heating the burner, the valve was just cracked open to allow a small flow of gasoline. The hot iron burner pipe vaporized the incoming fuel and a hot, pale blue flame was emitted from each of the small holes in the burner, much like a Coleman camp stove. When these improvised stoves were made and operated properly, they really worked beautifully and kept the tents cozy warm during those bitter winter evenings. We never operated them during the night, for safety reasons.

Strangely, the Air Force never offered any objection to the use of these unauthorized, non-regulation G.I. stoves, or to the use of thousands of gallons of high test aviation fuel which must have been consumed in them over a two year period. And, of course, every drop of this fuel had to be transported across the Atlantic by tankers, with the ever present risk to ships and lives. In those days most Americans seemed to think that we had access to an infinite supply of all natural resources.

Another example of the profligate use of gasoline by Americans was in the washing of planes which I observed at Gioia. All aircraft engines used in World War II tended to spew out varying amounts of oil during flight. Some of this oil naturally ended up on the wings and fuselage, and, at times, would build up a heavy residue which posed a potential fire hazard when the engine backfired. Thus, it was necessary to clean this oil residue off the plane surfaces on a regular basis. When the British and New Zealand ground crews cleaned their Hurricane fighters they got a small quantity of 80 octane vehicle gasoline - NOT 100 octane aviation fuel - in a can and washed their planes down by hand with a rag. However, when our mechanics washed down B-24s they simply drew bucketfuls of 100 octane fuel from drainage petcocks on the plane and literally sloshed it on the plane with smaller cans. It was not only extremely wasteful, but didn't clean as well as the method of our British cousins, who had not been reared in the land of plenty.

On Sunday the 16th there was a U.S.O. show in a hangar at

the field. In general, we had only second or third rate U.S.O. shows in Italy - we never saw any first line entertainers such as Bob Hope, or other Hollywood luminaries. Usually we had shows put on by a bunch of vaudeville has-beens. But this show was different and I shall always remember it as the night Ella Logan sang to us. She sang her heart out on a makeshift stage with a small band, wearing a pretty summer dress to boost our spirits. But as she sang we could all see that she was shivering in the sub-freezing temperature. Finally one of the fellows up front dashed up on the stage and put his fleece lined leather jacket around her. Then, between numbers, one of our cooks ran out and brought back a hot cup of tea for her. Before her next song we saw her dab away tears from her face. It was a memorable evening.

On 18 January I and a buddy, Bob Keup, had a pass and went into Bari, hitching rides on British trucks. We went to the P.X. and Red Cross Service Club where we got a shave, haircut and shampoo for 35 cents. What a luxury! We had hoped they might have a shower, as none of us had had a bath of any sort since 3 December; but no luck. This large port city was in a sorry state; shabby, smelly, people in rags and not a thing for sale in any of the shops, except for cheap red wine. We met and walked around with a soldier from New Zealand who had fought with the Eight Army across North Africa and had been away from his home for nearly three years. He had only more fighting to look forward to in Italy, with no end in sight.

Squadron detail work continued on the 19th and on the 20th we welcomed our planes - all 62 of them - which arrived from Algeria. Now, at last, we could begin to do the work for which we had been trained. Work which would be hard and deadly, both for our people and for the soldiers and civilians who would suffer under our forthcoming attacks.

(Continued next issue)

CROSSING



*Through the white danger of the crowded waves
A convoy plows within its iron lines.
One soldier wonders how much love she saves
For him back home; another squints for signs
Of land: another throws his dinner up;
Another reads "Ten Murdered," at the rail;
Another dreams of coffee in a cup
With cream and sugar and a buttered snail;
A few have pocketed the Testament
The smiling Chaplains pressed into their hands
As they shot craps with marvelous content.
One fat dark boy is careful where he stands:
No one can see the tears form in his eyes --
The ships continue while his father dies.*

Taken from "Pupent Poets" Italy 1945

Written by Ray Reynolds (Unit unknown)

BOOKS I HAVE KNOWN: --- OR, LET'S REVIEW AUTHORS

BOOKS / AUTHORS IN REVIEW

Over the course of our post-war entity we have uncovered several exceptional authors within our 451st ranks. Two of these writers have been prolific in their efforts to give the public books of interest and merit. Several others are attempting to scale the ladder of success as "first timers."



Lt. Elliott Arnold
Intelligence Officer,
1912-1980

One such "accepted" author was the late Elliott Arnold. Lt. Arnold joined the 726th upon conception at Davis-Monthan Field, in the capacity of Intelligence Officer. Already an author of note he was "tapped" by Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, Mediterranean Air Commander, upon our arrival in Italy, to go on detached service for the purpose of collaborating in writing a the official air history about the Mediterranean Theater of operation. The book that evolved from this effort was called, "Mediterranean Sweep," (compilation of war stories) Later in the war General

George C. Kenney, of the Pacific Theater, tapped Captain Arnold to do a similar book from that area. That effort was called "Big Distance." Another book that came from the talent of Mr. Arnold (post war) was "A Night Of Watching." This story relates the efforts that the Danish people made towards evacuating some 8,000 Jews from Denmark when the Germans decided that they were to be sent to concentration camps and in time exterminated. I read the book when it was first released (in 1967) and was engrossed by its story. (I would have been even more impressed had I known that Elliott Arnold was/had been part of our Group.)

Arnold also wrote the book "Blood Brother." This was a tale of the old west. It was one of the first literary attempts to put the Indian on an equal footing with the white man. It all takes place in the area of Arizona, home of the Apache Indians. "Blood Brother" later became a TV serial called "Broken Arrow." Ah Ha! that caught your attention, didn't it! Another of Arnold's books that grace my library is "The Camp Grant Massacre." Another story of his beloved South West. Elliott Arnold fourth marriage (and there were five marriages) was to the talented actress, Glynis Johns. Arnold died after a brief illness on 13 May 1980.

Now we come to our living (hopefully living, since I haven't heard from him in some time) contemporary author, William C. Anderson, LTC (Retired), 725th Pilot. Andy has put forth some excellent works over the years. His most recent, "Bomber Crew 369," puts into novel form his visions of WW-II, and the 451st

Bomb Group. With a certain amount of artistic embellishment, Andy weaves a fascination tale of combat, camaraderie, and concubine comforts with curvaceous companions. (Not so heavy on the latter, but a little more emphasis on the former.)

William C. has also turned out movie quality works. "Bat-21" only recently became a screen adaptation of his novel under the same name. Again a fine reproduction (with some artistic license) of an actual happening. The movie is now available on Video.

W.C. has done some other works that have become notable as literary successes; "Hurricane Hunter" (also a TV movie); "Penelope;" "Adam;" "M-1." And one that caught my eye, "Home Sweet Home Has Wheels, or Please Don't Tailgate the Real Estate." A story about traveling across Canada in a travel trailer with wife, kids and dogs.

New to the category of 451st established authors is Julius A. Altvater, 727th Bombardier. As a first timer, Al, has put forth a worthy effort about his experiences when his crew; Crew #68, (Mike Boyle, Pilot) were shot down on 5 May 1944 and subsequently POW'ed.

Al brings you through his early youth, his military ordeals, and to his final realization that he had a story to tell. His book, if still available, is called "Off we go Down in Flames." It sold for \$9.45 (S & H Inc). You can write Julius "Al"

Altvater at: 16401 Mallory Drive, Fort Bragg, CA 95437.

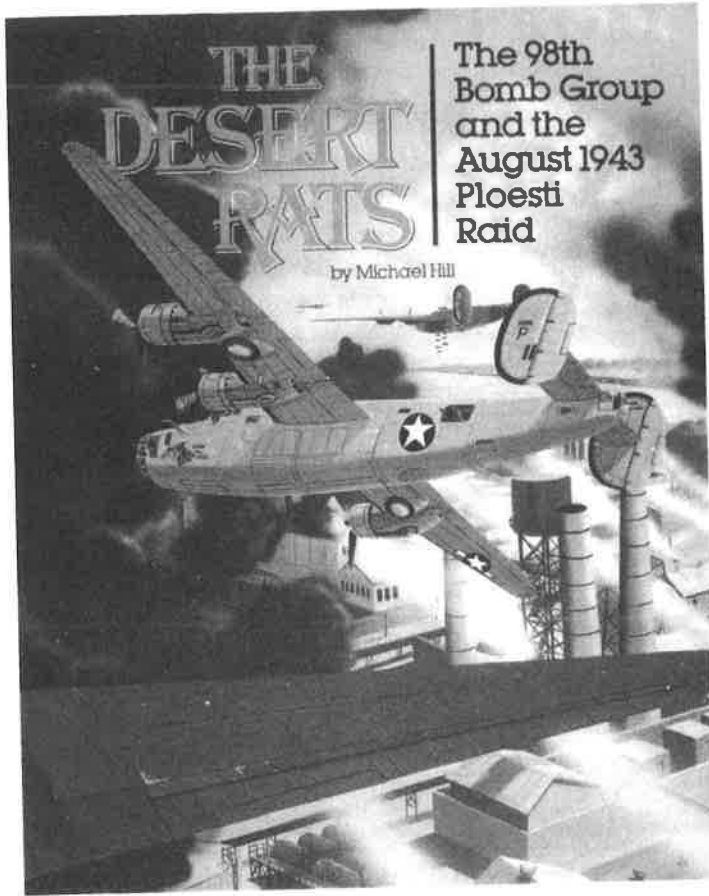


John P. and Mary Hollis

John P. Hollis, Jr., 726th Navigator, also falls into the category of "new" in the book authoring profession. Completely apart from the military theme, John has written on the premise that philosophy of our environment is necessary to the continuing existence of *Homo sapiens* in the form we want it to remain - or in a sense, to improve. The book is called "'Belonging,' or, Everything You Wanted to Know about



W.C. "Andy" and Dortha Anderson



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Existentialism but Didn't Know Who to Ask." I call it a profound book, certainly worth the effort to read.


These are the four, KNOWN, authors that have been spawned out of the 451st roster. Each has given the public something of merit in the world of "word-smithing."

Now from the realm of "our" KNOWN 451st authors, we dip into the "not so KNOWN" and rather new wartime writers.

First off we have to note that *this* author as "not unknown to us 451st'ers." He is the co-author to our "Fight'n Four Fifty First Bomb Group (H)" book. Mike Hill, Honorary 727th Member, along with his dad, Sedge Hill, worked long and hard on our particular tome. But interwoven with those efforts Mike has managed to do research and writing on a book about the 98th Bomb Group. The book tells of the infamous mission of 1 August 1943 - the Ploesti Low Level Mission. Mike's efforts

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Please ship _____ copies of Cuckoo Over Vienna to:

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone (in case we need to call about order.) _____

Authors autograph yes no Personalize my copy to: _____

are now complete, and his book is being marketed (note purchase order and promotion page). Here's your chance to help Mike along the road of success (and authorship), and to note the efforts of what "Killer Kane's" boys accomplished prior to our high altitude missions. Mike has done numerous articles, of military nature, in aviation magazines.

Now let me introduce you to Claude L. Porter, LTC USAF (Retired), former member of the 459th Bomb Group. I have two allegiances with Claude; one is he was at Gowen Field, Idaho at the same time I was (us and Colonel Kane) ; second, he wrote a damn fine book called "Cuckoo Over Vienna." His "one way ticket" to Ploesti on the 28th of July 1944, relates in great detail, his experiences. The term "Cuckoo" was derived from the signal put over the German "Volksradio" when an air raid was pending for Vienna, where Porter was then incarcerated. It's a good book, with much detail.

Not to leave out the ladies of our wartime experiences, let me introduce you to Nurse, 1st Lt. June Wandrey, author of "Bedpan Commando." She offers behind the scenes glimpses

of what we, as perhaps patients or even bystanders, were not privy to - had we the misfortune to incur illness or injuries. Not meant as a book of humor, nevertheless it conveys a nurse's inner feelings of despair that is often masked by humorous thoughts from within, and matched with a pleasant smile on the outside. I've met a few like that during my infrequent visits to the 60th Station Hospital in Foggia, but never saw any during my semi-infrequent visits to Doc Wagner's Group Clinic.

Nurse Wandrey served from Fort Custer, Michigan to North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France and into Germany. She saw the horrors war, right up to and including Allach and Dachau. And in the fulfillment of her duties garnered 7 major Battle Stars. Her method of conveying her message is by way of "letters home," and journal inserts. If you feel this type of reading isn't for you (you are much too macho) then perhaps your wife, or other female member of your family will. I'm sure that by time they get it done, you'll be reading it, too. But - not ordering the book will put you guys to a disadvantage - you'll miss an important adjunct these dedicated girls took in keeping us a'going.

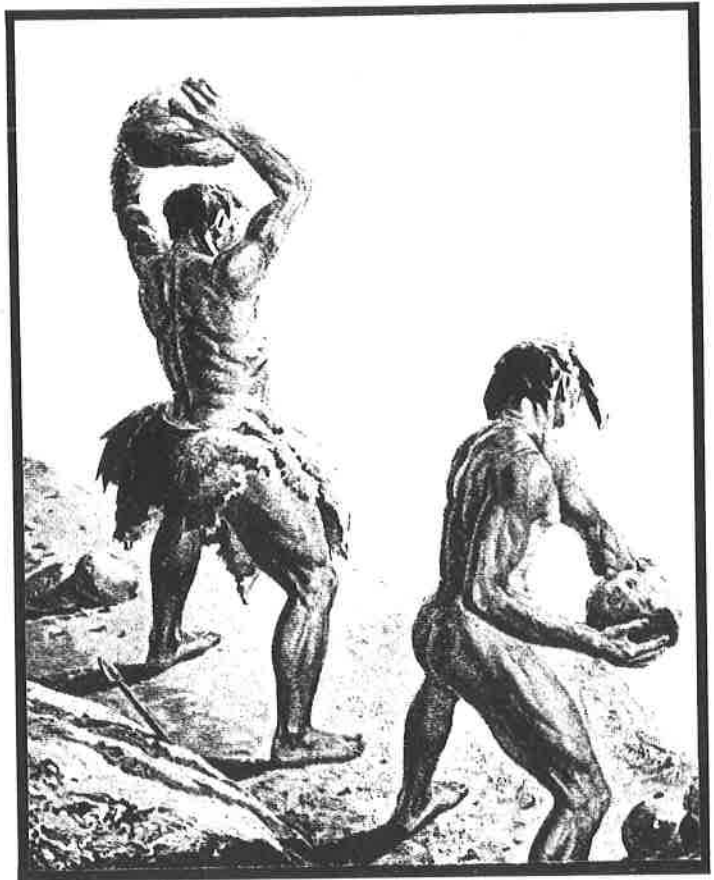
"Bedpan Commando" can be purchased by contacting: Elmore Publishing Company, 341 Rice, Elmore, OH 43416. The cost is a respectable \$12.95 (S & H Inc). Since June's daughter is the publisher, you could note the name "Gail" on your request -along with the fact that you found out about the book through the 451st Bomb Group newsletter. It should raise some eyebrows.

* * * * *

And in conclusion, may I address the subject of our very own 451st, "Fight'n Four Fifty First (H)" book. Sedge Hill and son, Mike, have entrusted me to handle the final distribution of what is left. The profit, as according to S. & M. Hill, is towards the continuation of the organization.

We have set the cost (donation) of \$50 for the book and \$5 to cover shipping, handling, and insurance.

Many members, after reviewing this fine book, are ordering extra copies for sons and grand children. In this way the memory of "Pop," or "Grand-Papa," will carry on through the generations. Now there will be no need to explain, when the question is posed, "What did you do during the war, Dad/Grandpa?" Just hand them the book, and like Flip Wilson use to say, "It's in the book son, it's in the book!"



Earth's Earliest Known "Bombardiers"

* * * * *



Joe "Scotty" McCormick, 725th & Eldon "Moe" Morrill, 724th

As the above picture shows, apart from reading comic books, German propaganda leaflets, big little books, or the new pocket books, getting news from home, by way of the local paper, was certainly worthy reading. Here we have Scotty McCormick and Moe Morrill sharing an issue of the "Stoughton Chronicle" (Stoughton, Mass.) for the benefit of the photographer. It seemed that for human interest, the photographers often relied on using a hometown paper, or a local dog, as a prop for their photos. I guess the hometown papers ate that stuff up.

VERSES FROM HERE AND THERE

LAMENT OF THE THROTTLE JOCKEYS: PILOT AND COPILOT

The engine is clanking, one cylinder is hissing,
and I know for a fact, the left mag's missing.
The oil pressure reading shows 10 pounds or so,
but we all know, old gauges always read low.
Exhaust stacks are falling off, the engine is snorting,
today's hot-rodders call this phenomenon "porting."
With the stick held secure, both ailerons shift,
but shucks, we all know that drooping increases lift.
The ghost of old-timers set up a shout,
"fine ... that's the way it flew when she rolled off the line."
I don't feel like I've slipped earth's surly bonds,
I'm looking for green fields, and avoiding the ponds.
No hissing, no snorting, in fact, there's no sound,
like old Newton's apple, I'm approaching the ground.
A patch looms ahead, but I can see there's a hitch,
for smack through the middle, runs a deep ditch.
I bounce over the ditch (though it wasn't my fault),
and short of the fence, the bird ground to a halt.
A crowd gathered 'round, and a young voice squealed,
"You must be an Ace, to have hit this small field."
"Great pilots" said I, "Set her down when she misses,
and most fields I fly from, are smaller than this is."
So now I'll call the Feds, and file those reports,
(sure hope my flight case contains some clean shorts.)

I'm the copilot, I sit on the right,
It's up to me to be quick and bright;
I never talk back, for I'll have regrets,
And I must remember what the pilots forgets.
I make out the flight plan and study the weather,
Pull up the gear and stand ready to feather;
Make out the forms and do the reporting,
and fly the old crate while the pilot is snoring.
I take the readings and adjust the power,
Turn on the heaters when we're in a shower;
Tell where we are on the darkest night,
And do all the bookwork without a light.
I call for my pilot and buy his cokes,
I always laugh at his corny jokes;
And once in a while, when his landing is rusty,
I come through with: "Gosh, ain't it gusty?"
All in all I'm a general stooge,
As I sit on the right of this man I call Scrooge;
But maybe some day with great understanding,
He'll soften a bit and give me a landing.

(Taken from the book "Army Air Force Lyrics" by J.K. Haveneer, 7340 Eastern, Germantown, TN 38138. Price \$4 Postpaid. Illustrations by Bob Stevens)

"ROUND TRIP"

By: Robert W. Finkle (726th BS) Dated: November 1944
POW'D: 11 December 1944 Target: Vienna, Austria
We're roll out of bed at three in the morning,
And told we'll brief at four.
We rush to dress and shiver with cold,
As our bare feet hit the floor.
We stumble out, into the dark,
And head for morning chow;
Grumble and groan about the cold,
And wonder were we're headed now.
Then chutes are drawn, and heated suits,
And things of all description.
We're briefed upon our raid today,
Above Germany's "hell's kitchen."
We're told about the intense flak,
And the fighters up there, too.
Start engines 0715 boys; happy landings:
See you when your through.
We trudge out to the darkened ship,
And check her all about.
Start engines right on time,
And taxi her on out.
Gun her up, release the brakes,
And down the strip we tear.
She shudders, vibrates in and out,
And we're finally in the air.
Generators on, gear is up,
As we climb into the blue.
Circle the field once or twice,
Then form at our rendezvous.
We're finally off towards our goal;
Way out there somewhere.
The Adriatic passed beneath;
The weathers pretty and fair.
We pass over Yugo; cross the Alps,
Their peaks so white with snow.
Then into Austria, it's getting cold,
But on and on we go.
The initial point is now in sight,
And we turn as we start our run.
Bombays open, the crew is tense,
We were briefed on 300 guns
Up it comes in bursts of black;
Its bursting all around.
It rips and tears and dents our ship;
It's not a pleasant sound.

Continued next page

Finkle Poem Continued from previous page

The leader finally drops his load,
 And "bombs away" is the yell.
 Tons of steel go hurling down,
 And the target is blasted to hell.

A ship to our right is going down,
 His number two engine on fire.
 It's plummeting earthward, spinning around;
 The flames growing higher and higher.

We rally right, away from the flak,
 And take a heading home.
 The ship is checked from nose to tail,
 And we listen for the engines drone.

A fighter is called-off to our right,
 Up at three o'clock high.
 Fifties resound the length of the ship;
 He's smoking as he passes by.

It's all okay and we relax a bit,
 And wipe the sweat away.
 The bombers roar toward the horizon, shore,
 The end of another day.

We're back again; over our field,
 And ships peel off in rotation.
 Yet, way out there, somewhere still,
 Are stragglers from our formation.

We hit the runway clean and smooth,
 And taxi her back to her stand.
 Then all step down to "good Mother Earth,"
 Haggard - every man.

We look her over; count the holes,
 And talk about the flak.
 Then look up there and think about,
 The boys who didn't come back.

We get our liquor, gulp it down,
 To give our guts a grip.
 For tomorrow again we'll fly once more,
 On the same old ship, "ROUND TRIP."

AN AIR FORCE CHRISTMAS PARODY

T'was the night before Christmas and all through the Group,
 The big wheels and wigs were grinding out the "poop."
 The bombers were parked in their hardstands with care,
 Waiting for armament soon to be there.

The fliers were nestled all snug in their beds,
 While visions of "milk runs" danced in their heads.
 When out of the darkness there came quite a knock.
 We cursed the O.D. and looked at the clock.
 "Briefing will be in two hours," he said.
 We threw him out and went back to bed.

Time marches on and the minutes whiz by,
 So it's out of the sack and get ready to fly.
 We rush to the mess hall, quick as a flash.
 We ate powdered eggs with hideous hash!
 Then a long bumpy ride to the Group briefing room,
 Where the big wigs preside and dish out our doom.

The target is told and the first six rows faint,
 For, low and behold, Vienna it ain't!
 The brain has slipped up. Oh! my poor aching back!
 We're bombing a place that throws up NO flak!

So it's back in the truck and off to the line.
 The road is now smooth and the weather is fine.
 The crew is at stations, the check list is run,
 The engines run smoothly as we give 'em the gun.

Then suddenly, the pilot wails in despair,
 "Look at the tower, they just shot a flare!"
 We dash to the window with a heart full of dread!
 The pilot was right. The damn thing is red!
 So it's back to the sack where we sit and wait,
 For there's a practice formation at a quarter past eight.

(Submitted by James H. Williams, 725th - Author Unknown)

VIGNETTES FROM "PUPTENT POETS " (CIRCA 1945)

ORDER by C.D. Westerberg (Unit Unknown)

"At eight AM we're pulling out,"
 The General sternly said,
 So the Colonel sent the order down,
 "At five we leave our bed."
 Well, the Captain took no chances,
 Because Captains never do,
 And so he told the Topkick,
 "Have the men get up at two."
 At midnight the Sergeant woke us,
 And here we sadly sit,
 Because it now is noontime,
 And we haven't pulled out yet.

FIELD MOVIE by V. Scott (Unit Unknown)

Beneath a starry summer sky,
 Upon a stubbled field,
 The soldiers sprawl enraptured
 While a movie is unreeled.
 They weep and laugh with shadows,
 They gasp at acted strife,
 Drink deep of formula romance
 Embrace a synthetic life,
 But these soldiers move in pageant
 More vast than any seen,
 And know it not -- for them
 Drama lives upon a screen.

A STEP BACK IN TIME

From Doren "Dick" Podoloff comes this modern day overseas odyssey. Dick has been in the area of Castelluccia several times over the past years, each time and has threatened to take an "in depth" look at what 'once was.' His latest adventures are as follows.

HICCUP TOWER 45 YEARS LATER

I am sure that many of you have wondered what the 451st airfield at Castelluccia de Sauri looks like 45 years down the line. I thought about it many times and finally in March of 1989 I went to Europe but really to back to our field. I was a member of the 727th Squadron and was there from the fall of 1944 to the end of the war. My pilot was Orrin Feiertag, who has since passed away. I didn't have time to travel to the 724th, 725th, or 726th Squadron areas: This is what I found.

This field is now a large farm. It is owned by Marie Stephano and her son Geraldo Lislo. The runway is now a 6,000 foot wheat field. The only structures left from the 727th is our mess hall. The family who owns the farm lives in one end and the stable is on the other end. There is the usual collection of farm animals but the briefing room, orderly room, the base officers buildings are all gone. The enlisted men's club, the wall for the movies and tower are all gone. All the stone houses that were built with so much labor are all gone. It's just one big wheat field.

I flew from Rome to Foggia Main in a commuter plane, and having landed at Foggia only once during the war, I couldn't remember exactly what it looked like. They have built a new terminal building, but beyond that I couldn't relate to it.

I found a taxi driver who spoke a little English and he drove us to Castelluccia.

There is now a town of 400 to 500 people built up around the Admiral's house. There is a town square and when we got out of the cab in the square two older gentlemen were standing there. When I showed my 451st I.D. they got all excited and began calling to their friends and we had to go to their homes and have something to eat and to drink wine. They still are the warm friendly people that we knew 45 years ago. The one thing that I noticed in all the homes is that they all had small American Flags displayed.

I had only been to briefings once or twice at Headquarters so I don't remember much of the Admiral's house; but the grandson of the Admiral is an American from Boston, who is living in Castelluccia and he joined us and interpreted for us. There is a lot of renovation going on at the house. I did see the briefing room downstairs and some of the other rooms in the building.

The following pictures, some vintage ones offered by Leo Stoutsenberger, and the more recent ones, done by myself, are meant to stir your recall. Perhaps you can relate to the old and new photos that are shown.

There is now a four lane throughway from Foggia south with a connecting road to Castelluccia. It's a lot different then that when we were there.

It was a wonderful experience and I just wish that I could have stayed longer in the area and gone to Bari and other towns we once visited.

Foggia is a modern city full of people, and what impressed me was that at 10:00 P.M. the streets were full of people walking around, unlike some of our cities.



1.) The Admiral's Villa, Group Headquarters (Circa 1943/45)



2.) Front Portico and Main Entrance



3.) Portico & Main House (Different angle from above; Circa 1943/45)

Podoloff.....Continued from previous page

Around the 727th Squadron Area



4.) Group S-2 and Group Operations (Circa 1943/45)



8.) Mess Hall (Opposite side was EM Ground Crew Tent Area)



5.) Admiral's Villa (Circa 1989)
(Dick Podoloff describes it as hard to locate due to new construction)



9.) 727th Mess Hall
(Opposite side of building from above picture)



6.) Same Villa - Another View



10.) Same Building (This end was set apart for EM Shower Room)



7.) Podoloff with his "Look Around Committee"



11.) Current Occupants of area near 727th Mess Hall



12) Standing on part of the Runway - Now all a huge wheat field



16.) Somewhere's in Castelluccia de Sauri



13.) Group Briefing Room (Admiral's Villa)



17.) Still somewhere's else in Castelluccia de Sauri



14.) Podoloff describes how it all came about



18.) Gerardo Lislo and his mother, Marie Stephano standing with visitor Dick Podoloff -- Mother and son are the current owners of the old air strip that once heard the roar of our Liberators, now hear only the sounds of the wind and rustle of wheat.

15.)
The following #'s 15,
16, & 17 are
Street Scenes of
Castelluccio de Sauri
A much built up city
from the days that the
451st occupied this area



19.) At the age of 15
Paolo DiFlumeri
worked in the 727th
Mess Hall.
Here he joins with
Dick Padoloff to recall
those bygone days.

NEVER ALONE

The following story was offered by Walter F. Cutchin, 724th. It was his wish to verify some of what had happened with information from our files. But for all the research we did, nothing could be found as to the A/C, nor its disposition. On the date the mission took place, and as Walter remembers it, 6 November 1944, the Group did a "split" effort. One diversion (Baker) went to Salerno Transformer Station in Italy, while the other part of Mission #146, (Able) went on to Vienna Ordnance Depot in Austria. The Vienna mission being the one that pilot, Lt Bob White (former copilot on the William Heath's crew), took part.

Walt led an involved 451st career. He was originally classified a combat Engineer Gunner (AEG) but due to physical reasons, was grounded and made a Crew Chief on Lt John L. Kearney's A/C, flying overseas with that crew. When Walter's physical condition proved sufficient for combat flying he again returned to his former training.

If anyone can shed information on this particular mission, and the aircraft flown, Walt would certainly appreciate it. His story goes as follows:

It was November 6, 1944 and for flight crews of the 451st Bomb Group this day, like many others in World War II, started at 0200 hours at Castelluccio Air Base near Foggia in Southern Italy. The Charge of Quarters (CQ) awakened us to prepare for the day's mission. I reached under my cot and turned up the valve that controlled the flow of gasoline into the homemade stove. I had not turned it off at night since one of the tent members came in once and tried to light it while the burner was still hot. The explosion that followed singed the eyebrows of a fellow tent member sleeping in his cot, not to mention scaring all of us half to death. I had found the burner in an abandoned German camp farther south. It provided our crew with heat and also gave us a means of cooking food we could obtain from the shops in town or the local farmers. I never missed an opportunity to buy anything to cook and eat in order to supplement the mess hall food. I just couldn't get by with some of the chow they were coming up with.

After heating some water in our helmets, washing up and shaving, we took off for the mess hall and breakfast. Coming from the South, where we had thick sugar cane molasses, I could never get use to that thin, watery syrup they served up with the pancakes, so back I went to the tent to find something in my "pantry."

The mission briefing, which indicated no unusual activity,

lasted for one hour followed by the wait for the flight to get underway while the ground crews finished pre-flighting the B-24 bombers. It was at this time that the "K" rations were distributed. Sometimes we had a choice of breakfast, dinner or supper, but mostly we had no choice. Everyone wanted the one with the chocolate.

Take-off got underway at 0625 hours with 48 aircraft taking part in this mission. Within forty five minutes all planes were in formation and climbing to gain altitude for the mission. Our route would take us over the Alps and into Austria. Some flak could be expected in Northern Italy and other points along the way.

As engineer gunner (AEG) for crew #6, it was my responsibility to stay near the pilot and copilot to aid in watching instruments and be on hand to do any other duties required to keep the B-24 aloft. Whenever enemy fighters were expected, which was usually thirty to forty five minutes before target time, I would put on my flak suit and climb into the upper gun turret. There I would remain until all danger from fighters had passed, or serious enough conditions on the flight deck warranted my presence.

Shortly after entering enemy territory we were fired upon by anti-aircraft batteries and took a flak hit in engine #2 which knocked out the turbo supercharger. This did not damage the engine itself, but prevented any appreciable power being

provided above ten thousand feet, and at this time we were above fifteen thousand. The complete assessment of the damage took only a few minutes, but by this time the remainder of our flight had left us miles behind. It was decided to increase the power settings on the other three engines to overcome the #2 loss and try to rejoin the flight. Using maximum allowable (and safe) power settings, we gradually decreased the distance to our formation. We knew that if we could not make it by the time fighters appeared our plane would be a sitting duck. It was difficult not to think of the ten crews that had

been lost from our neighboring tents during the last thirty days. Thirty minutes is a long time to be flying alone over enemy territory but we managed to pull up into position just as the flak started again. It was not intense and no damage was noted. We always liked to see light flak as this meant no fighter opposition as long as it lasted.

As expected, the fighters appeared about thirty minutes prior to target time. Although it was a light fighter attack, a number of planes were shot down and others damaged. Only one lost plane was seen to crash before the crew members could bail



William Heath's crew on lunch break during supply run to Lyon, France - Bill Heath seated center, rest of crew unidentified

out. The flak started again about the time the fighters left. The flak barrage was intense as we approached the target at Vienna, Austria. Many planes were hit as we continued over the target, dropped our bombs, and turned for home. It was during this turn that our B-24 suffered power loss on two other engines; numbers 3 and 4. The turbos' were out on these also, we discovered, and looking out under the engines we could see that the couplings which connected sections of the turbo duct were knocked out of their spring-loading positions on both engines, preventing exhaust air from turning the superchargers. This meant that full power was now available from only #1 engine above ten thousand feet. We were then at nineteen thousand.

Our pilot, Lt. Bob White of Owosso, Michigan, put the plane in a gradual glide, maintaining as much altitude as possible. It was not long, just a matter of minutes, and for the second time that day, that we were flying alone. Fortunately for us, no fighters appeared. The navigator checked to determine the distance we would be from the target area by the time we reached ten thousand feet. And at that altitude, we would again have sufficient power to maintain level flight. His calculations indicated we would be about one hundred and fifty miles out over the Adriatic Sea. This would keep us aloft, and in a safe area until we were clear of enemy territory, where flak or fighters could be expected at any time.

Our plane reached this point without problem, but since we had flown almost five hundred miles at maximum, or near maximum power, a close check of the remaining fuel would have to be made to determine if we would have enough to reach the base. Such a reading was regularly made by the engineer. I made my reading and passed this information on to the pilot and navigator to see if we should try to make it home or not. After checking, we discovered we would still be from one to two hundred miles from our base when the fuel ran out. A search then was made on the map to find a place where we could land and not be in enemy territory. The most logical place was the small island of Vis, three miles off the coast of Yugoslavia. This island was in the hands of the Partisans led by Marshal Tito. And, since it provided an emergency landing strip for Allied planes, a small crew of Americans were stationed there to help repair lightly damaged aircraft. This was so that they might return to their outfits and eventually back to combat duty.

The disadvantage of choosing this location was geographic. There were mountains at each end of a short runway and a deep ravine at one of the ends. As we flew over to make the approach it was obvious some planes had not been able to stop before reaching the dropping off place. It would be necessary to come in for the landing at a steep angle to miss the mountain, then pull up sharply, set her down and apply brakes to prevent rolling into the ravine. We noticed, also on our approach, that a B-17 (Flying Fortress) had just crashed into the sea. (We later were told they had run out of fuel while trying to land. We also learned from the crew, after having given them our flying suits to replace their wet clothing, it had been their third approach to the strip but they had not been able to get into position for a safe landing. Their navigator, who had been hurt by fighter fire,

was lost in the rough water after the crash.)

We double checked everything in preparation for the landing. Our gas was so low it was not possible to determine how many times, if any, we would be able to fly around. I informed Lt. White of this.

"Okay," he said, "Is everything else all right?"

"Yes," I said, "All the men are in crash positions; Set her down."

We came in over the mountains and down the side like a skier, hugging close to the tree tops. We approached the runway.

"Cut the throttles," shouted Lt. White to the copilot as he used all his strength to maintain control of the plane. She dropped in perfectly and rolled down the runway braking to a stop a safe distance from the ravine.

"A nice landing, Bob," I said.

"I didn't make that one," her replied, "The Lord did."

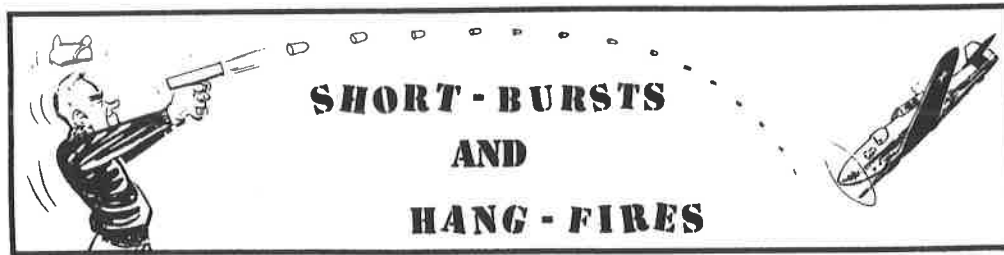
We were making arrangements to spend some time on the island when the pilot was informed that a plane, which had only run out of gas, was available for us to fly back to our base. That plane's crew had been taken to Italy by submarine and fuel was brought in later to prepare this ship for a flight home. Realizing the shortness of the runway and the nearness of the mountains, Bob came to me and asked if I thought we ought to try it. I said, "Let's ask the crew, let them decide."

The decision was made to go.

Early the next morning we boarded the B-24 which had been backed up to the very end of the available runway. As we were making the preflight test, the line chief came up through the bomb bay doors and handed me the clock from the plane which we had flown in. I inquired as to why he had taken it out. It was common knowledge that the clock was kept with any plane that was to continue to fly. He told me that the plane we flew in would never be able to fly out, it would be used as salvage. I later turned the clock over to the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB. After completion of preflight test, Bob set the brakes and revved up all the engines to full power. It seemed like the slowest takeoff roll ever, but with a little praying and much straining by the crew we took off safely and headed for home. It was necessary to fly at low altitude as we had given our flight suits to the downed B-17 crew.

This had been my 47th sortie and I kept thinking that I had three more to go. However, upon arriving back at the base, I was informed that the regulations now required only 35 trips over the target. "Alleluia," I cried, "That was my 35th." Now I would be able, after three years, to be home for Christmas. On the 19th of December, 1944, I arrived back in the United States.

(A recent letter from Walt regarding this mission, and after researching the journal of Squadron C.O., Major John Anderson (Issue 16), and other papers, Walt is wondering if somewhere's along the line someone "screwed-up" and the mission listed on his A-5 shouldn't be that of November 5, 1944. Check your records and see if his story matches anything you recall.)



Peter A. & Clara Massare, 727th ... Being entertained by the SAC Band with all 14 members dressed in WW-II uniforms ... and that was only one day out of 4 that were so great. Without a doubt the Omaha reunion will be one of the Hi-Lites of my life ... I thought, too, those two color brochures handed out at Fairmont AAF really added class to the program.

John A. & Erma Jean O'Connor, 724th ... Have you recovered from your 1990 "ordeal?" Are you still "Gung Ho" to repeat in '92.' The 451st hopes so..... The 74th Tactical Recon Group, who I served with on submarine patrol out of New Orleans, October 1942 to May 1943; have been meeting biannually since 1980 and we've never attended ... So here we go again!

Lindley G. & Patsy Miller, 725th ... Just a note to congratulate you on really running a great affair, but I think Patsy saw enough corn and planes to last her quite a time.... I am enclosing several photographs that Patsy took including three of the B-24, one of its buzz job and another of our crew.

Ernest J. & Virginia Louvar, 724th ... Once again, Ginny and I want to compliment you on the superior job you do in putting together the reunions. We were in the Red Lion about a week later, after having visited friends and relatives in Nebraska. There was another Bomb Group reunion going on, but the place was dead compared to the turnout and lively gang you had. Congratulations!



(editor ... Ernie included this rare photo of his original "Model Crew #1;" Claude U. "Dick" Vail, Pilot. Picture shows crew standing next to their aircraft "PIECEMAKER." Ernie was the regular copilot for the crew, but was "bumped" by Major Wilhite (Group Operations Officer) on the 11 March 1944 mission that cost the lives of all aboard.)

Robert C. & Margaret Kacena, HDQS ... Congratulations on a great reunion, nothing but a class act from start to finish.

Frank J. & Sally Lather, 727th ... Congratulations once again for another memorable reunion. I'm sure the next one under your guidance will be even more memorable! (Rumor has it that the next meeting will be in San Diego - true, false, or under consideration.

(editor ... Consideration - see Page 13.)

Karl F. Eichhorn, 726th ... It was a *GREAT* reunion - the best I have attended so far. The high point for me was the visit to Fairmont and seeing the Collings B-24 and the P-51 land there. And I must admit that when they played Taps, with the echo, so beautifully, it brought tears to my eyes! ... In general, I think everything went very well, considering the very complex logistics you had to work out. You deserve another campaign ribbon!

Robert E. & Marion Barnd, 726th ... Well the 1990 Omaha reunion is all over except for the shouting. Like all the others, Bob, it was a real winner - very much enjoyed by all 6 of us. Mickey and I stayed over on Monday and went back to Geneva. Mickey had stayed with a family there while we were at Fairmont. One of the girls still lived there, so we stopped to visit and also to check around to see if anyone there had ever seen an aerial picture of the old base.

(editor ... Can't help much on furnishing a photo, Bob, but please accept the surveyors plat, as displayed at the reunion.)

Kent & Doris Gillum, 724th ... Thanks again for another super reunion. I appreciate all you do for the organization. It was great to see several for the first time since July 1944.

Joseph M. & Faye Younger, 725th ... We are still living in memory of the best reunion ever - and owe more thanks than we can express on paper to you for making it possible.

Ralph M. & Helen McBeth, 725th ... We enjoyed the reunion. It was so nice to see people in our Group again. You did your usual fine job in presenting an outstanding program.

Larry & Eddie March, 724th ... Don't leave me out when it comes to adding kudo's to your list of kudo's tossers. Eddie and I had grand time, not unlike any of the rest we've attended .. only this one was better!

Reg Urschler, P-51 Pilot ... It was a true pleasure having the opportunity to work with all the members of the 451st and from our point of view, the airplane and flying part of the reunion was a great success ... We extend congratulations to you and all

your committee members for a job well done. I know all now breath a sigh of relief and enjoy a well deserved rest.

(editor ... Reg, it was our pleasure to have you "help us out." Your influence among the pilots of the area, gave our program a fullness that we, on our own, could never have accomplished.)

Mike & Linda Hill, Honorary Member #3 ... Hope that you have been able to recoup from the reunion by now. Wow !!! did you do yourself and the Group proud this time ... Speaking for myself, I was one pooped kid driving back to NODAK. I was also rather sad that the whole affair was over again. While it's a lot of work I would like to tell you that it is worth it. I know a lot of the guys felt the same way. There is only one word to describe that weekend; FANTASTIC !!!

(editor ... FANTASTIC, too, were all the photos you offered. Reunion and otherwise)

Fred & Mary Kalinka, 724th ... Thanks to you and the committee we enjoyed another fabulous reunion: seeing old friends and making new ones. The cherry on top when we met Charles Bronson.



(editor ... Fred, you and Charlie Bronson must have fallen right into lock-step. With your son in the same profession (acting) you guys probably "ratchet-jawed" till the wee hours.)

John & Lorena Bownds, 726th ... We wish to compliment you for the well organized reunion of the 451st Bombardment Group. The day at Fairmont was an experience that we won't soon forget.

Bob & Betty Taylor, 726th ... Just a note, and a check for the 451st BG. Thanks for another great Reunion. You did, and have always done, an outstanding job planning and supervising these Reunions ... It was nice to see Kelly and Guinness at this first Reunion for them. They were both good friends of mine in 1944

Joe & Sue Wood, 724th ... The Omaha/Fairmont Reunion was one of the best. Sue and I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of this festive occasion. Hope you will enjoy portions of the video tape enclosed.

(editor ... You and the Charles Haltom's have been most kind

to this old warrior. I've certainly enjoyed both tapes.)

(All these proceeding accolades may have been aimed in my direction, since I'm the most easily accessible; but may I redirect most of these messages of thanks towards the Omaha/Fairmont Committee that managed, through dedication and perseverance, to make it all come together.)

Rose Marie Hulse, Citizen of Exeter, NE ... I hesitated about going to the open house because I am alone now since my husband resides in a nursing home ... Just before noon, I decided to go and am I ever happy I did. I stood in line so long for the stamp cancellation, but it was well worth it. I was surrounded by veterans of the 451st with their spouses. I enjoyed all the war stories and their lives after the war ... I find stories about the war to be very interesting.

Leslie & Dorothy Skrivanek, Citizens of Milligan, NE ... I would like a copy of the book you have published of the 451st Bomb Group .. I enjoyed the reunion at the Fairmont Air Base, it was like going back in time, remembering what it was like 45 years ago .. Thanks for making it a very special day.

James & Dorothy Bunker, Citizens of Milligan, NE ... Is the Group planning a 50th reunion back here again? It would really be nice, wouldn't it. Everyone was surprised at the large attendance at this one. Naturally I thought it was great and brought back so many memories.

Adolph Marcus, 484th BG Member ... Have been wondering if you could somehow be of some help to me. .. After a write-up about the 461st/484th Bomb Group in the local paper, a man by the name of Edward Ahearn called me. His brother George Ahearn was in the 726th BS (your Group) and was wondering who to contact about his late brother. He barely received anything from the Military Records Division from St. Louis, since they lost some of the records in a fire. Ed Ahearn understood his brother was killed on take-off, but has no particulars, even as to where he's buried. Any info could be directed to: Edward F. Ahearn, 3467 Coral Spring Drive, Coral Spring, FL 33065.

(editor ... I offered some information to Marcus and Ahearn to appease their craving for info, but could not supply full details; perhaps some of you guys can fulfill Ed's thirst.)

William & Mildred Heath, 724th ... Mildred and I had planned to attend the reunion this year, but have just learned that our daughter, who is stationed in the Philippines, will be bringing the two grand daughters, three and six, to stay with us until she and her husband PCS back to the States in October .. I would appreciate it if you would get someone of your choice to present the B-24 model to you at the upcoming reunion as a token of our appreciation from all the members of the 451st for your continued dedication and hard work in keeping this group together and active.

(editor ... Sorry to say, Bill, but time did not allow for presentations at our Banquet. The model was prominently displayed at the Head Table and a lot of guys came forward and commented on it. They are aware of its significance and

how proud I am of it.)

Lamont J. Bestwick, Candidate for Membership ... Just heard of your AD-LIB, your organization, and of your reunions .. I am enclosing a donation in honor of the 451st. My special reason to donate is the honor of being part of the 451st and 725th BS, also to honor a very special copilot Lt. Quisenberry, who was killed on take off for a bombing mission.

(editor ... Glad to have you (nearly) with us, Lamont, as will be those of the a/c "Citadel" and its pilot Bryon Balliet.)

Lew Loury, Comp #24 ... AGAIN this month I will not go to Las Vegas. Instead I'd rather send you this check to forward the continuance of the 451st B.G.

(Thanks, Lew, you've got an unusually big heart. Tis appreciated.)

James H. & Mary Williams, 725th ... (Musing about past AD-LIBs) ... Another link was found with the name of J. Dean Eckersley (AD-LIB, Fall 1989). I never met Eckersley or his crew, but my crew, Al Sherman, Pilot, arrived at the 725th Squadron on December 2, 1944 and were assigned to "Eckersley's quarters." It was only when we entered the tent that we realized that Eckersley and his crew had been shot down that day. It was a real let down for us, a new crew; not quite the welcome we had expected .. I really enjoyed the reunion. And I've been reliving the war years ever since, trying to piece together the people and the incidents that occurred so many years ago. I'm sorry that I did not know about you sooner. You all have a ten year start on reminiscing.

(editor ... Let not the loss of those 10 "together years" hold back your remembrances. It doesn't take long to bring them back into focus.)

A. James Latchaw, 725th ... Our pilot (Silliman) bailed us out over Hungary in March, 1945. He did the right thing. We were in imminent danger of losing a wing. But he, the copilot (Roberts) and engineer (Millis) stayed with the plane and landed on Vis. They were returned to the base and later were killed while ferrying a B-24 back to the States. Our ball turret man was killed on Bail-out, but the rest of us spent some time in prison camp .. The purpose of this letter is to pass along suggestions .. (1) support the effort to get the benefits that are due EX-POW's; (2) consider a subgroup of our 451st BG composed of ex-prisoners of war. There must be a reasonable large number of them.

(editor .. We're certainly behind anything pertaining to helping EX-POW's; recognition or benefits. As to making a sub-strata, of sorts, with POW's, I'd rather we not get involved. Sub groups can be carried on down the line till we've diluted the purpose of our main organization. As it is, we're faced with two groups; Ground personnel and Combat crews, and already and its hard to give adequate credit to either without slighting the other. And, too, there are already organizations set up for the purpose you advocate. Thanks, though, your comments are appreciated.)

Harry H. Fox, 724th ... Am recovering from colon and prostate cancer - The operations were successful and guess they got it all but it takes a while to build up again .. "Mother Painter" is in a rest home in Ft. Wayne, IN - must be in his 80's and still full of "crap." .. I hear from Col. O'Connor, Col. Anderson, Pastor Johnshoy, Capt. Manoogian, and M/Sgt Bennett out of Group, and many, many more. *(editor ... A' tta boy, Foxy, you're not only "hanging-in" but still raising hell and eyebrows with the US mail service. Keep it up!)*



724th Orderly Room (Formerly Grain Storage Building)
L to R: S/Sgt Harry Fox, S/Sgt Bill Saye, Cpl Sanford Beck, 1/Sgt Palmer Gums, Sgt Alvin Leach, Captain Norman Mochel,



Bob Blair, 726th ... *(editor ... Bob sent the above picture of his two vehicles with license plate identification numbers: 451 BG and 726 BS, respectively. Bob explains that even though the plates carry the year of "1989," they are annually tagged with a small sticker to make them current. So goes Wisconsin in balancing the State budget.)*