



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

ISSUE 20

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SUMMER 1991

CALIFORNIA: HERE COMES THE 451st!

SITE INSPECTIONS MADE (by Bob Karstensen, Pres.)

Last January 20, 1991 I embarked on an extended motor trip, stopping first at Omaha, Nebraska to "re-cement" the fine interaction that the Omaha Committee had in putting together our 1990 reunion.



Omaha Committee

Rear: Jim Casperson, Harold McWilliams, Leonard Meyer, Bob K. Jim Knapp, Sedge Hill
 Front: Doris Casperson, Dorothy McWilliams, Maxine Meyer, Mary Emma Knapp, Wilda Hill

The overall purpose of my one month "TDY" was to evaluate some of the hotels that would have the potential to accommodate our Group. As you will recall from our Omaha

Reunion, I promised that the West Coast would get favorable consideration for our next "go-around." After all we've never been further west than Colorado Springs, Colorado. And, too, it seems that the world situation has been stabilized along with a probable upturn in the nations economy.

Four areas were on my agenda; Tucson and Phoenix Arizona; San Diego and the Orange County area in California. But since a walk starts with that single step; this motor trip had to start with its first stop-over. Since my car has a groove worn into the concrete, leading to Omaha, I just followed that course. Thus my prearranged dinner meeting with the Omaha Committee.

From Omaha to Fairmont, (note Fairmont article elsewhere in AD-LIB) then on to McCook Nebraska where the citizenry is making an effort to maintain their old training base from WW-II. At both stop-off places I had contact with the community leaders as to the future of both their air base sites. From my perspective, the old McCook AFF has a lot less to work with than what Fairmont currently has. But a diligent effort is being made by a dedicated few to preserve what is left.

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Princess Caradja Recognized for WW-II Work

My course took me to Pueblo, Colorado, where I attended a ceremony/celebration in honor of Rumanian Princess Catherine Caradja. The Princess, perhaps not known to many of you, was the savior and guardian angel of many of our POWs that were shot down and interned in Rumania. Her charitable work dates back to the "Low Level Ploesti Raid," when, on 1 August 1943, she demanded the Germans turn over all captives to her

REMEMBER YOUR DONATIONS

"AD-LIB"

451st Bomb Group (H), Ltd. Publication

Written and Published by Bob Karstensen, Sr.

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care. Her persistence won out. A beautiful portrait, commissioned by the 376th Bomb Group, was unveiled and will hang in the Pueblo B-24 Air Museum, near the city airport.



"The Albuquerque Advocators"

Further down the course of my odyssey I stopped for a night at Albuquerque NM. There Dennis Adams called together a "few of the boys." Along with their wives, we spent an evening with a little light libation at one of the Mexican restaurants that populate the city. In that group were; Dennis Adams, 727th, Harry Fox, 724th, Frank Gutierrez, 726th, Earl Van Benschoten, 725th, and William Brockett, 727th.

Traveling through Silver City, New Mexico, I took on sustenance at the KFC branch of Colonel Sander's empire. I tried "ringing up" Ed Walkey, 726th, but was informed that he was "out and a'foot" and was unavailable at the moment. Not wanting to spend too much time letting the cars carburetor cool down, I proceeded on to Tucson, stopping off to visit my sister and her husband in Sunsites, Arizona.

Tucson, being my first hotel evaluation check point, really gave me an insight as to some of the swanky layouts that are out there. I examined three resort type properties and concluded

Loews Ventana Canyon
Resort
Tucson, Arizona



Sheraton El Conquistador
Tucson, Arizona



Crescent Hotel
Phoenix, Arizona



Scottsdale Plaza
Resort
Scottsdale, Arizona



Town & Country
Hotel
San Diego, Calif.



"Tucson Tacticianors"



"Phoenix Phenomenators"

that these were not our style. The facilities were so far flung that it would be inconvenient for us to maintain any contact with each other as we have in the past. True, there are a multitude of outdoor activities to engage in; golf, tennis, swimming, horseback riding, hiking, and one place even had croquet. But in the final evaluation I figured we would have to pay more for something that many of us aren't physically capable of enjoying. My assessment of a reunion is to meet and mingle; and with as few restrictions as possible. The multi-story style hotels that we've used in the past seems to adhere more to that format than the spread-out resort style.

In Tucson I met with Keith Dauderman, 727th, Gordon Gunderson, 725th, and Virgil Faulkner (custodian of the Pima Air Museum's B-24). Another evening of light wine and heavy eating.

On to Phoenix/Scottsdale area and another venue of high priced and far flung accommodations. Were we all wealthy and of full of vim, I'm sure we could have accepted one of these fine resorts for our gathering. But going with the inevitable, ever present, age category we fill, I opted to look further. But not before "breaking bread" with some of the "boys" that Doug Wadlund had contacted. In that foray, along with Doug and Ann Wadlund, 727th, were; George Bennington, 727th; George Stricker, 725th; John Stack, 724th; Ben Kramer, 726th; Richard Hayford, 724th; Charles Christy, 725th; James Beckerman, 726th; and Robert Crosby, 725th. Some (nay, many) of the previously mentioned were accompanied by their wives. Since I had a couple nieces living in the area they came to oversee, and with a jaundiced eye, evaluate their wayward uncle. Luckily, I'm still in the family. In that area three hotel/resorts came under close scrutiny, and three of four others were glossed over due to unacceptable rates.



"San Diego Sanctioners"

San Diego came next. Three more were closely viewed and two were bypassed for lack of interest on their part. Another evening of merriment with our 451st cadre. Taking part were:

Carl Heimaster, 724th; Sam Hornbeak, 726th; Lloyd Ryan, 725th; Frank Burger, 725th; Mike Spellacy, 726th; and Edwin Learnard, 724th. Again, some of the men were complimented by their wives.

Up the left coast I meandered, stopping in the Anaheim, California area. There I inspected, in detail, some seven fine hotels. Throughout the course of my hotel inspections, from Tucson to Anaheim, I was warmly received by the staffs of the various hotels I viewed. This was due to the early arrangements I had made previous to my departure from home. My modus operandi for these inspections is to first contact the Convention and Visitors Bureaus in the cities I expect to visit. Then armed with information from their hotel brochures (noting: hotel location, number of committable rooms, size of ballroom, ease of access by car or air, amenities, etc). I contact each acceptable hotel and alert them as to my upcoming visit. Pre-warned and ready for my inspection, they offer me a very detailed tour of their facility. I explain what is expected from them by our standards, attendance and what parameters we are working with as to dates and prices. Some could tell by my pained expression, when they quoted prices, that they weren't even in the ball park. But they gave it their "best shot."

Taking all things into consideration (locations, climate, costs, and local available tours) it became a process of elimination. First; which city, considering the hotel amenities, would serve us best. Secondly; which city would have enough appeal to draw our members from the Mid West and East Coast. Thirdly; how comfortable would our guests be during the reunion. Fourth; how cost effective could we become in order to attract those with limited resources. All these, plus more, entered into the selection of our host city. What it all boils down to is: "Where can we get the 'best'est for the least'est."

The consensus is Anaheim, CA. Just which hotel? That's still up in the air. Several have filled the criteria of adequate size, acceptable rates, and easy access - either by car or air. In the case of air travel; the Orange County (John Wayne) Airport is nearby. As far as auto travel; our chosen hotel wouldn't be too far off Interstate - 405.

Time of year is also a prime consideration, both with our plans and with the availability of the hotel. Hotel prices are reasonably moderate, and acceptable in the month of September. Thus I'd advise you to circle the whole month of September 1992. Later, when the dates are "nailed down," we'll give you the specifics and you can circle the dates.

And as to comments in the last AD-LIB about available



"Orange County Organizers"

working committee people to have on site, the Los Angeles area sports quite a few. With just a few minutes on the phone I managed to bring together the following for a "little chow;"

Dale Mayswinkle, Herbert Guinness, Duane Maybay, William Hysell, Steve Bartlett and Leonard Baltzer -- also, accompanied by their better halves. These, plus more yet to be contacted, would make up part of a working committee.

Yet to be cleared is the 15th AF interest, at March AFB, Riverside, Calif. But word from the CEO, Ben Franklin, of the 15th Air Force Association, says that our chances for getting amenities from them are very good. This will be examined by the on-sight committee. Other components, sightseeing tours, day trips, etc.; things that make a great reunions, are also being studied.

Mark your calendars for September 1992 and review your options as to transportation. This should be a GREAT one.

ONE WILL HOST THE 451st BOMB GROUP



Irvine Marriott
Irvine, California



Hyatt Regency
Irvine, California



Hyatt Newporter
Newport Beach, Calif.

Westin South Coast Plaza
Costa Mesa, California



Red Lion Hotel
(Orange County Airport)
Costa Mesa, California

Some Hotels Under Consideration
Failed to Offer Photos

PHOTO OFFICER "DWYER" OFFERS LEGACY

MAJOR WILLIAM DWYER'S LEGACY

Forty seven years ago our Group was making powerful and memorable history. World War-II became the crucible that forged our various components into one of the 15th Army Air Force's strongest, and resolute, fighting units in the Mediterranean Theater. Correspondents and reporters were offering the folks back home a portrayal of what they saw and experienced. But, as is to be expected, reporters had to spread their coverage into many segments of the Italian Campaign. All too often, as we reflect back, the 15th AAF was given "short shrift" in the area of publicity. We did our job and were happy when it was over so we could get back home. And during the intervening years, little thought was given to our military accomplishments.

But now there is a resurgence of interest in what our Group accomplished - back then. The publication, "Fight'n 451st Bomb Group (H)" has generated a whole new inquisitiveness into our wartime activities. Our AD-LIB seems to be well received by our membership and other research enthusiasts. However well written these forms of information are, little visual enjoyment could be expected without the input of the photos that were generated during our 1943 to 1945 tenure. They added the realism that words alone could not convey.

So, lets talk about photography as it relates to the 451st Bomb Group; and where better to start than with the Officer in Charge of the Photo Section, William M. Dwyer.



Bill Dwyer; Getting/Passing the Word

The Major (Bill Dwyer) and I have had several phone conversations recently, relevant to a photo promotion that we're trying to work out. During the course of these calls, Bill reviewed his early remembrances with the old Group. It seems that the two Group Commanders, Colonels' Eaton and Stefanowicz (a.k.a. Stefan), passed on some sage, and authoritative, mandates that Bill recalls, even today.

Bob Eaton said on first contact (and I paraphrase) "You are now our Photo Officer. You will take pictures on, and of, our missions. Without pictures to verify our bombing, we may not establish credit for that mission. You're responsible!" Thus the Photo Section's duties were simply, and articulately outlined.

Colonel Stefan, our last combat Group Commander, told Bill that all our photo negatives were historically important and that utmost effort must be taken in hanging on to them. This was at the time the Group was packing to return home. Colonel Stefan, unsure of the Group's upcoming status told Bill, "You pack the negatives with your personal items in your footlocker. In that way they won't be mislaid and lost. You're responsible!"

This is what Bill did. He hung on to the negatives, awaiting orders from higher up as to what to do with them. Under normal procedure these negatives would be the responsibility of S-2, but with Colonel Stefanowicz interdiction, S-2 relinquished control in favor of the Photo Section. When no word came down, and as Bill migrated from Bangor, Maine to Manchester, New Hampshire, and finally mustering out, still no orders as to the disposal of his worthy possessions.

It may be that Bill is the only Group Photo Officer in the 15th Air Force history that ended up with such an inventory of original negatives. Since the time of his separation from the military, these original negatives have been under the care of our "one and only" Photo Officer. Bill told of always wanting to make an album of these pictures for the benefit of his comrades, but during the course of making a living, raising a family, etc., never had the chance. Now that there is a viable 451st organization, and a more notable interest in the photographic aspect of our history, Bill wants to see if there is some way that these photos can be shared, and if something, in a financial sense, can be contributed to the furtherance of our 451st Bomb Group (H), Ltd.

Bill Dwyer has done extensive research into costs, quality of product, and handling of the finished product. In seeking the best prices to have this exacting photo reproduction work done, the break-off price ends up at 51 reproductions of each negative. It should be noted that with Bill's past photographic knowledge he wasn't about to accept the corner drug store as his choice for doing these important enlargements. He has sought out a photographic shop that can deal with the intricacies that are involved in professional reproductions. Such words as "cropping, dodging, extensive light manipulation" slipped into our conversations as he explained the complexities involved. His intentions, after the enlarging procedure, are to have them "plastic shrink-wrapped" on three-sixteenth acid free foam

"EXTRA JOKER"



"VAPOR TRAILS"

"PLOESTI MISSION"



Fight'n 451st Bomb Group (H) Book Still Available - Price \$55

board making them impervious to soiling or handling, and ready for immediate hanging. The size of each photo is to be 11" X 14". It's surprising the detail that becomes apparent when they are blown-up to that proportion. Packaging and mailing also enters into the final pricing.

What will set these photos apart from any other wartime photo will be that each print will be authenticated by the Group Photo Officer, William Dwyer with a gilt-edge certificate. A plastic sleeve will be attached to the back of each photo for storing the Certificate of Authentication, a brief history and description of the photo, and any accompanying information relevant to the photo. Bill has worked out a "File Number" code for each photo, and that too will be noted.

Bill has set an ambitious course in making these photos available to our membership and he hopes, as I do, you will take advantage of this offer.

So as to keep the parameters of this first investment within limits, we are proposing that our selections be limited to a series of three photos: --- 31 May 1944, Ploesti Mission; --- 23 August 1944, Extra Joker's Fatal Mission; --- Vienna Bound/Vapor Trails. These will have to be sold in consignments of **THREE**; -- and only these three for our first attempt. If these prove popular we will strive to make others available in the future.

Now don't fall out of your tree when I quote the price. We are asking for a donation of \$100 plus \$5 for S & H. This does not include the frame as shown in the above photo (top -Extra Joker Photo). That will add another \$12 per frame (Inc. S & H). These frames are "snap-together" elements and anyone, or their grandchild, can put them together.

At this time we're not asking for your money, rather are asking for your PLEDGE to purchase this full series. When we find we have enough financial commitments to go ahead we'll advise you and then ask for your donation. If we were to "outlay" the initial costs for this project we'd have close to \$5,500 invested. No one wants to take that risk, unless they have just won the State Lottery.

As Bill and I were discussing the merits of this project, Bill spoke of the interest that some professional people took in



examining the various photos that were displayed in his shop. Many showed a keen interest in purchasing them for their offices. Bill averted any commitments to sell to anyone outside our Group until we established a format that was fair, workable, and equitable, to both of our perspectives. It may be that you know of some office managers, doctors, and other professional folks that would consider these as "high impact" pictures, and would make their offices more "conversational" to their clientele.

To make your pledge for this series of combat photos, fill out order blank below, or write to this office and voice your interest. You will be informed when, and if, we're ready for your check. Remember, as a donation, its tax deductible.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHENTICATION

This historically classic unretouched 451st Bomb Group photo print was reproduced from an original 'K-20' combat camera negative

TITLE AND DESCRIPTION: Mission #56, Ploesti, Romania - Target, Oil Refineries; 31 May, 1944 - a/c "CON JOB" - Serial Number 42-78145 in #4 Position, Pilot, Lt. Hubert E. Anderson, leading the 2nd Element - 1st Flight - 727th Bomb Squadron - a/c Model B-24-G-5NA
 Combat Photographer, Robert N. Hoffman, lying in a/c "PATSY JACK".
 Squadron lead ship, Pilot, Captain Roland E. Threadgill.

Major William M. Dwyer, Retired

DATE _____

Photo Officer
451st Bombardment Group (H)

FILE NUMBER -14 - 10 (D)

ACCOMPANYING CERTIFICATE
(Customized document included with each photo)

Yes, I am interested in securing this series of three authentic WW-II photos described above.

Please accept this order as my pledge to commit the sum of \$100 (plus \$5 for S & H) when the decision is made to produce the photographs.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date: _____ Phone: (____) _____ - _____

Signed: _____

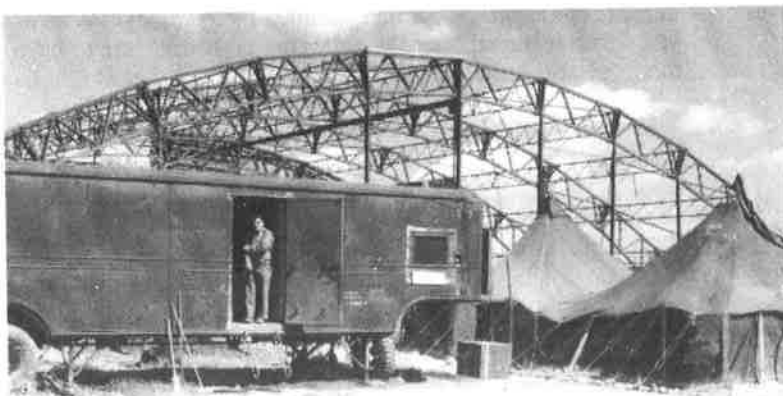


PHOTO TRAILER AT SAN PANCRAZIO, ITALY
(Nick Prato in Doorway)

YUGOSLAVIAN PATRIOTS MEMORY REVIEWED

EFFORTS TO RECOGNITION MIHAILOVICH

Fascination with world history certainly comes to the forefront when monumental happenings are occurring in areas where we once trod. At this point in time we're looking at Yugoslavia trying to change the course of its government. Upheaval and discontent are working against the sitting communist regime. Perhaps in time a rightful, as we determine rightful, ruling party will take over. Not unlike some of the other European communist ruling parties that we've recently seen topple (i.e. Poland, E. Germany, Rumania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc.) we may well see Yugoslavia on the same course.

Current events in Yugoslavia catch our interest as we can easily relate to that vicinity from our World War II experiences. The Ground crews can remember all the aircraft under their care that ended up in Yugoslavia, either crashing, with the crews bailing out, or making desperation landings on one of the few allied controlled airstrips along the Adriatic coastline. Some of the latter ships coming back into their respective Squadrons.

But to the "lost aircraft," there is generally a related story of aircrews that managed to bail-out, and/or either becoming captives of the Germans or, managing to evade capture. Those that became reluctant guests of the German Army; their exploits have been somewhat recognized by our government with the recently struck "POW Medal."

But for those who underwent the rigors of "EVASION" their efforts have been somewhat overshadowed by the fact that they made it back without the spotlight of having been in German hands. It was not the status of having evaded, nor the possibility of having to finish their missions, a factor in their wish to resist capture. In some cases it was the instinct of self-preservation; for others it was sheer cussedness of the individual to try and outsmart the enemy. And again, some were lucky and fell in with "resistance fighters" and were aided and led to safety.

Those who managed to fall in with these "friendly forces," fit into two distinctive identities: the Chetniks, or the Partisans. The Chetniks under the leadership of General Dragoljub Draza Mihailovich, and the Partisans under control of Marshal Josip Broz Tito were the two factions that, though opposite in political beliefs, managed to aid our fliers to escape.

During our tenure in Italy, the Yugoslavian political waters were pretty muddy. Though we weren't privileged to choose which group was to help us should we be forced to bail-out, most of us felt we'd be more dutifully served if we fell in with the Chetniks. Word was filtering back that Tito wasn't all that trustworthy in his actions. And as was later reported to the Allied Headquarters, neither was the Chetnik leader, Mihailovich. But we, not knowing the inner-

most workings from "high command," went along with "gut instincts" and felt more comfortable with the name of Mihailovich, and feedback coming from the Chetnik forces.

The Allied Command was being fed information that Mihailovich and the Chetniks were collaborating with the Germans to offset the influence that Tito was garnering from the Communists. Little did the Allies know that Intelligence Reports out of Yugoslavia were being reinterpreted, through Cairo, to London, by the local Secretary of the Communist Party, who was at that time part of the British Intelligence Staff. Any time the Chetniks, or Mihailovich's name crossed this agent's desk he changed the names, giving credit to Tito and/or the Partisans. According to a 1980 book written by David Martin, the agent was not above filing false reports that made Mihailovich out to be a German collaborator.

By the end of the war, Marshal Tito held the influence of power in Yugoslavia, due in large part to the supporting Allied powers, and after a swift mock trial in 1946, he had the leader of the Chetniks, Draza Mihailovich, was executed.

In time, this part of the war, and this part of world history involving the Mihailovich factor has barely been noted. But for those wjp were the benefactors of the heroism of Mihailovich and his Chetniks, the trial, and the ensuing execution, was a travesty of justice. Efforts by those who were rescued to take part in the 1946 trial were thwarted by Yugoslavia and the US government for fear that we could upset the delicate situation that prevailed under Tito.

My involvement, and interest, in presenting this story to you comes through my visit with my Congressman, Philip M. Crane, 12th Congressional District of Illinois. I was pursuing a story on the late Prince Andrej Karadjordjevic of Yugoslavia, who, at one time lived comfortably within my Congressional District. My pursuit ended when the Congressman presented me with a more formidable task of helping to pass House Joint Resolution #178.

This Bill would be to authorize the "National Committee of American Airmen Rescued by General Mihailovich" to erect a monument to General Draza Mihailovich in Washington, D.C., or its environs, in recognition of the role he played in saving the lives of more than five hundred United States' airmen in Yugoslavia during World War II. If you would make contact with your local United States Congressman and request a copy of this Bill, I'm sure you'd see the significance, and importance, as it relates to our Group.

I have to imagine you are wondering how this project came about. As you can guess, there is a former 451st member down there "in the trenches," doing what he can to further the cause.



General Dragoljub "Draza" Mihailovich (1893 - 1946)
Chetnik Leader



MG Donald Smith (724th)

That man is M/General Donald J. Smith, Retired, former copilot with the William R. Harris' crew, 724th. Don is currently the Honorary Chairman of the National Committee of American Airmen Rescued by General Mihailovich, Inc.

Prior to Don's commitment was Maj. Richard L. Felman, Ret., of Tucson, AZ, who, in 1946, organized an attempt to rectify this injustice. Dick was a B-24 Navigator flying out of Italy. It has been Felman's persistent effort that managed

to change history books (encyclopaedias' Britannica and Americana) regarding the true story of Mihailovich and his Chetniks. In pursuit of the hidden facts, Felman managed to declassify the fact that President Harry S. Truman (with the recommendation of General Eisenhower) awarded Mihailovich the Legion of Merit; posthumously. But due to the unstable European situation, our government kept the fact secret. It wasn't until Dick Felman and U.S. Representative Edward J. Derwinski of Chicago, managed to have it declassified that more of the truth started coming out. Now with the assistance of Congressman Crane, and numerous petitions in Congress, there is hope that H.J. Res. #178 can be passed. You can add your weight (clout) to the effort by contacting your Congressman or Senator and request an airing, and passage of this bill. This bill would cost the taxpayer nothing as the funds have already been promised from private funding. The only expense that may be incurred by this monument is in the allocation of a site, on federal lands, for its construction.

In presenting this article, I'm confronted by the number of you guys that were, in essence, a part of this story. Though you may not, as yet, have come forward with your memories - thinking they aren't that significant - I'd like to hear from you and about your evasion adventures. In the "Short Burst & Hangfire" column I've recounted what Frank Vernon, 724th, wrote to me some time ago. For the sake of historical documentation, I'd like to hear more.



MAJ Richard Felman (Ret.)

Bringing this story into sharper focus was my remembrance of an early conversation I had with the late Melvin Nierman (AEG, Frank Vernon's crew). This was when our organization first started up. It so happened that in May of 1945, when we were both sent to Ft. Sheridan for our furlough processing, Melvin became ill and I notified the medics as to his condition. Nierman was transported to the hospital and I packed his B-4 bag and dropped it off at the Orderly Room. I had no further contact with Nierman until I phoned him in 1979 and reestablished our friendship. Our conversation ended up with a discussion of happened to his B-4 bag. It seems that it was pilfered, and the most notable item that was taken was his prized autograph of General Mihailovich. Above all that he lost, this item he cherished most. It was kinda hard to tell him that it was "I" that carried his bag to the Orderly Room where it was apparently looted. I never got the chance to meet Nierman again, as he passed away shortly thereafter.

CALLING ALL STALAG LUFT III POW'S

The following article was presented in the Chicago Tribune last December 16, 1990 in the "Voice of the People" column.

LONDON - I have been commissioned to write the complete history of Stalag Luft III, the prisoner-of-war camp for allied air crews at Sagan, Germany, from 1942 to 1945. It is scheduled for publication in September, 1991

I am eager to hear from any readers who were associated in any way with the camp, or are friends or relatives of survivors and who might be able to furnish material not only on escape and covert activities but also on day-to-day life in the camp, especially aspects which have hitherto been neglected.

I am particularly interested in East and Middle Compounds, summer 1942 and winter 1942-43; East, Middle and North Compounds, April 1944, to January 1945; Camp Belaria;

and the pre- and post-war careers of former Sagan POW's and German camp staff.

Anyone who furnishes information will be shown the relevant pages for corrections and suggestions. Please write to me:

Charles Rollings, C/O Hat-chards, 187 Piccadilly, London W1V 9DA, England.

(Editor ... Another opportunity spotted by Nate Firestone (725th Navigator) and passed on to me for your edification. If you can help out another military specialist in his documentation, it would not only elevate our prestige within the research community, but would give you a chance to have, as Andy Worhol said it, "Your fifteen minutes of fame." If you have any material to submit, send them directly to Charles Rollings; and please make copies and send to me for our files.



Major Charles Haltom & S/Sgt Tom Charles (726th)
(Reluctant POW 's of the German Government)

KARL EICHHORN'S 726th JOURNAL

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

THE AIR WAR IN ITALY

After our planes arrived we had a major task to check and inspect all the airborne armament. All guns had to be removed and cleaned, and each turret and all bomb racks had to be thoroughly checked. This work took several days. The weather continued to be bitter cold and damp; at night we shivered, even with four wool blankets. Except for the brief periods when we could huddle around our stoves in the evening, we were always cold. That winter of '43 - '44 was the worst time I have known. Pulling guard duty at night was especially bad, for we had only regular army issue clothing; we had none of the special Air Force cold weather jackets, pants, boots and helmets which had been so welcome at Fairmont AFF.

When our air crews arrived we learned of the amazing exploits of one of our planes, #636. Over the Caribbean, between Florida and South America, she lost first one, then two, and finally, three of her engines. Only the number four engine was still fully functioning. To lighten the load, the pilot, Lt. Winski, ordered his crew to throw overboard everything that could be tossed out the open hatches. First went all the machine guns and ammunition which could be easily removed, then bomb shackles and hoists went out, along with other loose equipment. Finally all the crew members' personal luggage was tossed out. It was a desperate measure, but it saved the ship. Winski managed to land her on an emergency field on the island of Saint Lucia with one functional engine and the others restarted at barely minimal power, a feat which no one believed a B-24 could accomplish. When #636 arrived at Gioia we had to almost completely refit her. Winski was immediately promoted to Captain by our Group Commander for his remarkable achievement. The plane was later named, "Three Feathers" and a pretty, naked gal, holding three appropriately positioned feathers, was painted on her nose.

On the 22nd we saw our first fatal accident at the field, though it was not one of our planes. A C-47 cargo plane was landing with a load of equipment when, for some reason, it ground-looped, flipped over and burned. None of the crew was able to get out. The field at Gioia, as noted earlier, had been built as a fighter strip by the Italians. It was never intended for use by heavy bombers. We were assigned there only temporarily, until the engineers could complete our permanent base near Foggia. The runway had been lengthened for use by our bombers and steel matting had been put over the unpaved runway to better distribute the weight of the B-24's.

While working on our planes on the line, some of us got to know a few of the British Royal Air Force (RAF) ground crews. I became good friends with the crew of a Hurricane

which was parked fairly close to our Squadron. The mechanic was from Birmingham and the armorer was from Wellington, New Zealand. When I had a little spare time I sometimes helped clean the machine guns in the Hurricane; she carried an incredible six - Caliber.303 guns in each wing. The plane's mechanic was fascinated by a pair of "water pump" pliers I had, which he had never seen before, so I gave the tool to him as a gift and drew another from supply.

On the 25th an old "D" model B-24 with 59 missions to her credit, was transferred to our Squadron from another Group. She was named "Tangerine," and we spent about three days trying to get her back into "fighting trim." A week or so later she was transferred back out of the Squadron! We also had to complete a variety of modifications to our planes which had been directed since we left Fairmont.

On the 28th I came down with fever and chills; another bout with some sort of army "bug." I was very sick the following day, and that night we received our first orders to load live bombs. I was feeling too ill to help out and I felt terrible about it.

Our Group's first combat mission was flown on 30 January. We were, of course, in the 15th Air Force and were assigned to the 47th Wing, along with the 99th, 376th, 449th, and the 450th Bomb Groups. This first mission was the usual "Milk Run" (an easy mission) which was assigned to inexperienced new Bomb Groups. There was no flak and no fighter opposition, but even so we missed the target, a radar station in Albania.

I felt very bad for over a week and again had some pain in my ear, but I remained on duty after the first couple days. We loaded 500 lb. demolition (demo) bombs again the night of 1 February for a mission against another Albanian radar station on the second. That day there WAS flak and a number of planes came back with damage. One plane of the 724th Squadron crash-landed with a blown tire and one engine out because of flak. This was our first real introduction to the realities of war.

It might be useful at this point to describe the mechanics of loading bombs and to identify the types of bombs we used. We had a curious organizational structure with respect to handling of bombs and ammunitions. Each Bomb Squadron had assigned to it three or four Ordnance men. These soldiers were actually in the Army Ordnance Corps, assigned to the Air Force. On their uniforms they wore the Ordnance Corps insignia, rather than the Air Force insignia. (Likewise, we also had two men assigned to each Squadron from the Army Chemical Corps to serve as gas-protection specialists.) Ordnance was responsible for the transportation of bombs and ammunitions from ports like Naples and Bari, where it arrived via cargo vessels, to bomb dumps located near each bomber base. When orders were received for certain bombs to be loaded, the Ordnance people, who operated the bomb dumps, would load the appropriate bombs on special bomb trailers and haul them to the airfield where they unloaded the required number beside each aircraft. At that point we Armorers took over and loaded the bombs into the planes. After loading, the Ordnance people would return to mount the steel fins on the larger demolition bombs and to



"Three Feathers"
(Winski in Cockpit)

install the fuses in each bomb. The fins had to be installed after loading to prevent damage from handling. Ordnance was also responsible for installing the arming wires on the fuses, but we often helped with that job.

Most of the larger general purpose demolition bombs had a fuze installed in both the nose and tail, where there were threaded recesses to receive them. Smaller incendiary and fragmentation bombs usually carried only one fuze. The small 25 lb. anti-personnel fragmentation bombs, which were mounted in clusters of six were shipped in wood boxes, with the fuses already installed. We hated to load fragmentation bombs because they were so awkward and hard to handle, but we loved the cases they came in as we used the wood to construct floors for our tents.

The fuze (yes, it is properly spelled with a "z"!) contained a very sensitive explosive train which actually detonated the T.N.T. in the bomb. Each fuze was normally in a "safe" condition. It had a small propeller at the end which was locked into position with a removable safety pin, much like a cotter pin. In flight, on the way to the target, the Bombardier had to remove this pin from each bomb fuze and bring them back so that the armorer could verify that all arming pins had been removed. After the bomb was dropped, air flow would rotate the propellers rapidly and after a set number of revolutions the fuse would be "armed" and ready to explode the bomb on contact. Some fuzes could be adjusted for a predetermined time delay so that, for example, a bomb would not explode when it hit a factory roof, but a brief time later, after it was inside the building. Sometimes we used fuzes with a long time delay, of perhaps several hours. These we called "booby-trap" fuzes as they caused a buried bomb to explode under the earth long after it landed. In addition, these fuzes had another nasty feature. Two ball-bearings rode with tapered tracks on opposite sides of the fuze. As it was screwed into the bomb these balls recessed into the deep part of the track, causing no interference. But when anyone tried to disarm the bomb by removing the fuze, the balls would jam against the thread, penetrate the thin wall of the fuse and instantly detonate the bomb. Even we could not remove these things. When a plane had to abort a mission and return with unused bombs, they were usually dropped "safe" into the Adriatic Sea.

It was just too dangerous to try to unload them on the ground for reuse, with those fuzes installed.

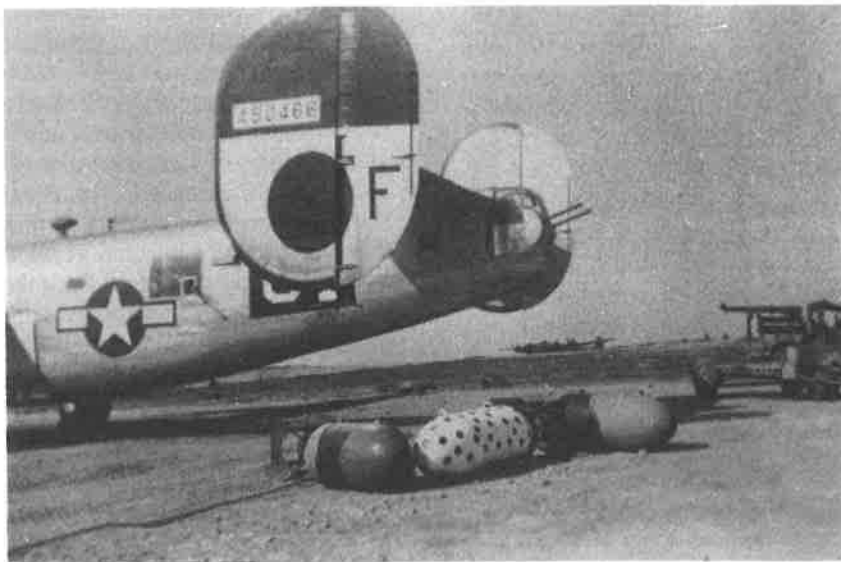
Since, after the Bombardier had removed the arming pins in flight, air flow through the bomb bay might cause the fuse propellers to rotate and arm the bombs inside the plane, a second safety device, called an arming wire, was used. This was a long brass wire with a ring in the center. The two ends of the wire were inserted through

the two fuze propellers to prevent their rotation and the center ring was attached to a special spring-loaded snap on the bomb shackle. When the bomb was released, by way of the bomb-sight, this retainer snap would be locked closed thus securing the arming wire, which pulled free of the fuzes as the bomb dropped and remained attached to the shackle within the aircraft. Normally, when bombs were "salvoed" mechanically, the retainer snap was NOT locked and the arming wire ring would pull out of the shackle and fall with the bomb, thus preventing the fuzes from arming during free fall. In practice, because there were many missions, especially later in '44 when it was desired to drop armed bombs in "salvo," we often hooked the ring of the arming wire over one of the shackle arms so that there was no way any bomb could fall in a "safe" condition.

During our first several weeks of combat missions we loaded bombs in the standard approved manner. Two hand-operated winches, which had a long steel cable with a hook on the end wound around the drum, were mounted on the inside of the bomb rack to be loaded. The bomb, say a 500 pounder, was rolled under the bomb bay by hand and positioned under the rack. A heavy-duty double web sling, with attach points at each end, was positioned under the bomb. Next, the winch cables, rigged through pulleys and hooks, were connected to the bomb sling. Then two men, one on each winch, would slowly crank the bomb to the proper place on the rack; starting at the top, while a third man guided the bomb up and finally connected the shackle into the large snaps on the rack. When the first rack was loaded the winches had to be removed and re-positioned on the next rack. A B-24 could carry a total of twelve 500 lb. bombs and it would take three men at least 75 to 90 minutes to load one plane. Crews often had to load four planes in a night, so the work went on until the wee hours of the morning. Later on we came up with a much easier loading method, which I will describe later. It was contrary to all standing tech orders, but it was so much simpler that one man, if necessary, could load a plane all by himself, in less time than three men using the approved loading method.

Smaller bombs, such as the 100 lb. incendiaries; the demo bombs; and the fragmentation bomb clusters (frags) were hand

loaded by two men without winches. These smaller bombs were loaded five to a rack ; a total of twenty per plane. Later on, by using some special cables we devised, we were able to double our loads of incendiary and fragmentation bombs. The 250 and 300 lb. demolition bombs were loaded at the same positions as the 500 pounders (i.e. twelve per plane). While we winched the upper one up, we often tried to speed the work by manually lifting the two lower 250 lb. bombs into position. In



"Der Fuhrer's Easter Present"
(Ready for Packaging)



Karl Eichhorn (Circa 1944)

retrospect, this was a stupid thing to do, as someone could have been badly injured if one of those bombs had dropped. As it was, three of us developed hernias. The 1,000 lb. bombs were loaded two to a bay; a total of eight per plane, and for 2,000 lb. bombs we had to install special auxiliary racks in each bomb bay, each of which held only one bomb, for a maximum load of four bombs.

All of the above were maximum loads. For long missions deep into Germany, our planes often carried smaller loads; such as ten 500 pounders; six 1,000 pounders, and three 2,000 pounders. By far the bomb we most frequently used was the 500 lb. General Purpose (G.P.) demolition bomb. The following is a list of all bombs I can recall that we used:

- 24# anti-personnel fragmentation - 6 per cluster - 40 clusters
- 100# fragmentation (used against parked A/C - 40 per load
- 100# G.P. demolition - up to 40 per load
- 100# incendiary - up to 40 per load
- 250# G.P. demolition - 12 per load
- 300# G.P. demolition - 12 per load
- 500# G.P. demolition - 12 per load
- 1,000# G.P. demolition - 8 per load
- 1,000# armor-piercing demolition (against sub-pens) 8 per load
- 2,000# G.P. demolition - 4 per load

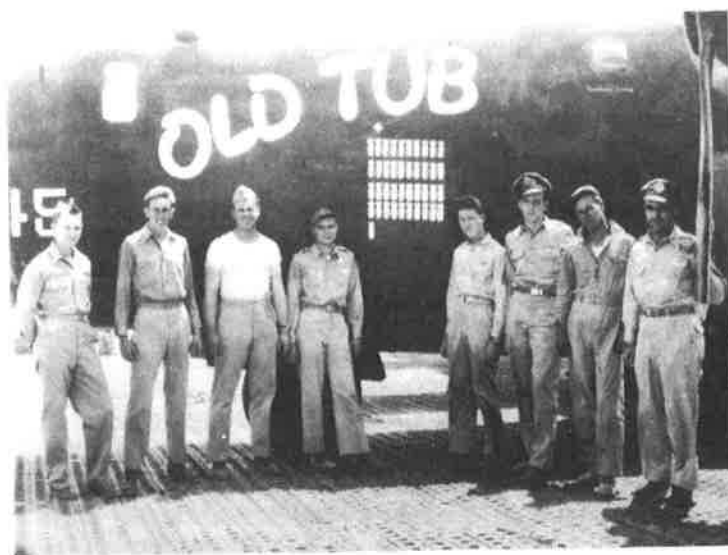
When the AF Headquarters called the Bomb Groups to give orders for the next day's bomb load, they used code words for each type bomb. I can recall only that the frag clusters were "Lightnings;" 500 pounders were "Liberators;" and the 2,000 pounders were "Thunderbolts." All other bombs were also given aircraft names as code words.

Overall during our service in the 15th Army Air Force, the 451st Bomb Group flew 245 combat missions, the first on 30 January 1944, and the last on 26 April 1945. We

bombed targets in Italy, France, Albania, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Rumania, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greece and Bulgaria. Most of our missions were against strategic targets, such as aircraft factories, submarine pens, ball-bearing factories, oil refineries, airdromes and marshalling yards. We also bombed lesser targets such as bridges, radar stations, highways and front line targets in support of troop operations. It would be tedious to go over these one-by-one in this history, thus it is my intent to describe what I regard as the most significant of our operations and those events which were of direct personal interest. As an attachment to his record I have included a copy of our Group's complete mission history, as compiled from official Air Force records by our 451st Bomb Group (H), Ltd. organization. (Note mission listing on Pages 16 --17)

We were grounded for the period 4-7 February because of extremely poor weather conditions. Generally, it was cold, rainy and windy and on the 6th we had several inches of wet snow on the ground. Our first real bleeding in combat occurred on 8 February when we bombed a steel mill and marshalling yards at Piombino, Italy. During take-off one of our Squadron planes, "Old Tub," #151, after appearing to lift off normally, and with her wheels already retracting, began to lose altitude, as though from loss of power. She crashed with full bomb load about five miles beyond the runway. Of the ten crew members aboard, only three survived, One very seriously injured. One of the gunners was found walking around in total shock about a mile from the crash site. Most of us who were at the runway got into the nearest trucks, weapons carriers and jeeps to drive to the crash to offer whatever help we could. There was little to do; the wreckage was a roaring inferno, as the entire load of fuel and two bombs exploded. After the heat subsided the medics came in to recover whatever remained of the bodies of the crew. The rest of us worked around the wreckage to pick up any reusable items of equipment or personal items we could find. I still recall picking up someone's fleece-lined flying boot, which seemed strangely heavy, and discovering to my horror that it still contained a human foot.

Yet there was more to come that day. The Group was subjected to heavy flak at the target and many planes were damaged. As we stood near the runway watching the planes return, we



"OLD TUB"
(Lt. Grant Sturman, Original Pilot and Crew)

saw a red flare fired from Captain Winski's plane; a signal that there were wounded aboard. His plane was given landing priority and as he swung into his final approach we could see that the entire upper front of the plane, including the windshield and upper turret dome, was red, as though covered with hydraulic fluid. Instinctively, we realized that there was no hydraulic system in that area and before the wheels touched the runway I am sure most of us realized that we were looking at blood, not hydraulic fluid.

Winski's nose gunner had taken a piece of flak directly in the head and had been entirely decapitated. We were to work all night under floodlights repairing the damage and cleaning up the turret. It was the most gruesome task of my life. After the medics removed the gunner's body we had to replace the damaged turret dome and clean up the mess, as best we could. Cleaning the upper part of the fuselage was easy, compared with cleaning the turret itself. There were bits and pieces of blasted bone and flesh in every recess and crevice. We were provided with some sort of disinfectant to help with the cleaning, but the smell of that, combined with the odor of the blood and flesh under the warm lights was sickening. For days afterwards, the new gunner who inherited that turret complained of the lingering odor.

On 9 February we received a new plane, #429, with only 85 hours on her, to replace "Old Tub." The following night we had our first experience with loading "Lightnings," the anti-personnel fragmentation bombs which were mounted six to a cluster. Each bomb came with fuze and fins already mounted and the cluster weighed over 150 pounds. We loaded these by hand, with a man on each end to lift. They were awful things to handle because there was no good handhold and sharp pieces of metal stuck out everywhere. Cut fingers and ripped clothing usually went with loading them, and even our gloves, when we finally got some, were usually short-lived. The frags were for troop support missions to the Anzio Beachhead, which were aborted because of bad weather.

On the afternoon of 14th a truck ran into the nose guns on #111, "Old Taylor," and bent them badly. Two of us spent all night replacing those guns. They were so badly bent that we had to saw off the barrels in order to remove the guns from the turret. It was bitter cold on the line that night and we wished we had the warm fleece-lined clothing that we had at Fairmont AAF.

On the 18th we had more snow and the mud around the field and tent areas seemed almost bottomless. Our planes were grounded for several days because of the weather. During this period I was still receiving Christmas packages from home; one with cookies in it was so badly crushed that only crumbs remained. On the 21st I had a pass and hitch-hiked into Bari where I went to a movie in a British theater and also spent some time at a British Service Club, which, as I recall, was called the Campbell Club. It was a strange fact that while American soldiers were always welcome at British facilities in Italy, the American Red Cross did not allow British or Colonial troops to use their facilities. This sort of blatant discrimination began to sour me on the Red Cross and the feeling increased over the months and remains with me to this day.

Early on the morning of the 23rd a stove exploded in our Group HQ building and burned the wood structure to the ground; it was a spectacular blaze. On the following day our Squadron had finally managed to set up a make-shift shower, with semi-warm water which flowed by gravity from a couple

55 gallon drums mounted on a wood platform. It wasn't much, and we had to wait in a long line, but I managed to get my first shower since 3 December and it really felt great!

After seven relatively easy missions to targets in Albania and Italy, we flew our first mission to Germany on 22 February; an aircraft factory near Regensburg. An attack on another ME-109 factory near Steyr, Austria followed the next day. Then on 25 February we flew a memorable mission. Our target was the same ME-109 aircraft factory at Regensburg which we had bombed, not too well, on the 22nd. Our Group led the attack with 40 aircraft. They flew to the target without fighter escort, since we then had no fighters with the necessary range. Enroute they were attacked almost continuously by some 200 Luftwaffe ME-109s and there was intense anti-aircraft fire from batteries near the target. During the aerial battle our gunners shot down 16 German fighters but we lost six B-24s. Our bombs were accurately placed on the target, in spite of opposition, with severe damage to the facility. Because many of the planes were damaged, or had injured crewmen, and because most were so low on fuel when they returned, almost all of our planes landed at fields near Foggia. Only three returned to Gioia that evening.



"HARD TO GET"
Lost 25 February 1944

Our Squadron lost one plane; Lt. Coleman's "Hard to Get," #738. This raid was part of what came to be known as the "Big Week" in the air offensive against Germany. Though we did not know it at the time, this was to be our last mission from that airfield. But it was also one of our finest; for this Regensburg mission our Group received its first Distinguished Unit Citation (Awarded by Presidential Decree), which entitled all personnel to wear the Distinguished Unit Citation, a gold rimmed badge with a blue field,

on the right breast of our uniform. Before the war was over we were to receive two additional such citations; we became one of two Bomb Groups to be awarded three Unit Citations in the Italian theater, but more notable was that all were earned within a span of six months.

It had been obvious for some time that our heavy bombers could not continue to operate from the field at Gioia del Colle. Their weight had forced the steel matting into the mud and landings had become hazardous. When our loaded B-24s took off they threw out "rooster tails" of mud and water, much like a racing hydroplane. Our planes returned to the field from Foggia on the 28th but thereafter the runway was closed to all but the RAF Hurricanes which were still flying troop support missions to the front lines. The problem was that our new field was still under construction and the Air Force could not simply ground a Bomb Group for a couple months.

It was decided that our Group should be broken up temporarily, with two Squadrons, ours and the 724th going to a field further south called San Pancrazio, with the other two

Squadrons to operate from another nearby field called Manduria. On the 2nd of March our Squadron started moving men and planes to the field at San Pancrazio. I took my last pass to Bari the following day and spent my time wandering around the city with three Canadian soldiers from the Eight Army.

On 5 March our Armament Section was told we would move the following day and we spent the rest of that day packing. The next day we took two of our five tents down, and dismantled our stoves, but the move did not come off. We had to double-up sleeping that night. On the 7th we took our remaining three tents down and three tent-groups of the fellows left that day, some by truck and others on planes. Those of us who remained had to sleep in the open on the ground with only a shelter half to cover us, as our blankets had been packed and shipped ahead. It was a bitter cold and miserable night.

On the morning of the 8th our fourth tent-group left by plane. My group was the last to leave; we had lunch at the 60th Service Squadron, then left via truck. The trip of about three and one-half hours took us through Taranto on very muddy roads and we finally arrived at our new field at San Pancrazio about supper time in a pouring rain. The other fellows had already put our tent up so we just had to unload and move in. The ground was very muddy and since there was not time to reassemble our bunk beds, which we had made from scrap wood at Gioia, we scavenged wood and roof tiles from nearby bombed-out building and put it on the ground to sleep on. Though the tiles kept us out of the mud, they didn't make a very comfortable bed! We even had to load bombs on a couple planes that night in the rain. During the next couple days we made our improvised bunk beds and got our stove set up.

When we had first started operations at Gioia our armament assignments were somewhat chaotic; we just all pitched in and did whatever work had to be done, regardless of which plane was involved. By mid February, however, we got a bit better organized. Our section was divided into three flights, each responsible for four or five planes. Each armorer was assigned to one specific plane, but the flight worked together on loading operations. My plane was #078, "Big Mogul," with Lt. Miller's flight crew. They were a fine crew and with our Crew



"BIG MOGUL"

Chief, T/Sgt Wilford Clayton, we were like a small family. Normally the gunners were responsible for cleaning and oiling their guns after every mission, while the armorer did all the maintenance and repair work.

Most of our Bomb loading was done during the night, for several reasons. The decision on what type and how many

bombs to load came from 15th Air Force Headquarters, and they seldom transmitted that decision before evening, after the day's mission had been evaluated. Once we got the word we had to wait sometimes two, three or more hours for the Ord-



"Dale Miller's Crew"

Standing: J. Garrison, B. Cross, K. Foor, E. Kidida, A. Feil. Kneeling: D. Miller, M. Hunter, R. Butts, N. Bilowick.

nance guys to drop the bombs off at the planes. Only then could the armorers begin their work. Usually the fastest response was when we had orders for 500 lb. GP demolition bombs, as they were the easiest to handle and load.

While at San Pancrazio we developed a new method for loading bombs to speed up our work and reduce labor. Instead of using two winches and a bomb sling, we dispensed with the sling and one winch. We had found that by simply making one turn of the winch cable around the bomb case and attaching the cable hook back onto the cable underneath the shackle, we could easily winch the bombs into position by simply letting them slide up along the bomb rack. Thus with one man cranking the winch and one guiding the bomb, two men, rather than three, could load a plane and could do it much quicker than by using the standard two-winch method. We felt the method was safe, since the cables were designed for use with 2,000 lb. Bombs, which meant they had a tensile strength well in excess of 1,000 pounds each. In a pinch, one man could load a plane by himself, provided he was very careful to get the bomb well balanced on the single cable. I often loaded my plane alone, with 100, 250 and even 500 lb. bombs.

We also developed a super-quick method of unloading planes when the bomb load had to be changed. Instead of setting up the winch and cranking each bomb down, we simply released the bombs one at a time by mechanically moving the shackle releases and letting them drop to the revetment! Of course, the fins and fuses were removed first and we only used this method on steel cased demolition bombs. The frags and incendiaries were always lowered by hand, never dropped. This seemed perfectly safe to us since the ground was relatively soft and was covered with flexible steel matting. In addition, we knew that T.N.T. was quite insensitive to that sort of mechanical shock. Later that year we learned to our dismay that this was NOT true of a newer type of bomb that I will describe later.

We also developed another innovative bomb loading technique at San Pancrazio. As noted earlier, a B-24 had a total of 20 bomb racks, which meant that, for example, only 20-100 lb. demo bombs could be carried. This represented a considerable waste of capacity which the Air Force should have recognized and done something about long before B-24s went into combat.

I do not know who came up with the idea, or even whether it was developed in our Squadron, or in the 60th Service Squadron. It was the sort of simple, but brilliant, idea which makes one wonder why he didn't think of it first. The concept was to hang a second small bomb (incendiary, frag cluster of 100 lb. demo) outboard of the one attached to the bomb rack, using a short length of steel cable hooked around the other bomb. The 60th Service Squadron fabricated the short cables with a loop swaged on each end. The cable was wrapped around the outboard bomb and the loops were slipped over the attached lugs on the inboard bomb and held in position by the shackle. It worked beautifully; when the bomb rack was triggered, both the bombs dropped, the cable simply fell off and the two bombs went on their way. This method doubled the capacity of the B-24 for carrying smaller demolition, fragmentation and incendiary bombs. It more than doubled the work load for the armorers, however, because it was a lot more difficult to load these doubles, especially when they were frag clusters. There was one benefit for us, however, double clusters of frags meant twice as many wood shipping crates which we could use for tent floors and makeshift chairs and bunks.

To give some idea of how our loading schedules went and the problems we had with delays and indecision, I will detail our work for a two week period in mid March of '44, as taken directly from my journal.

11 March - Planes bombed submarine pens at Toulon, France. That night we started to load ten 500 lbs. bombs on each plane. When we were almost finished, orders were changed to load 20 of the large 100 lb. fragmentation bombs instead. We unloaded the 500's and loaded the frags.

12 March - Mission cancelled. We were ordered to unload the fragmentation bombs and load 500 lb. Orders changed again; unloaded 500 lb bombs and reloaded the same frag bombs.

13 March - Planes grounded by weather. We unloaded the fragmentation bombs and loaded six 1,000 lb. bombs per plane. We had to wait for Ordnance, did not get started until 0200 and did not finish until 0430.

14 March - Planes grounded by heavy rain.

15 March - Planes supposed to bomb city of Cassino on troop support mission, but most could not find target through clouds and returned with bombs. We removed the 1,000 lb. bombs and loaded twelve 500 lb. bombs per plane, finishing at midnight.

16 March - Planes grounded by weather. We unloaded the 500 lb. bombs and loaded doubled (40) 100 lb. incendiary bombs per plane. We worked all night and finished at 0500 in the morning.

17 March - Planes bombed target in Vienna. We did not receive loading orders until midnight, then it was double clusters (40) of fragmentation bombs. We worked all night.

18 March - Planes bombed troop concentrations in Northern Italy. We loaded ten 500 lb. bombs per plane that night.

19 March - Planes bombed Klagenfurt, Austria. We loaded twelve 500 lb. bombs per plane.

20 March - Planes grounded by weather. we unloaded the 500 lb. and loaded double clusters of frags.

21 March - Mission cancelled by weather. Unloaded the frags in the morning. Planes went on a practice flight. "Ice Cold Katie," #751, cracked up on landing and was badly damaged. We loaded twelve 500 lb. bombs that night.

22 March - Planes left on a mission to Austria, but target

covered with clouds and all returned with full bomb load.

23 March - Planes grounded by weather. A 724th plane, piloted by Lt. Sunman, blew up while taking off. No survivors.

24 March - Planes bombed ball bearing factory at Steyr, Austria.

25 March - Planes Grounded by weather. We loaded double (40) 100 lb. incendiaries that night.

As can be seen from the above, the weather in March was atrocious. Our planes flew only ten missions that entire month, largely because of poor weather. As I try to think back to those days at San Pancrazio I can think only of mud and long back breaking nights. For some reason I have no clear memory of our tent area, the line area, or the field itself. That one-month period is almost a blank in my memory, as though the awful weather and primitive living conditions caused my mind to blank it all out. Since I had no film for most of that time, I don't even have any photos to jog my memory. By contrast, however, two or three events of that period do stand out in sharp relief over these forty past years.



"Deadly Playground"

It was common knowledge that there was a large Italian/German bomb and ammunition dump on a small hill near our field. On Sunday, 19 March, a group of us from the Armament Section decided to go and see what was there while the planes were on their mission. We took a weapons carrier and drove up a dirt road to the dump. The first thing we saw was a very large aerial bomb of at least 1,000 to 1,500 kilos. From its general design we decided it was Italian, rather than German. We looked it over very carefully to verify that the fuzes had been removed, then when we were quite sure it was safe several guys sat on the thing and the rest stood behind while I took their picture. There was almost every sort of ordnance in that dump that one could imagine. We could see several sizes of bombs, a huge pile of artillery shells, and scattered all about were a variety of anti-tank and anti-personnel mines. One of our fellows started to walk into the dump but the rest of us told him to get the hell out, which he did.

Just two days later I was sickened to learn that two of the gunners on my plane, "Big Mogul," Sergeants David Hall and Robert Whitney, had gone to the same dump and both been killed by an anti-personnel mine. No one else was present and no one knew what had happened, though there was speculation that one of them may have fired his pistol into the mess. If so, it was an incredibly stupid thing to do, as the whole dump might have gone up. The mine that killed them was a German "Bouncing Betty" anti-personnel mine, sometimes called a

"Butterfly" mine. When triggered they jump up and explode shrapnel at waist height. One man was dead and the other dying when they were discovered. Both were buried at the U.S. Military Cemetery in Bari. They were friends and I was sick about it. I wondered if I had mentioned the big bomb to them, and if so, whether that had led them to visit the dump. I still wonder when I think of it. After their deaths the Air Force declared the area off limits, but it was too late for them. There must have been hundreds of abandoned bomb and munitions dumps scattered all over Europe after the war. Whatever became of them? How many children may have died playing in such places?

On 30 March we bombed the marshalling yards at Sofia. When the planes returned, "Lonesome Polecat," #114, fired a red flare and, as on 8 February, we could see a red discoloration all over the nose. This time no one speculated about hydraulic fluid; we knew it was blood. The nose gunner had been hit in the head by a cannon shell from a ME-109, and it was every bit as bad as what happened to "Three Feathers." Fortunately, "Polecat" was assigned to another Flight so I was not involved in the clean up this time.

I had my own problems. During the mission one of Jack Garrison's tail guns had jammed on "Big Mogul." We were grounded the next day and I spent the entire day working on the gun with Jack. We changed almost every part that had anything to do with cartridge feed, but still the gun would jam when it was charged. Finally, we removed the entire gun and replaced it with a new one. Unbelievable, the new gun also jammed! It was already late at night, so I had no choice but to red-line the plane, something I had never had to do before.

We were still grounded on 1 April and I spent the day working on the gun and related hardware. Our top non-com, M/Sgt Oliver Jones spent several hours helping me, but even he gave up on it. Everyone was just plain stumped. The next morning, out of desperation, I removed every bit of the ammunition from



M/Sgt Oliver Jones

the tail turret and had Ordnance bring me some new belts. When I had it loaded and fed it into the gun it worked beautifully! The Ordnance guys then checked the old ammo and found that a section of the belt, which was from the "defective" gun had been improperly belted. Either the belting machine was out of adjustment or someone had not operated it correctly, as the rounds had simply not been fully inserted into the links. We were all dumbfounded!

"Big Mogul" was thus ready to go on a mission to Budapest on 3 April, though she missed one to Steyr the previous day. When she returned from Budapest one engine was badly shot up and one tire flattened. Lt. Miller brought her in beautifully on three engines and the flat tire, but she was out of commission for several days for an engine change.

Around the first of April we were advised to start packing our gear and equipment for early transfer to our new field near Foggia. We all hoped it wasn't an Air Force April Fool's joke!



47th Wing Identification Marking
(Carried from January 1944 to
April 1944)



Painting on New Wing Markings
(Solid Red on Top & Red Ball Lower
Section Denoted 49th Wing)

Editor Comments:

We shall continue this Journal in the next AD-LIB. The break in the story continuity comes at the time when the 451st became the senior Group in a new Wing; the 49th. This Wing was to be the smallest Wing in the 15th AAF, consisting of three groups: the 451st, 461st and the 484th Bomb Groups. It was commanded by Colonel [Later Brigadier General] William B. Lee.



726th Ground Crews

MISSION LISTING - 451ST BOMB GROUP (H) - 1944/1945

MISSION #	TARGET & COUNTRY	DATE	MISSION #	TARGET & COUNTRY	DATE
1	Fier Radar Station, Albania	30 Jan 1944	67	Rimini M/Y & Bridge, Italy	22 Jun 44
2	Durazio Radar Station, Albania	2 Feb 44	68	Giurgiu, Rumania	23 Jun 44
3	Arrezo M/Y, Italy	3 Feb 44	69	Le Pontet Telephone Building, France	25 Jun 44
4	Piombino M/Y, Italy	8 Feb 44	70	Vienna Oil Refineries, Austria	26 Jun 44
5	Velletri Troop Support, Italy	10 Feb 44	71	Chitila M/Y, Rumania	28 Jun 44
6	Anzio Troop Support, Italy	12 Feb 44	72	Blechhammer(Early Return), Germany	30 Jun 44
7	Siena M/Y, Italy	16 Feb 44	73	Budapest Locomotive Depot, Hungary	2 Jul 44
8	Regensburg A/C Factory, Germany	22 Feb 44	74	Bucharest Oil Storage, Rumania	3 Jul 44
9	Steyr A/C Factory, Austria	23 Feb 44	75	Beziers M/Y, France	5 Jul 44
10	* Regensburg A/C Factory, Germany	25 Feb 44	76	Aviano Oil Storage, Italy	6 Jul 44
11	Pontessieve M/Y, Italy	7 Mar 44	77	Blechhammer Oil Refineries, Germany	7 Jul 44
12	Toulon Sub/Pens, France	11 Mar 44	78	Vienna Oil Refineries, Austria	8 Jul 44
13	Cassino Troop Support, Italy	15 Mar 44	79	Toulon Sub/Pens, France	11 Jul 44
14	Vienna, Austria	17 Mar 44	80	Nimes M/Y, France	12 Jul 44
15	Lavariano, Italy	18 Mar 44	81	Petfurdo Oil Refineries, Hungary	14 Jul 44
16	Klagenfurt, Austria	19 Mar 44	82	Creditul Oil Refineries, Rumania	15 Jul 44
17	Steyr Ball Bearing Factory, Austria	24 Mar 44	83	Wiener Neusdorf A/C Factory, Austria	16 Jul 44
18	Mestre M/Y, Italy	28 Mar 44	84	Arles Railroad Bridge, France	17 Jul 44
19	Balzano M/Y, Italy	29 Mar 44	85	Manzell A/C Factory, Germany	18 Jul 44
20	Sofia M/Y, Bulgaria	30 Mar 44	86	Scheissheim Airdrome, Germany	19 Jul 44
21	Steyr, Austria	2 Apr 44	87	Brux Oil Refinery, Czechoslovakia	21 Jul 44
22	Budapest M/Y, Hungary	3 Apr 44	88	Ploesti Oil Refinery, Rumania	22 Jul 44
23	Bucharest M/Y, Rumania	4 Apr 44	89	Linz - Herman Goering Tank Fcty, Austria	25 Jul 44
24	* Ploesti Oil Refineries, Rumania	5 Apr 44	90	Beret Oil Refineries, Albania	26 Jul 44
25	Zagreb M/Y, Yugoslavia	12 Apr 44	91	Budapest Arms Factory, Hungary	27 Jul 44
26	Budapest Airdrome, Hungary	13 Apr 44	92	Ploesti Oil Refineries, Rumania	28 Jul 44
27	Bucharest M/Y, Rumania	15 Apr 44	93	Budapest Air Craft Factory, Hungary	30 Jul 44
28	Brasov Airdrome, Rumania	16 Apr 44	94	Bucharest Oil Refineries, Rumania	31 Jul 44
29	Belgrade Zemun Airdrome, Yugoslavia	17 Apr 44	95	Le Pontet Oil Storage, France	2 Aug 44
30	Ferrara M/Y, Italy	20 Apr 44	96	Vipiteno (Friedrichhafen Area), Germany	3 Aug 44
31	Bucharest, Rumania	21 Apr 44	97	Miramas M/Y, France	6 Aug 44
32	Bad Voslau Airdrome, Austria	23 Apr 44	98	Blechhammer Oil Refineries, Germany	7 Aug 44
33	Bucharest M/Y, Rumania	24 Apr 44	99	Almasfuzito Oil Refineries, Hungary	9 Aug 44
34	Orbetello Seaplane Base, Italy	28 Apr 44	100	Ploesti Oil Refineries, Rumania	10 Aug 44
35	Toulon Sub/Pens	29 Apr 44	101	Genoa Gun Positions, Italy	12 Aug 44
36	Alessandria M/Y, Italy	30 Apr 44	102	Genoa Gun Positions, Italy	13 Aug 44
37	Orbetello Seaplane Base, Italy	2 May 44	103	Toulon Gun Positions, France	14 Aug 44
38	Ploesti Oil Refineries, Rumania	5 May 44	104	Frejus Beach Area, France	15 Aug 44
39	Pitesti M/Y, Rumania	6 May 44	105	Ploesti Oil Refineries, Rumania	17 Aug 44
40	Bucharest M/Y, Rumania	7 May 44	106	Alibunar Airdrome, Yugoslavia	18 Aug 44
41	Weiner Neustadt Airdrome, Austria	10 May 44	107	Szolnock/Rakoczifala Airdrome, Hungary	20 Aug 44
42	Piombino Troop Support, Italy	12 May 44	108	Vienna Oil Storage, Austria	22 Aug 44
43	Faenza M/Y, Italy	13 May 44	109	* Markersdorf Airdrome (Vienna, Austria)	23 Aug 44
44	Padua M/Y, Italy	14 May 44	110	Ferrara Railroad Bridge, Italy	24 Aug 44
45	Porto Ferrajo Harbor Area, Italy	17 May 44	111	Otopeni Airdrome, Rumania	26 Aug 44
46	Ploesti Oil Refineries, Rumania	18 May 44	112	Venzone Viaduct, Italy	27 Aug 44
47	Recco Viaduct, Italy	19 May 44	113	Szolnock/Szajol R/R Bridge, Hungary	28 Aug 44
48	Marina De Carrara, Italy	22 May 44	114	Szeged M/Y, Hungary	29 Aug 44
49	Subiaco Troop Support, Italy	23 May 44	115	Ferrara Railroad Bridge, Italy	1 Sep 44
50	Wollersdorf Airdrome, Austria	24 May 44	116	Mitrovica Railroad Bridge, Yugoslavia	2 Sep 44
51	Carnoules M/Y, France	25 May 44	117	Sava E. R/R Bridge (Belgrade), Yugoslavia	5 Sep 44
52	Lyon, France	26 May 44	118	Save E. R/R Bridge (Belgrade), Yugoslavia	6 Sep 44
53	Salon De Provence Airdrome, France	27 May 44	119	Bron Airdrome (Supply) Lyon, France	10 Sep 44
54	Weomer Meistadt A/C Factory, Austria	29 May 44	120	Bron Airdrome (Supply) Lyon, France	11 Sep 44
55	Wels A/C Factory, Austria	30 May 44	121	Bron Airdrome (Supply) Lyon, France	12 Sep 44
56	Ploesti Oil Refineries, Rumania	31 May 44	122	Bron Airdrome (Supply) Lyon, France	13 Sep 44
57	Szolnok M/Y, Hungary	2 Jun 44	123	Bron Airdrome (Supply) Lyon, France	15 Sep 44
58	Gad Railroad Bridge, Italy	4 Jun 44	124	Bron Airdrome (Supply) Lyon, France	16 Sep 44
59	Rimini Bridge, Italy	5 Jun 44	125	Bron Airdrome (Supply) Lyon, France	17 Sep 44
60	Ploesti Oil Refineries, Rumania	6 Jun 44	126	Bron Airdrome (Supply) Lyon, France	22 Sep 44
61	Antheor Viaduct, France	7 Jun 44	127	Athens/Eleusis Airdrome, Greece	24 Sep 44
62	Porto Marghero Oil Refinery, Italy	9 Jun 44	128	Athens Area - Sub/Pens, Greece	25 Sep 44
63	Porto Marghero Oil Refinery, Italy	10 Jun 44	129	(Able) Munich West, Germany	4 Oct 44
64	Giurgiu Oil Starages, Rumania	11 Jun 44		(Baker) Latisana Railroad Bridge, Italy	4 Oct 44
65	Neuaubing - Munich Area, Germany	13 Jun 44	130	(Red) Vienna Oil Refineries, Austria	7 Oct 44
66	Szony Oil Refineries, Hungary	14 Jun 44		(Blue) Komarno M/Y, Hungary	7 Oct 44

MISSION #	TARGET & COUNTRY	DATE	MISSION #	TARGET & COUNTRY	DATE
131	Castelfranco M/Y, Italy	10 Oct 44	193	Wels Repair Depot, Austria	17 Feb 45
132	Graz Area, Austria	11 Oct 44	194	St. Valentin Tank Works, Austria	18 Feb 45
133	Bologna (Target #97), Italy	12 Oct 44	195	Graz M/Y, Austria	19 Feb 45
134	Osterreichische Motor Wks & M/Y, Austria	13 Oct 44	196	Pola Naval Base, Italy	20 Feb 45
135	Oderal Oil Refineries, Germany	14 Oct 44	197	Vienna Station Area, Austria	21 Feb 45
136	Linz - H. Goering Benzol Plant, Austria	16 Oct 44	198	Roseheim & Target of Opportunity, Germany	22 Feb 45
137	Vienna/Vosendorf Oil Refineries, Austria	17 Oct 44	199	Knittelfeld M/Y, Austria	23 Feb 45
138	Milan Breda Works, Italy	20 Oct 44	200	Klagenfurt M/Y, Austria	24 Feb 45
139	(Red) Munich Allach A/C Fcty, Germany	23 Oct 44	201	Linz M/Y, Austria	25 Feb 45
	(Blue) Milan Breda Works, Italy	23 Oct 44	202	Caprag Oil Refineries, Yugoslavia	26 Feb 45
140	Regensburg Oil Refinery, Germany	29 Oct 44	203	Augsbure M/Y, Germany	27 Feb 45
141	Podgorica Troop Concentrations, Yugoslavia	31 Oct 44	204	(Red) Balzano M/Y, Italy	28 Feb 45
142	Vienna Ordnance Depot, Austria	1 Nov 44		(Blue) Balzano M/Y, Italy	28 Feb 45
143	Klagenfurt A/C Factory, Germany	3 Nov 44	205	(Red) Moosbierbaum Oil Refineries, Austria	1 Mar 45
144	Kufstein M/Y, Germany	4 Nov 44		(Blue) Moosbierbaum Oil Refineries, Austria	1 Mar 45
145	(Baker) Vienna Oil Refineries, Austria	5 Nov 44	206	Linz Benzol Plant, Austria	2 Mar 45
	(Charlie) Sarajevo M/Y, Yugoslavia	5 Nov 44	207	Graz M/Y, Austria	4 Mar 45
146	(Able) Vienna Ordnance Depot, Austria	6 Nov 44	208	(Red) Hegyeshalom M/Y, Hungary	8 Mar 45
	(Baker) Salerno Transformer Station, Italy	6 Nov 44		(Blue) Hegyeshalom M/Y, Hungary	8 Mar 45
147	Sarajevo (Ali Pasin Most) M/Y, Yugoslavia	7 Nov 44	209	(Red) Bruck M/Y, Austria	9 Mar 45
148	Aviano Airdrome, Italy	11 Nov 44		(Blue) Graz M/Y, Austria	9 Mar 45
149	Innsbruck Main M/Y, Germany	15 Nov 44	210	Vienna Oil Refineries, Austria	12 Mar 45
150	Munich West M/Y, Germany	16 Nov 44	211	Regensburg M/Y, Germany	13 Mar 45
151	(A-Blue) Vienna Oil Refineries, Austria	17 Nov 44	212	Weiner Neustadt M/Y, Austria	14 Mar 45
	(B-Red) Blechhammer South O/R, Germany	17 Nov 44	213	Klagenfurt M/Y, Austria	15 Mar 45
152	Villa Franco Airdrome, Italy	18 Nov 44	214	Moosbierbaum Oil Refineries, Austria	16 Mar 45
153	Maribor M/Y, Yugoslavia	19 Nov 44	215	Muhldorf M/Y, Germany	19 Mar 45
154	Blechhammer South O/R, Germany	20 Nov 44	216	Wels M/Y, Austria	20 Mar 45
155	Novi Pazar Troop Concentration, Yugoslavia	21 Nov 44	217	Bruck M/Y, Austria	21 Mar 45
156	Munich M/Y, Germany	22 Nov 44	218	Vienna Kagran O/R (+ Graz), Austria	22 Mar 45
157	Innsbruck Main M/Y, Germany	25 Nov 44	219	Vienna Kagran Oil Refineries, Austria	23 Mar 45
158	Blechhammer South O/R, Germany	2 Dec 44	220	Buedjovice M/Y, Czechoslovakia	24 Mar 45
159	Innsbruck M/Y, Austria	3 Dec 44	221	Prague Kbely Airdrome, Czechoslovakia	25 Mar 45
160	Maribor M/Y, Yugoslavia	6 Dec 44	222	Straszhof M/Y, Austria	26 Mar 45
161	Innsbruck M/Y, Austria	7 Dec 44	223	Klagenfurt M/Y, Austria	30 Mar 45
162	Graz M/Y, Austria	8 Dec 44	224	Linz Benzol Plant, Austria	31 Mar 45
163	Villach M/Y, Austria	9 Dec 44	225	Klagenfurt M/Y, Austria	1 Apr 45
164	BruX Oil Refineries, Czechoslovakia	10 Dec 44	226	St. Polten M/Y, Austria	2 Apr 45
165	Vienna, Austria	11 Dec 44	227	Brescia M/Y, Italy	5 Apr 45
166	Linz M/Y, Austria	15 Dec 44	228	Brescia Arms Plant, Italy	6 Apr 45
167	BruX Oil Refineries, Czechoslovakia	16 Dec 44	229	Bressanone Railroad Bridge, Italy	7 Apr 45
168	Oderal Oil Refineries, Germany	17 Dec 44	230	Gorizia M/Y, Italy	8 Apr 45
169	Blechhammer Oil Refineries, Germany	18 Dec 44	231	(Red) Area Apple Ground Support, Italy	9 Apr 45
170	Blechhammer Oil Refineries, Germany	19 Dec 44		(Blue) Area Apple Ground Support, Italy	9 Apr 45
171	Linz M/Y, Austria	20 Dec 44	232	(Red) Area Baker Ground Support, Italy	10 Apr 45
172	Wels M/Y, Austria	25 Dec 44		(Blue) Area Baker Ground Support, Italy	10 Apr 45
173	Oswiecim Oil Refineries, Poland	26 Dec 44	233	Bronzola M/Y, Italy	11 Apr 45
174	Venzone Railroad Viaduct, Italy	27 Dec 44	234	St. Veit Railroad Bridge, Austria	12 Apr 45
175	Venzone Railroad Viaduct, Italy	28 Dec 44	235	Malcontenta Ammunition Factory, Italy	14 Apr 45
176	Udine Factory, Italy	29 Dec 44	236	(Red) Bologna (Area M-22), Italy	15 Apr 45
177	Trento Rail Installations, Italy	4 Jan 1945		(Blue) Nervesa Railroad Bridge, Italy	15 Apr 45
178	Zagreb Rail Installations, Yugoslavia	5 Jan 45	237	Bologna (Area ST-18), Italy	16 Apr 45
179	Linz M/Y, Austria	8 Jan 45	238	Bologna (Area ST-18), Italy	17 Apr 45
180	Vienna Locomotive Factory, Austria	15 Jan 45	239	Avisio Railroad Bridge, Italy	19 Apr 45
181	Brod Railroad Bridge, Yugoslavia	19 Jan 45	240	Lusia Road Bridge, Italy	20 Apr 45
182	Linz M/Y, Austria	20 Jan 45	241	Attnang-Puchiem M/Y, Austria	21 Apr 45
183	(Red) Graz M/Y, Austria	31 Jan 45	242	Badia Road Bridge, Italy	23 Apr 45
	(Blue) Moosebierbaum Oil Refineries, Austria	31 Jan 45	243	Rovereta M/Y, Italy	24 Apr 45
184	Moosebierbaum Oil Refineries, Austria	1 Feb 45	244	Linz M/Y, Austria	25 Apr 45
185	Regensburg Oil Storage, Germany	5 Feb 45	245	Sachsenburg M/Y, Austria	26 Apr 45
186	(Red) Korneuburg Oil Refineries, Austria	7 Feb 45			
	(Blue) Bratislava Port Area, Czechoslovakia	7 Feb 45			
187	Vienna Repair Shops, Austria	8 Feb 45			
188	Graz M/Y, Austria	9 Feb 45			
189	(Able) Maribor M/Y, Yugoslavia	13 Feb 45			
	(Baker) Maribor M/Y, Yugoslavia	13 Feb 45			
190	(Red) Moosbierbaum Oil Refineries, Austria	14 Feb 45			
	(Blue) Moosbierbaum Oil Refineries, Austria	14 Feb 45			
191	(Red) Vosendorf Oil Refineries, Austria	15 Feb 45			
	(Blue) Vienna M/Y, Austria	15 Feb 45			
192	Neuburg Airdrome, Germany	16 Feb 45			

M/Y = Marshalling Yards

O/R = Oil Refineries

A/C = Aircraft Factory

* = Distinguished Unit Citation Awarded

NEWSPAPERS RECALL EARLIEST GROUP TRAGEDY

Since our 7 September 1990 excursion onto our old air base at Fairmont, Nebraska, a much deeper and more involved interest has been generated between this office and the folks in Fillmore County regarding our earliest history.

As a result of our "invasion" some of the folks of the area have been sending me copies of newspaper articles that were first circulated back in 1943. Two such front page articles; one published in the Lincoln State Journal on October 26, 1943, the other in the Milligan Review, October 1943, were recently received from Mrs. Dorothy Novak of Milligan, NE. I am including both versions. It seems that the Milligan rendition is more detailed, whereas the Lincoln State Journal was, perhaps, more widespread in circulation, and a bit more general in coverage.

LINCOLN STATE JOURNAL

HEAVY BOMBERS COLLIDE - Both based at Fairmont

FAIRMONT, Neb. (AP) Seventeen men were killed and one parachuted to safety Monday afternoon when two B-24 bomber planes collided in the air north of Milligan about 4:30 p.m., Monday. Lt. Henry B. Holmes, public relations officer at Fairmont army air field, said Tuesday.

Second Lt. Melvin Klein, Chicago, co-pilot on one of the planes, was thrown out of the plane and managed to descend safely by parachute, Lieutenant Holmes said. Lieutenant Klein walked to the Milligan post office and called the Fairmont base to report the accident.

Those killed were:

2ND LTS. CHARLES L. BROWN, Fairplay, Mo., CLYDE H. FRYE, Catawba, N.C., JAMES H. WILLIAMS, Cincinnati, O., WILLIAM E. HERZOG, Springfield, O., KENNETH S. ORDWAY, Hornell, N.Y. FLIGHT OFFICER ACHILLE P. AUGELLI, Scranton, Pa.

SGTS. EUGENE A. HUBBELL, Detroit, Mich., WILLIAM C. WILSON, Kincaid, W. Va., ALBERT R. MOGAVERO, Long Island, N.Y., ARTHUR A. DORIA, Watertown, Mass., JAMES H. BOBBITT, Boloxi, Miss., WILLIAM D. WATKINS, Pelzer, S.C., WILBUR H. CHAMBERLAIN, Pawtucket, R.I., WILLIAM H. WILLIAMS, Berwyn, Ill., EDWARD O. BOUCHER, Detroit, Mich., URSULE GALINDA, Jr. Escondido, Calif. PFC ANDREW G. BIVONA, Newburgh, N.Y.

Lieutenant Holmes said both planes burned after falling on farms about three miles apart in the district two to five miles north of Milligan, Neb.

FAIRMONT, Neb. (AP) Two B-24 bomber planes from the Fairmont field collided in the air north of Milligan about 4:30 p.m., Monday while on a routine flight, Lt. Henry C. Holmes, public relations officer at the Fairmont army air field, said Tuesday. Holmes gave no indication of the number of casualties.

The planes were on a routine training flight. Officials from the Fairmont field are investigating.

Fairmont is in Fillmore county in southeast Nebraska. Milligan also is in Fillmore, about 15 miles southeast of Fairmont.

Lieutenant Holmes said one plane crashed two miles north of

Milligan and the other three miles from the point where the first one hit.

A guard has been placed around the entire area pending the investigation.

One of the planes was reported to have crashed on the farm of Mrs. Anna Matejka and the other in the farm yard of Mike Stech.

FROM THE MILLIGAN REVIEW

PLANE CRASH TAKES HEAVY TOLL OF LIVES MILLIGAN ACCIDENT CLAIMS SEVENTEEN

(Editor: the first part of the MILLIGAN REVIEW article was the same as carried in the Lincoln State Journal. A more detailed account is herewith included from the Milligan Review)

"According to eye witness accounts of the accident, it was told that a thunderous crash was heard in the skies which reverberated in the earth but nothing was visible because of the heavy clouds that overcast the sky. Then a thunderous roar of the motors was heard which diminished and resounded again. Looking skyward, people in the vicinity saw three separate parts of an airplane come hurtling toward the ground thru the clouds, and at almost the same time another plane came earthward. While eyes were frozen to the course of the earth-bound planes, a figure with a parachute floating towards earth attracted the attention of many. This was the only survivor of the tragedy. Fragments of the plane strew the air for several minutes afterwards. As the first plane crashed, a deafening explosion resulted which sent black clouds of smoke soaring upward for several hundred feet. The second plane, according to the eye witnesses, tried to make a landing, evidently, as it tried to straighten its course of flight. It dived, circled, and went into a spin, then glided and again spun earthward. The crash caused a terrific explosion and the plane burned, sending up billowing black columns of smoke. The first bomber crashed about a half mile from the Frank Hromadka farm, partly in their pasture, but was scattered for a great distance. The second bomber crashed about 50 feet west of the Mike Stech farm home setting fire to a chicken coop and hog shed. All the chickens were killed and about 20 hogs had to be shot as they were so badly burned. The latter plane, however was intact, except for a missing tail without which it was almost impossible to make a crash landing. The radio had described this plane as attempting to make "an heroic crash landing.

Lt. Klein related that he undoubtedly was knocked out of the plane as a result of the crash impact in the air. He further said that he must have been either dazed or partially unconscious, but as he plummeted earthward the cold air revived him and he pulled the rip-cord which opened his chute. He stated that even his parachute was only partially on him. Upon landing, he remained on the ground for some time but before someone could get to him, he got up and began walking toward the Matejka farm. As he got to the section line, Mrs. Jerry Krupicka, who saw the accident, was driving by and took him to town from where he made a call to the Fairmont Air Base. He suffered only a minor leg sprain and a bump on the head and limped a little.

The explosion and columns of smoke were audible and visible

for miles and miles and people from this immediate vicinity and from neighboring towns began pouring in from all directions. The Friend fire department arrived at the Stech farm to protect the adjoining buildings. Some time later the military personnel from both the Fairmont and Bruning Air Bases arrived at the scene of the tragedy. The crowds were dispersed and a military guard policed the areas. Shortly afterwards ambulances and civilian and military fire departments from the airfields came upon the scene. The charred bodies of the men were removed to the air base. The twisted wreckage was a horrible and sickening sight.

The windows on the west side of the Stech house were blown in from the concussion of the explosion. Milo Hromadka states that he was in the proximity of the first plane and the concussion of the explosion was so terrific that it knocked him backwards. Mrs. Hromadka witnessed the tragedy from a bathroom window and said the explosion shook the whole house. Jerry Krupicka relates that he was husking corn in the field near Hromadka and when he saw the plane coming earthward he ran toward the scene and about that time a large fragment fell just about 25 feet from him. He ran back and sought refuge under the wagon from further fragments. Fred and Mike Stech saw the second plane reeling toward them and they spurred their horses in an opposite direction to avoid being hit. The plane circled and they had to drive their wagon back again.

The accident was indeed tragic and brings closer to our minds the horrors of war. The only fortunate part of the whole tragedy was that the planes did not crash into a home, a school or perhaps a crowded street which would have resulted in still greater tragedy.'

Upon my first reading of these articles, an amazing fact came to my attention. Included in the listing of those that died was the name of **Sergeant James H. Bobbitt**. Up to this point, in all my readings of our history, his name had not been mentioned.

This omission sent me back into my volumes of data in the hopes I could justify this error. I could find no reference in our history to this extra man.

What follows is information from our history, that describes the two major disasters that befell the 451st while training at Fairmont AAF.

On 10 October 1943, when we suffered our first aerial tragedy, the results were written as follows:

"The first fatal accident in the group occurred at 0730 October 10, 1943, when Crew 42 of the 726th Squadron was flying a routine training mission, high altitude, over Wayne, Nebraska, about fifty miles from FAAF. The A/c caught fire in midair and plunged to destruction. There were three officers and three enlisted men aboard. All were instantly killed."

In this description of that incident, not only were the deceased listed, but their numbers (six victims) were given.

In the crash description given in our history, involving James Bobbitt, no pure numbers (i.e. sixteen/seventeen killed) were given for reference. As written in our history:

"The tragedy was hardly forgotten (10 October) when, at 1615, 25 October 1943, two airplanes assigned to the 724th Squadron collided in midair during a formation flight near the FAAF. Both A/c crashed to the ground and all personnel, save one was killed."

Indeed, we've encountered another confusion in our overall history. In this case, unlike the "Ploesti Picture," we are attempting to rectify the omission of "a human casualty" that was one of our own. I have no wish to let the matter drop without hearing from those of you that made up the original 724th Squadron cadre, especially those that have a clear recall of the facts. This office would welcome your comments.

BUSINESS/CALLING CARD AVAILABILITY AIRED

I've been getting queries to make available personalized items that our office could sell our members. Something besides our colorful Membership Card, but in the same vein. An item that can be passed on to denote the givers relationship to their old Group.

I have thought after seeing beautiful logos on some of our members' donation checks, that this could be the classy route to go. I'm not truly versed in how this could be achieved, nor how this distribution could be handled. I'm sure it would be quite expensive. But the thought is always in the back of my mind.

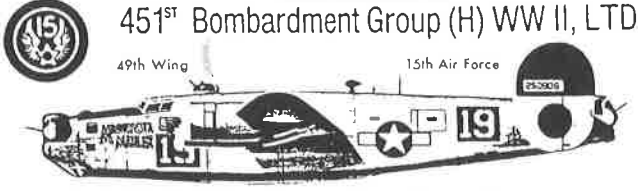
What came to light, as a workable alternative to the personalized check, was to have two-color Business/Calling Cards made with the member's name, address, and phone number printed thereon (Note Example). Bob Kacena (Hdq) spurred me into getting prices and info, and checking out the feasibility of such an undertaking.

In talking with my "printer," I was advised that, by volume, he could give me a respectable quote for a minimum of 500 cards per individual. This would mean that I would get the printing "camera ready" from this office, and they would do the color separation (red & blue), setup, and printing.

By volume, the printer referred to multiples of 10 or more individuals ordering at one time to get the price affordable. In this way he could "gang" the individual cards into mass printings. And that would bring the costs to \$30, per 500 cards.

It would include shipping and handling from this office, and would, if my figures are correct, be about six cents per card. What better way to flaunt your connection with your wartime affiliation than to flash these colorful ID's.

If you are interested, give me the particulars; name, address and phone number(s) you want on your card. We will not change the "Member at Large" status with anything else as this would only confuse "yours truly." Designate your check as payment for these cards. Any profit realized will go into the "kitty." Remember; the line forms right behind Bob Kacena -keep yourselves at respectable intervals.

FORMER MEMBERS OF THE	
451ST Bombardment Group (H) WW II, LTD.	
49th Wing	15th Air Force
	
GROUP HEADQUARTERS 724th 725th 726th 727th Squadrons	
(YOUR NAME PRINTED HERE)	
Member at Large	
PHONE: (123) 456-7890	RESIDENCE: 1000 Succotash Lane Hometown, USA 12345

P.R.O. DOES MAJOR JOB FOR 724th C.O.: BEANE

(Editor's comment) The following story is written up in "The Fight'n 451st Bomb Group (H)" book on page 121. Those of you that have already purchased the book, have probably read the article. To those that hadn't, I'm including it for your perusal. As all Public Relations stories go, this one is hardly any different. A little twist of facts here; a little more emphasis on THIS rather than THAT, and you have a more palatable story for the folks back home. In view of what I only suspected as "not offering the complete story," I solicited Robert Stone and his Crew #3 for their perspective; striving for a more total picture. Bob Stone (Pilot) and Roger Johnston (Navigator) supplied two of the follow-up statement. Others of the crew are coming forward with their interpretation. Their comments, for the most part, parallel each other in substance, but may vary in minor details concerning the mission. We have to remember, this happened over 47 years ago and the rewards of age isn't necessarily "a clear and total recall."



Major James B. Beane
724th Squadron Commander

do a lot of damage, so I toggled them out, hoping for the best."

"Then the ship caught another burst, and I hit the alarm bell. My copilot called over the interphone to bail out. I counted eight chutes opening below us. The ship was deserted, except for the co-pilot and myself. By juggling the control we managed to keep our altitude. It was a long chance, but we figured that with luck we might make Yugoslavia and bail out over there."

"With our wing slanted upward and the other pointed to the ground, we began the long trek home. We might have made it, too, if it hadn't been for the fighters. They like cripples."

"We were just beginning to feel that the danger had passed, when I looked out the window and saw six ME-109s diving in for the kill. The first one made a pass and pumped two 20 mm shells

into the fuselage. Everything happened so fast after that, it's hard to remember all of it. I'll never forget some parts though."

"The second fighter drilled shells through the flight deck, and we could feel the metal pinging into the armor plate of our seats. Another fighter came in from the tail and we could hear bullets rip into the fuselage. We dumped the nose just in time to see some tracers go by overhead."

"The ship was literally falling apart by this time. After a few more passes we were afire. Then we threw in the towel and prepared to jump. While I tried to keep the ship on an even keel, my co-pilot slid out of the cockpit and jumped. I let go of the controls and lunged for the open bomb bay."

"The next thing, I was dangling from the shroud lines watching the ship spinning down ablaze from stem to stern."

"I landed in a small village and was taken prisoner. The next few months were not particularly pleasant, and the food and quarters were not the best. Our prison was close to the Ploesti factories, too close for safety. With the increased bombing of the oil fields by the 15th AAF during the day and RAF by night, life became a nightmare of explosions."

"During one of the attacks, I was buried under a heap of rubble which a moment before had been the living quarters of 110 prisoners. I crawled out, unhurt, but others were not so fortunate."

"On the day Rumania declared war on Germany, I was in Bucharest with more than 100 other prisoners. When the gates of freedom were opened we were welcomed as comrades. The day before we had been enemies. The people couldn't do enough for us. Wine cellars were thrown open, and every home had a welcome written on the front door."

Captain Robert Stone (Aircraft Commander)

This is my remembrance of 5 April 1944 raid on the oil production facilities of Ploesti, Rumania.

After an early morning wake-up by the CQ, we had the usual

But for starters, here's the original P.R.O. story:

MAJOR JAMES B. BEANE RETURNS FROM RUMANIA RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS

"Give 'em hell, boys, I'm going down," from a crippled, burning B-24 Liberator of the 15th AAF echoed this cry of Major James B. Beane, 1601 Tamarind Avenue, Hollywood, Calif., leading a group of B-24 bombers over the oil refineries at Ploesti.

Hundreds of earphones picked up his challenge. Seconds later a shower of bombs dropped on the target.

That was on April 5, the first 15th AAF attack on Ploesti. Sunday, five months later, the bombing of Ploesti was over, Rumania was out of the war, and among the hundreds of American airmen shot down on that mission to Rumania who were liberated from their prison camp was Major Beane.

When he came back to his outfit, the Distinguished Flying Cross awaited him at the 451st Bomb Group, and had been waiting since April 5.

While Major General Nathan F. Twining pinned the blue Battle Streamers on the Group's blue and gold banner, Major Beane, in the same wrinkled Khaki uniform which he wore 25 hours before in Bucharest, Rumania, stood stiffly at attention while the Adjutant read the citation.

Later he had a chance to describe the swiftly moving events which led to a prison camp in Rumania.

"We had just turned on the bomb run when the ship staggered from a direct flak hit. I looked out on the left wing and saw a hole big enough to swim through. The left aileron was jammed, and the one engine was shot out."

We dropped out of formation and began to lose altitude rapidly, we weren't up to the bomb release line, and still had our load of bombs. Even if we were going down we could still

GI breakfast. At the morning operation briefing we were informed that the 724th Bomb Squadron would lead the 2nd wave of the 451st Bomb Group. My crew had been selected to lead that formation with Squadron Commander Major James Beane as co-pilot. There were the usual comments and gripes from the crew members about Beane taking the place of Lt. Paul Johnshoy on that mission. No crew likes to have to take on a substitute member, especially since Beane had a reputation as an excitable and nervous individual.

Our crew that day was made up of:

Captain Robert L. Stone (Pilot)

Major James B. Beane (Copilot)

1Lt. Roger A. Johnston (Navigator)

1Lt. Russell K. Crans (Bombardier)

T/Sgt John J. Stuerer (AEG & UG)

T/Sgt Orin E. Howard (ROMG)

T/Sgt Bernie C. Hayman (NG)

S/Sgt Eugene Cuff (BG)

S/Sgt Patrick A. Marnell (LWG)

S/Sgt Robert R. Yeaton (RWG)

S/Sgt William F. Berry (TG)

The take-off from our base in Southern Italy was normal, as the Squadron ships quickly joined formation. We got our 2nd wave in position behind and slightly above the 1st wave. As the formation approached the Yugoslavian coast, numerous other Bomb Groups could be seen in the surrounding sky. A cloud cover was forming inland over the mountains, so we climbed slowly to avoid the clouds, and to avoid scattering our formation. What happened to the 1st wave I am not sure. They either made a 360 degree climbing turn or flew into the clouds. Anyway, we lost visual contact with them. In any event, we continued on course amid the other Bomb Groups. As we neared the IP (Initial Point), fighters began attacks on our formation. According to reports from our gunners, another Group behind us was under heavy attack. After turning towards at the IP, the aircraft was placed on auto-pilot and control on the bomb run was assumed by the bombardier. The flak became very intense as the bomb release point was approached. I could hear some pieces of shrapnel striking the ship. Almost immediately after the bombardier called "Bombs Away," we heard and felt an explosion in the aircraft. A shell had hit and exploded in the left wing just outboard of the #1 engine. A rather large hole was in the wing, parts of a fuel tank was flapping in the wind, the left aileron cable was either jammed, or severed, and the #1 engine was dead.

At this point the aircraft was almost out of control and going into a steep spiral. At this juncture Major Beane became very excited and agitated and ordered the crew to bail out. The aircraft was finally brought under some semblance of control by throttling back to idle, the #3 and #4 engines, and increasing the power on #2. Altitude was being lost rapidly, but we had managed to head west. Just out of the target area we were attacked by two ME 109s. Now without any gunners on board we were at their mercy. Major Beane did get into the upper turret, but could not get it to operate; either he didn't know

how, or it was damaged. The enemy pilots were taking their time knocking us off. The right wing was set on fire and we took several hits in the cockpit area. Some of their bullets struck the armor plate behind the pilots seats, a cannon shell exploded below and to the left of my seat. I was wounded in the left knee and leg.

After the fire started in the right wing, further efforts to keep the aircraft in the air was hopeless. So Major Beane made an intercom check to determine if all crew members were all out - he got no response. He also quickly checked the nose and waist compartments. We both bailed out of the bomb bay. After leaving the ship it rolled over and dived into a nearby valley and exploded. After my parachute opened, a German fighter circled once and flew away.

We both landed in the center of a small village of Goldinia.

My parachute hung on top of a small house. Before I could get out of the harness and down to the ground, a soldier and a crowd of people had surrounded me. That night we spent in the local jail. They searched us, only for weapons, and that night we burned our mission notes and hid the escape evasion maps and other items in our jacket sleeve linings.

The next day two soldiers loaded us, handcuffed, into a horse drawn wagon and took us to Targovista. We were kept there in a military compound with about 15 other Americans for a couple of days.

Then to Ploesti in a bus and into another military compound. After being interrogated for about 2 days, by English speaking Rumanian officers, we were sent to the Bucharest Prison Camp. There we remained until Rumania surrendered in late August 1944.

Roger Johnston (Navigator)

The book "FIGHT'N 451st" is an invaluable and remarkably good historical record. I have read intently, the accounts and experiences of the many contributors. What follows may be considered an addendum, as well as my personal recollection of the April 5, 1944 bombing mission of the oil refining center at Ploesti, Rumania. On that day the 451st flew a maximum effort to attack and destroy the petroleum refinery installation. Flying at an altitude of 22,500 ft. it was the first of many high level daytime raids to follow. Not all of the 451st planes reached the target area that day, but those that did, were met with determined enemy opposition, both fighter planes and flak.

I, Lt. Roger Johnston, was the navigator of what was to be the lead ship of the second wave. The pilot, Captain Robert Stone, was at the controls and Major James B. Beane, 724th Squadron Commander, flew as copilot, replacing Lt. Paul Johnshoy for this mission, who was otherwise the regular copilot. The bombardier, and a good one, was Lt. Russell Crans. The remainder of the crew that day were all Sergeants of varying grades. John Steurer was the flight engineer; Oren Howard, radio operator and gunner; Bennie Hayman, nose gunner; William Berry, tail gunner, Patrick Marnell, waist gunner; Eugene Cuff and Robert Yeaton filled in at top and belly turrets.



Robert Stone's Crew Next to Original Gashouse

While climbing on course to flight altitude, a dense cloud coverage over the Adriatic Sea, and continuing over Yugoslavia, caused our second wave to lose visual contact with the other wave of 451st aircraft. I do not know for sure to this day, whether our wave may have even passed up, and gone ahead of the intended first wave, but we were on our own.

About 15 to 20 minutes before reaching the target, the cloud coverage below began to clear. The target area was reached about 1440 hours, and the bomb run began from the IP (Initial Point). The enemy fighter plane attack and flak were now intense. Lt. Crans, the Bombardier, had control of the airplane. He called "BOMBS AWAY!" over the interphone. He looked up at me and we nodded approval to each other. It was then, the thud of a flak burst to the left wing was heard and felt. Our B-24 began to labor in its forward progress. In the excitement and heat of battle, Major Beane may have thought he toggled and released the bomb load, but in fact the bomb drop had already been made by Lt. Crans. The 451st was later awarded the second of its Distinguished Unit Citations for its performance on this Ploesti raid.

Next we heard the alarm bell ring and the voice of Major Beane over the interphone saying, "Get the hell out of here boys, and make it quick." Crans and I pulled the emergency handle and opened the nose wheel hatch. As I bent over to leap, Crans booted me in the butt and away I went, still wearing my oxygen mask, and dragging the entire length of the oxygen hose, which broke off from the adaptor connection.

All of the crew successfully abandoned the airplane and returned to the States following POW internment. Our crippled B-24 was blown apart by enemy fighter attack, I have since learned, but not until the entire crew had parachuted.

My own descent was thru a calm stillness in spite of the smoke and inferno raging below at ground level. As I came closer to earth, I could hear bullets from small arms fire whistle by me, but I was not hit. My landing was on level ground about 100 yards from a German flak gun emplacement. Personnel from the entire battery came out to meet me. An English speaking Ober-Lieutenant approached me and said, "For you the war is over." My captors now were looking at me with curiosity more than animosity, as we all retreated to a revetment, when the air raid sirens blew a warning of another bombing attack.

Most of our crew became Rumanian POW's, but Crans, Marnell and myself were taken prisoners by the Germans. After four days in a Ploesti lock-up, the three of us were taken to an airfield, probably near Bucharest, and flown in a German JU-88 tri-motor to Vienna. That same evening we boarded a train for a night ride, passing thru such USAAF and RAF prime target places as Regensburg, Steyr, and Darmstadt. All the while we were under the escort of two armed guards, since we left Ploesti.

Later the same morning, we arrived at Frankfurt, Germany, then moved to a small community, Obereusel, the site of the main Luftwaffe interrogation center. Following three days of solitary confinement and questioning (name, rank, and serial number), we were transferred to a holding area with other allied airmen from both the 8th and 15th Air Forces. Three



Captain Robert L. Stone A/C Commander

days later we were moved by rail to Barth, Germany, located on the Baltic Sea, about 125 miles north of Berlin. Here the northern latitude was equivalent to the middle of Hudson Bay in Canada. This was an officers POW camp known as Stalag I, where Crans and I spent the duration. Marnell was sent to an enlisted men's camp, in conformance with the rules of the Geneva Convention, which provides for the segregation of commissioned and enlisted personnel in prison camps.

Barth, Germany, had an air strip which German fighter planes had been using. After VE DAY it provided the means for strip-down B-17s from England to fly in and take POW's to RAMP (Recovered Allied Military Personnel) Camp near Le Havre, France.

From May 13th to June 3rd I entered a program of delousing, new clothing issue, medical check-up, and controlled dieting. Our trip home was by boat, a Liberty ship that landed me at Camp Patrick Henry, at Hampton Roads, VA. Finally, I had reached the good old USA. With my feet on firm ground I knelt down and kissed the soil. There were times when I wondered if I would see home again.

From Russell K. Crans (Bombardier)

Coincidentally, Rog Johnston sent me a draft to review just recently. After my review and Stone's, he has plans to send you our version of what happened over Ploesti on April 5, 1944.

Rog has a fabulous memory and I agreed with everything he said and told him I would not change a word. So his report to you is also my version.

John J. Steuerer (Engineer/Gunner):

Received your letter about our mission on April 5, 1944, in which our plane was shot down. I was the flight engineer on the plane and when I got out of the upper turret was able to see more than anyone as to what was going on.

Captain Robert Stone was the pilot flying the plane and Major Beane was the copilot and flying as an observer and was also our Squadron Commander (724th). Captain Stone gave the order to abandon ship and rang the bell. I observed both Captain Stone and Major Beane in the cockpit. When I got out of the upper turret and saw the bomb bay open and the bombs had been released, I walked on the catwalk to the rear of the plane and checked the rear turret and also the lower ball turret and everyone was out and no one wounded. I then walked to the front of the plane and the cockpit was empty. I then stepped out of the front bomb bay; counted 10 and pulled the release cord.

I was tracked down by ack-ack fire and when I was close to the ground was fired upon with machine guns and small arms fire. I landed in a tree and cut the shroud lines and turned to run into a wooded area. I was surrounded by about 15 men with all types of weapons and one hit me in the back with a rifle butt and I went down with a concussion of the spine. The next day I was assisted and walked through one of the main streets of Bucharest with my hands tied behind me and had people come up and spit in my face and was called a gangster.

It was the skillful flying of Captain Stone that enabled all of his crew, and the Major, to get out safely.

From Bennie C. Hayman (Nose Gunner):

As I recall the Ploesti Mission of April 5, 1944. We took off from San Pancrazio and flew to the target. I was nose gunner on Crew 3. As we got to the bomb run my intercom went out. I could not hear the rest of my crew, or could I talk to them. The ME 109, with the yellow spinner noses, were giving it to the 725th, who were in front of us. About that time we picked up an 88 shell through the left wing. As you know the nose gunner has the best seat on the B-24. Some time you can see too much.

I did not know we were in such bad shape until I was firing at a head on attack, and I looked in back of me to see the nose wheel door open and the navigator and bombardier bailing out. So, I made my move out to the turret. To my dismay my chute was not where I left it. It had moved it about three feet from where I usually kept it. Once I finally found it I went out the nose wheel door, feet first. As my intercom was out I never did hear what Major Beane said, nor did I hear any bail-out bell.

Soon as I opened my chute it was so damn quiet I could hear my heart beating and my pilot chute fluttering over my main-chute. I picked up a burst of flak in my leg and a small wound in my chest. I landed on an oil storage tank. Some Rumanians and one German took me off the tank and to a first aid station.

We went to an army garrison, then to a school house. There they separated the enlisted men from the officers. Then they sent us to a hospital. This hospital was about a quarter mile from the marshalling yard at Bucharest. So the 15th bombed us in the daytime, RAF at night, and the Russians bombed us all the time. When the Rumanians gave up the Germans bombed the hospital that we were in. We had one KIA and "a bunch scared to death!" So we got it from four different air forces.

When we were at the school house, where the enlisted men were separated from the officers, Major Beane walked up to me and said, "Don't I know you?" I said, "Yup, I was your nose gunner when we got shot down."

When I was first captured they put me in a chair with my legs and hands tied, and put a bucket over my head and someone beat it with a bayonet till I passed out. This was the only time I was treated bad.

The food was awful; potato peeling soup and black bread. We were all hungry and so were the body lice. If you think the missions were "Tuff," POW camp was 10 times worse.

From William F. Berry (Tail Gunner)

I read with great interest the info on Major Beane. As I recall he was a replacement copilot on our crew, and Captain Stone, my regular pilot flew as PILOT. Even 47 years later I never could really visualize this man (Beane) as I never had anything to associate him with. From the article, and his personal winning of the war, not one reference to any member of his crew, especially his pilot that almost flew the bomber alone. If Beane deserved the DFC, we all did who flew that mission regardless of what crew they were on.

You're right, as one gets older the stories get bigger and better - and I've done my share of adding it on.

Not on Stone's A/C, but eyewitness to incident:

1st Lt. Thomas R. Moran (Pilot - Deputy Lead Ship)

I was the pilot flying right wing, or Deputy Lead of the Group which Captain Stone was leading. We were on the bomb run for approximately three and a half minutes when Captain Stone's plane dropped below the two wing planes. Thinking this was

evasive action, I followed as best I could, and when we were again in position I sensed the Captain Stone's ship was hit by flak, as there were several burst near us. Approximately thirty seconds later he dropped his bombs and immediately after releasing his bombs, the plane swerved to the right and started down in a slow gradual descent. As the plane left the formation, two men came out the nose wheel door, and at various times during the descent of the ship, men were noted coming out of the bomb bay and waist windows. In the wake of the plane, eight parachutes were observed. I believe the plane was hit by flak in a vital spot and unable to continue the homeward flight

1st Lt. M. Manooglan (724th Intelligence Officer)

On April 5, 1944 I was flying as observer in the Deputy Lead Ship, right wing of Captain Stone. At 1439 hours I was his ship swerved slightly as it received a burst of flak on its left wing, approximately one minute prior to releasing its bombs. The ship continued on course under control, dropping its bombs on the target at the right moment. Immediately following the release of bombs, two men bailed out through the nose wheel door as the ship began to loose altitude, still under control. A few seconds later, three more men bailed out through the front bomb bays. I followed the ship as it continued down, still under control. I last saw it at about 12,000 feet, under control. A large gaping hole could be seen in the wing, between engine nacelles number #1 and #2.

(Editorial Comment)

Perhaps it was the nature of the man (coming from Hollywood - the land of make beleive), that allowed him to be exploited in the manner of the original press release. It seems that, except for the flamboyant little quirks he wove into the operation of his Squadron, he apparently conducted the day by day demands of flying and operating the Squadron to the satisfaction of his superiors; I'll not fault nor impune him on that.

Its, "That's Hollywood," part that was difficult to accept by the men of the Squadron. It seems that it was Beane's style to have the "resident bugler," (reluctant though he was) Captain John O'Connor blow reveille at the crack of dawn. This O'Connor did without too much outward grumbling, but to the chigrin of those within hearing range.

As much as Captain O'Connor wished the crew of Captain Robert Stone only the best of luck during their misfortune, it was acknowledged that from the time of Major Beane's absence, he no longer had to get up before dawn and jump-start the troops.



Captain John O'Connor (Pilot, Instructor, Musician & "Bugler")

TV OFFERS THOUGHT PROVOKING REPORT

While perusing the TV dial on 12th November 1990, following the official 11 November Veterans Day, I stopped on the my local Public Broadcasting Station carrying the Mac Neil/Lehrer News Hour. At the end of their news and interview segment they generally carry an essay, or an appropriate story that puts a viewer into a thinking, or reflective mode. This evening was no exception.

Ex-Marine, now columnist for the Kansas City Star, Jim Fisher, wove a story that held me spellbound until it was done. Together with the visual aspects, he captured some of the emotions that we are all undergoing at this stage of our lives.

As soon as I could I sent for a transcript of his talk. Upon reading it, in the quiet of my own thoughts, I thought it appropriate enough to include in our newsletter. I wrote Mr. Fisher requesting permission to include his essay. He offered his permission for us to include it at our bidding.

HOME FOREVER By: Jim Fisher

Forty-five years ago this fall, World War II was over and the boys were coming home. Remember the newsreels filled with faces, young, happy, smiling. Gone were the guns and tanks and the mud and the rain of earlier newsreels, now with sea bags and packs the troops boarded homebound ships. The apple tree was just over the next ocean's swell. Finally, port, the boys crowding the rail. The welcome home sign, embraces, tears, families, they had survived; they were home.

Yet, they came home to an uncertain world, to housing shortages and the GI Bill, to VA loans, to waiting lists for new cars and exploding maternity wards, to a changed, crisis-oriented world, and for most, a future of middle class prosperity; Material things their parents never dreamed of.

There would be two more wars in Korea and Vietnam, inconclusive and dirty, where their brothers and sons would come home in dribbles, ignored, or scorned.

World War II faded into reunions and those small town parades in which older men looked uncomfortable in ill fitting uniforms. World War II for most Americans seems as distant as the Civil War, recalled only at times like last fall, when the walls and barricades, visceral legacies of that long ago war, finally came down in Eastern Europe.

But in north Georgia, how can they forget that war? Every weekday, a final act of that war, occurs here with 20 ton blocks of marble cut from the floor of the Georgia Marble Quarry at Tate. Not just World War II either. Name a war this country has fought in, the last physical act or participant happens here and in a few other places. The boys of World War II are dying. Forty-five years means they are in their 60s, 70s, and in some cases their 80s, ages when mortality is no longer an abstraction of youth. About 25,000 World War II veterans die each month now. That number will peak in the mid '90s at 36,000 a month. And that means production for Georgia Marble. It means gang saws cutting blocks into four-inch thick blanks. Other diamond tipped saws trimming to three feet, six inches high. Then one foot, one inch wide. Other machines rounding the

top. Human hands finishing the stone, applying latex stencil, then sand blasting the name of letters deep enough, the company says, to last several centuries.

Georgia Marble is currently producing 3,000 head stones a month. Another thousand come from a Vermont marble company; flat grave markers, designed for easy mowing, account for the rest. How many is that? Well, the VA says 75 percent of the 25,000 veterans who die each month choose a government marker, and that is the surprise.

The deliberate opting for simplicity, uniformity, 'Why? Why would a man, or a woman, who has spent a mere fraction of their lives in absolute boredom, bug-infested discomfort, or even mortal danger choose such a simple marker? One of the reasons is the markers are free, the taxpayer pick up the \$150 tab. But the answer has to be more than that. Was it the bonding of Soldiers and Sailors and Marines and Coast Guardsmen in days that were both wonderful and terrible? Was it the memories of buddies, closer in battle than any later wife or child, who didn't come back? Or was it the pride in the swaying ranks marching together, ever onward, to some disputed rendezvous? The answers, if they could be heard, are probably as disparate as the markers. The religious affiliation atop each stone. The initials of the service person. The names, themselves. Yet, stand back at a national cemetery, such as this one at Marietta, Georgia. Remember the rush down the gang plank when the war was over, the dissolving of military ranks, the rush towards America, all it offered? Now they are in the ranks again. They are home.

OUR DEPARTED COMRADES



Harry F. Beegle, 725th

Joseph T.G. McCormick, 725th

Archilles H. Nixon, 726th

Charles A. Pyles, 727th

Alvia M. Watts, 725

Inscribed on the Memorial Wall (Panel 6, North Wall), FLORENCE AMERICAN CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL, ITALY: *Their bodies are buried in peace, their name liveth for evermore.* (From Ecclesiastes 44)

"GOLD STAR" WIDOW LAMENTS WW-II LOSS

Ever watchful for "leads" on former 451st members and queries as to the "who, what, where and when" of our Group, I spend a lot of time perusing some of the military magazines that cross my desk. Of these magazines, none has proven more productive than the 15th Air Force Magazine (Sortie), and the B-24 Liberator Club (Briefing). Over the years we have located some new members by way of articles written by former members in quest of information - with reference to the 451st.

Other magazine articles are those that probe the readers for information about family members; now deceased. In a sense these inquiries beg for an answer. And in my small way I have countered with whatever information I had, plus offer them a chance to correspond with some of our members that can further enlighten them. On my part, this has been most rewarding, and I hope beneficial to those I've recruited to assist.

One of my most recent encounters has been through the B-24 Liberator Club "Briefing." In the Spring 1990 (Issue 42) of the magazine was a letter to the editor (section referred to as "Inter-Com") wherein a Mrs. Audrey Wood sought information about her first husband, Lt. Walter E. Ross. Lieutenant Ross was killed in action on his first mission, 14 February 1945. He was flying that day with his own crew and with an experienced pilot. He was the only fatality on that aircraft, and from all my records, the only fatality on that mission.

As a result of my first letter - her ensuing follow-up - and my gauging the depth of her appeal, I offered the addresses of four of Walter Ross' crew. Along with the letter to her, I sent "copy letters" to the crew members so they would be aware of my efforts. Within two days of the letters reaching their destinations, phone calls were placed by Charles Sciuillo and John Hulser to Audrey renewing an old, but valued, friendships. And a few days later Sid Taub followed up with a letter. Others, in time, followed suit.

Further communications with Audrey uncovered her deep devotion to her wartime mate, and to the despair that envelops a



Lt. Walter E. Ross (Born 16 April 1917 - KIA 14 February 1945)

"Gold Star" WW-II widow. In 1980 Audrey wrote the following remembrance to her children, and later, - prior to the upcoming Memorial Day - sent it to her hometown Louisville Courier-Journal and to the Disabled American Veteran magazine. It was published, and reads as follows:

THE LETTERS

His letters are still crisp and clean and seldom read, because "it hurts too much," and yet, I cannot part with them, for they are "all I have of him." Not really all - his boy and girl have children of their own, so he lives on in them, and I will always love him.

How long ago it seems! Those war years when we met and fell in love. That portion of our lives; of sudden sunshine, shadow, pain, when housing was so scarce and money spare that we must live apart for

months on end, and I went home to know the pain and aching longing of loving from afar.

How long the months he trained and studied for his silver pilot's wings! His cheerful daily letters tell of endless training drills, strict discipline to "make a boy a man," and constant on-the-go routines. The many books he read and test he passed on instruments and weather, math and physics; all so new to him, yet eagerly devoured. Then, principles of flight for weeks and weeks before he even saw a plane!

Then, the day of his first flight - he loved it! Had to call me on the phone. And, all the hours of flights with his instructor, until the thrilling day he soloed on his own! Another phone call! "It was great, Angel, I wish you could have been with me!" "Some day I will teach you to fly!" He loved it all, except the lonely nights. The "wanting us to be together ... Golly, Angel Mine, I need and love you so! Oh, war is hell!"

Our son was born. He could not make it home and



Walter and son David Ross

sent roses. But, Mom was there, and she and Daddy took good care of us. Thank God for understanding parents. And Sister who was thrilled to be an Aunt.

More weeks of letters. Flying more and more, with graduation closer every day. And, oh, the thrill of being there with him, to pin those silver wings upon his chest! Those bars on his broad shoulders! I

was so proud!

And then at last, a furlough home, and that first glimpse of his own baby son, and he was proud of us!

More letters as the weeks went by before he settled long enough to find a place for us. Then letters could stop and life was good again.

More flying - far and wide in brand new planes, across the country, night and day. And suddenly, it seemed, more transfers, never staying long. Another baby on its way; too many miles to follow him around, and so the letters start again.

The weeks and months go by. He's "sure to go to war with this next shipment." The nervous waiting, waiting, praying he won't go! He has a leave again, and this time off we go to meet his folks up north. How thrilled they are with their first grandson! How sad his mother's eyes when we must go.

The baby is a girl; he is not here again. New fathers surely do not need a leave; what do the Big Brass care? And so he sent red roses and his love. He comes near Christmas time to see his new one, and get to know his little son again. He calls her "Little Princess" and rocks her to sleep, and romps and laughs and plays ball with his son. And life is sweet again, but bittersweet, for both of us are counting off the days. And all too soon he has to go away. His son wails, "Daddy's gone," and cries himself to sleep. How can he understand at less than two?

And then it's time for war, and he is really gone. To Italy, so far away from me! Less than a month is all that's left. A month of cheerful censored V-Mail letters. And then those days of silence, utter silence, while I pray, "Oh, dear God, No!" And then the dreaded telegram that night, and weeks of my own

loving letters coming back. "Deceased" is stamped on them, and on my heart.

Then, letters from the members of his crew, for flak was meant to take just one that day. He bled to death before they got him back, and all were shaken, angered by his death. They tried to comfort me. I read their letters now and weep; for brave, brave men who flew with death each day; for men who flew for us and won.

Then, letters came from relatives and friends, and all were pained and saddened by our loss. His mother's tearful letter was the worst. It took her weeks before she managed it. Her only son was gone. And she still mourns him.

The letters stopped. I have them all - I cannot part with them. Do you see why?

(Editorial follow-up) Whatever this office has done to reunite members of this wartime epic, it has been most rewarding. As is often the case, beyond what you may normally expect (i.e.; rejoining former participants, creating a non-wartime atmosphere for reflections, and involving others into the study) another perspective can also be gained. That is to arouse those that, prior to the current investigation, weren't privy to all the information that has now surfaced.

In this case its the son of the late Walter E. Ross, David Walter Ross. David has put together a fine biography of his dad, from "Birth to Death." Although its not, in a voluminous sense, a publishable tome, it nevertheless passes on the gratitude of a "son to his father" for the legacy left from a "father to his son." I'm sure it's David's purpose to make this biography available to as many of his descendents as possible. What an excellent way for generations down the line to read, understand, and appreciate the sacrifice that of one of its family members made during WW-II. It points out, not the fact that life is cheap, but rather that the price of freedom is dear. And to those left behind, even more precious.

I am (we are) indebted to Audrey Ross Wood and to David Walter Ross for sharing their feelings in this sensitive and unforgettable matter.



"FAMILY FURLOUGH PORTRAIT"
Walt; Audrey [Holding David]; Mrs. (Miriam [Audrey's Sister]) & Mr. Jones; Grandmother Lamy [Holding Kathy]



WORDS FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

I've never been known to say in a few words, what a vast number of words can say - just as easily. This column is no exception. "Words from the Flight Deck" is my chance to share, editorially, some of the challenges that confront our organization. From time to time you've read of some of our dilemmas. Foremost have been seeking new members, gathering story material, verifying change of addresses, collecting and confirming phone numbers, noting deceased members, obtaining adequate funding, etc, etc. Therein we need your help. We encouraged, nay begged, your cooperation in achieving these goals.

In return we have attempted to give you the chance to re-associate with your WW-II comrades, either through correspondence or reunions. We have, in every possible way, offered you a quality organization. And that goes all the way back to the days of WW-II when you were an active and integral part of the 451st. Every time I sit down to organize my thoughts on what should be included in the AD-LIB, I'm always struck with the enormity of stories there are, and the fact that they should be told. Each of you guys harbor some fascinating story; sad, heroic, or even humorous in content, that begs telling. Most of these stories, unless they are degrading and disrespectful of others, are kept, and may be pulled from the file for re-telling in some later issue.

Our reunions have been, on the whole, a classy operation. Due in part to the local committees that have maintained high standards to which we continue to adhere. No committee has been without someone that knows, from previous reunion experience, what is expected of them. Someone in the new committee has attended a past reunion. To those that haven't experienced "our" reunion style, they soon get the thrust of what's expected and fall into step as we go along.

The contents of the AD-LIB have been warmly received by both members and historians alike. With our membership near 1,475, (disallowing for our deceased comrades) we have quite a large mailing list each time we go to press. With the current Postal increase, close to 50% for bulk mailings, we're faced with a more formidable cost in the mailing alone. As you will note on the "header" of the first page, we've written in a \$3 per issue charge for any, other than viable, interested members. In a sense we're trying to establish a format for which we can financially operate outside, and within, our normal expectations.

In that vein we've had to consider the screening of our own member that haven't been communicative, either with words or donations since joining. Some started out with fervor and interest, but somehow it waned. We want them back in!

Since the beginning of this year, 1991, I have programed the computer database to note all my incoming mail and donations. It may not set well with the members that have been "just riding along," that after this current "Issue 20" we may review this "input" category and purge those that haven't made any attempt at "interest renewal." They won't be dropped from

membership, since our purpose is to keep tabs on all our members, but rather we'll omit them from receiving future costly newsletters, that is, until some rapport is established. We will, from time to time, try to encourage some contact so as to keep the mailing address viable. This contact may only be at the time of reunions, but that hasn't been thought through yet. I hope in this way we can get more input; more funding; and not have to count on those "dedicated few" to sustain us as we grow.

*** Since our last AD-LIB I've been doing some "rapping" (verbal communicating) with our Vice President, Peter Massare. The subject has been the tone of our newsletter. It seems to me that I do stress some of the more depressing aspects of life; past and present. I confided in Pete that when I write it, it seems to fit the occasion, but as I reread it, at a later date, it seems to bear heavily on the fact that we're not getting any younger. As was written in our Group History series, "We're losing some of our good men." Not only is the loss of our members of deep concern, but the outlook we (at least I) now have on life gets more and more melancholy. We were fortunate to have experienced, and survived "our" war. In that long ago past we saw our bravest pay the price for our freedom and allow us our station in life. Now we see, all too often, our newly re-found comrades leaving our ranks.

Sentiments such as this I communicated to Pete. His response was that I was probably mirroring the thoughts of many of our members. The fact is - we're not getting any younger - and these dark thoughts do enter into our everyday thinking. Perhaps it isn't as morbid as I make it out to be. Perhaps I can express whatever it is I need to express; but articulate it in a more palatable form. Perhaps you guys will even accept it.

*** Something more, perhaps in the same vein, is the failure to notify this office of a members death. Some families are reluctant to offer such information for fear we'll drop them from the mailing list. While others do make the effort to notify us, they still leave this office confused as to their future wishes. We would gladly continue to mail to these families, but would appreciate knowing so we can properly put them into the computer. Once it has been established that a former member has died, his file is "tagged" and no mailing labels are generated from that time on. A few times, without my insight as to the family wish, I've been asked NOT to continue mailings since it still pains to remember the loss. Remember - we're more than happy to continue mailing to the family, but we have to be informed.

*** Late word in about Rumanian Princess Catherine Caradja (POW Savior); she is moving back to her home in Rumania in the later part of May 1991. She has been a long time away. We wish her only the best. "Her boys" will miss her.

*** Early word in from the 15th Air Force Association is that their 1991 "DESERT VICTORY" Reunion will take place from 16 - 20 September at the Mirage Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada.

*** This frustrated amateur writer had the pleasure to "break bread" with Carroll (Cal) Stewart, co-author of the book, "PLOESTI." This happened while staying in Pueblo, CO for Princess Caradja's Commemoration. Those familiar with the history surrounding the "Low Level Mission," will quickly agree that this is the bible of all Ploesti books. It is now out of print and hard to find. Cal claims he can't even lay hands on a copy. Luckily, I've got mine - now freshly autographed!

451st MAJOR LEAGUE BALL PLAYER LOCATED



"Dobernic in 451st Camp"

One of those BIG-little stories that comes about from someone trying to locate a friend that was a tentmate in the old Group. In this case the "looker" was Sam Miller (725th -Corporal in Chemical Warfare Branch of the Armament Section). Sam looked through our Issue 19 publication and noted the picture of "Unidentified 'Big Leaguer' Warms Up" in the "History Supplement." It ended up that the "looker" (person sought) was, as remembered by Sam, his tentmate, and former major league baseball player, Jess Dobernic. Sam located him while on a trip through St. Louis. It was

another case of picking up the phone book and scanning its pages for a particular name. Sam lucked out. The Dobernic he contacted was indeed the Jess he remembered. But not fully remembered was Dobernic's first name, which was Andrew.

Sam immediately passed on Jess' address to this office and, with his response is now enrolled as member #1461. Sam is to be commended for his thoughtfulness and diligence in looking for Jess.

Some relating items that may be of interest to some of you major league baseball aficionados. These first stats are from the back of an original "Jess Dobernic's Baseball Card": # 200 of a series of 240.

Pitcher - Chicago Cubs; Born: Mt Olive, IL, November 20, 1917; Bats: Right / Throws: Right / Height: 5 ft. 10 1/2 in. / Weight: 185

A workhorse for the Los Angeles team during 1946 and 1947. Appeared in 46 games the first year and 55 the later. Had a reputation for being one of the best relief pitchers in the Pacific Coast League. Had a trial at one time with the White Sox. 1947

when he had a record of 10 - 5, was one of his best years. With the Cubs during 1948 he was in 54 games and had a 7 - 2 record.

In another card series put out by PLAY BALL in 1949, and again reissued in 1988, came this review:

The Cubs were looking for a relief help and plucked Jess from the minor leagues where he had been toiling for several years. They found a gem as Jess became a mainstay of the bullpen. In 54 games in relief he compiled a 7 -2 record with a 3.15 ERA.

Played with the Cincinnati Reds 1949 --- White Sox 1938

Jess' wife, Dorothy, added an addendum to my sending of our recent AD-LIB's and History Supplement. She writes as follows: "Jess played his last season in baseball in 1954, the year we were married. He still gets lots of autograph requests, some including his baseball cards."

"I would also like to thank you for the Group's newsletters, having read them I was amazed that someone was able to keep such an accurate and detailed report. Karl Eichhorn should be very proud of his journal and I am looking forward to the next issue."

"Another surprise was my husband's picture and the fact that Sam Miller remembered him after so long a time."

Now that this office knows a little more of Sam and Jess' past involvement (as per 451st tenure), and that Sam use to "catch" while Jess warmed up - I'd like to see what's left of that catchers mitt that Sam allegedly used. It was probably padded with flak vests and flight gear. If it wasn't padded then Sam must still have the scars that surely evolved.



"Dobernic in Cub Camp"

451st MEMBER CHALLENGES "COLA" REBUFF

Peter Massare, not one to idly sit by and let Congress walk all over the honorably discharged veteran, took pen in hand and responded to the failure of Congress to pass the benefit increase for Disabled Veterans.

The original letter went to LETTERS TO THE EDITOR section of the "Democrat & Chronicle" (Gannett Rochester Newspaper, Rochester, NY). Additional copies went to his U.S. Representative and Senator in Congress.

The letter reads as follows: *I couldn't help but take note of an Associated Press article published in your local paper. The article stated, "No raise for Bush in New Year."*

It was noted that Dan Quayle, along with other top federal employees, would receive wage increases up to 29 percent. Social Security, military and federal employees would receive a "COLA" (Cost Of Living Allowance) increase of 4.1 percent.

I'd like to take this opportunity to let the public know what the article failed to mention: Disabled American Veterans did NOT receive a COLA.

The 101st Congress adjourned WITHOUT granting a COLA

for disabled American Veterans. These are the same politicians who, on Veterans Day, will make such statements as: "Veterans are America's most deserving category of federal benefit recipients." or, "Veterans should always receive first priority and the first claim on the federal budget."

The lack of action on COLA increase for disabled Veterans is outrageous and disgusting. Especially in view of the fact that EVERYONE, except President Bush, did receive one.

The majority of disabled Veterans are in the twilight of their lives. They are now more in need of proper health care than ever. The Department of Veterans Affairs can do very little because of draconian budget cuts over the past several years. But that's another story.

To those of you that have felt the pinch, I'm sure Pete wouldn't mind if you used his words to express your feelings to your Congressman or Senator. You may just be sitting by as these omissions are crammed down your throats. Without too much effort you could copy exactly (or do it in your own words) the thrust of Pete's message. You may think it a futile effort, but till one tried it, one never knows.

USS "THRESHER" & 451st BOMB GROUP

"What's a nice looking submarine like you doing in a magazine like this?"

That could well be asked, as it seems that any submarine story would seem out of place in a publication dedicated to B-24s and stories about the people that flew and maintained them.

But in this case there is a "tie-in."

If you are familiar with any U.S. Navy history, perhaps you remember the loss of the USS THRESHER (SSN 593).

This occurred on 10 April 1963, 220 miles off Boston, Massachusetts, with the loss of all hands.

Of the compliment of 129 men aboard, one was a former member of the 451st Bomb Group, Paul C. Currier.

Paul was working in the capacity of civilian SHIP PROGRESSMAN MACHINIST while the sub was refitting after earlier "shake-down" cruises. The direct cause of the loss has never been determined. The THRESHER had been christened and launched on 9 July 1960 with promises of being the most technologically advanced nuclear-powered submarine in the U.S. Navy.

The THRESHER was named for the thresher shark, and was the second U.S. submarine to bear the name. The previous "THRESHER" was decommissioned in 1947, having achieved an enviable wartime record of 15 war patrols, sinking some 146,000 tons of shipping.

By conjecture I'd have to say that Paul came to be on the ill-fated boat by happenstance. Born in the area of Navy shipyards and ports, it may well have been his destiny, after experiencing what the Air Force had to offer, to go naval. Some of his pre-war employment had been as apprentice machinist at Portsmouth Naval Shipyard. Later his post-war education seems to have totally ordained his future. Paul majored in engineering before returning to the shipyards.

While with the 451st, Paul was a Sergeant in the 727th Squadron, doing duty as an aircraft armorer. The connection Paul had with the 451st, and later with the THRESHER, came to me by way of Squadron friends some time ago. But this is the first time that I've been able to research the connection. Much of my research came by way of Terry Cass, Archivist, with the Naval Submarine Base New London, Groton, CT. We are indebted to her for her patience in understanding "Air Force."

Paul left a wife, Barbara and five children; Peter, Ellen, John, Beverly, and Paul Jr. At the time of his death he resided in Exeter, New Hampshire.



USS THRESHER ---Lost At Sea 10 April 1963

This may well be construed as a less than enlightening story about one of our former members. But it has a sense of fascination that I felt should be passed on to our readers. Paul's death is perhaps not the most unique, but it is certainly noteworthy. Many of our comrades have, since WW-II, died under unusual circumstances. Some honorably, some without honor.

We've suffered losses during the Korean conflict, and maybe even in the Vietnam war. Others, not involved in war, have

died in simple dignity, with family and friends at bedside.

There may have even been some that due to wartime experiences, could not accept the post-war world and for whatever reason, chose not to stick around. These comrades may have succeeded in suicide, or taken to drink with the same results.

Some of our members may have even taken to crime, inadvertently or by choice, and ended up in jail. The severity of their crime would gauge the intensity of their sentence. In the most extreme situation we may have some that passed away "behind the wall." This office has no evidence of such an incident, but, with only speculation on our part, it may have happened.

Thus, the manner in which Paul Currier died is unusual. Especially in light of his past military experience and expertise. I felt it should be brought to your attention as many of you 727th guys remember Paul and would appreciate this belated information.



Paul C. Currier (1922 -- 1963)

LYON, FRANCE (Supply Missions) SYNOPSIS

ISSUED BY AAF-RAF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Thursday, 19 October 1944

LIBERATORS RUN SUPPLY MISSIONS TO FRANCE

This is another of those "how was it done" yarns, concerning the big-bellied B-24 Liberators of a 15th Army Air Force Wing, the 7th Army, the Tactical Air Force and the critical days of September 10 to October 5, when the 7th Army and the fighter-bombers were almost stopped in southern FRANCE for want of aviation gas, oil, bullets and bombs.

The 7th Army was plunging up the RHONE Valley under the direct support of the Tactical Air Force, and taking everything in stride. The situation was promising. Then came the eternal question of supplies for the all-important fighter-bombers, for the air superiority had to be maintained if success of the 7th was to be assured.

There were plenty of supplies in the ships off the wrecked port of MARSEILLES, and there were even considerable stocks on the docks. But to unload and then transport over the cratered roads leading from MARSEILLES would take days to reach the emergency flying fields in and near LYON, the temporary supply center for the fighters. And time was figured in hours and minutes.

So they called Major General Nathan F. Twining, Commanding General of the 15th AAF, who in turn called Colonel William L. Lee, Weatherford, Texas, and Jackson, Miss., the Wing Commanding Officer. Colonel Lee Ordered the heavy bombers of his Wing to be made ready immediately to run bombs, gas, oil, ammunitions to France.

On September 10 the first formation of Liberators, stripped of turrets and turret guns, took off from home fields loaded with supplies. Eleven hours later they landed at the LYON-BRON airfield. Officers and men and what help there was at the field unloaded the aircraft.

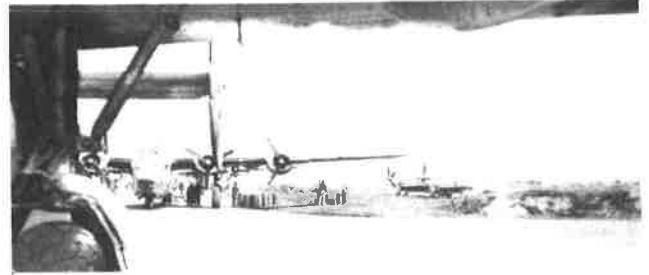
Portable pumps, part of the cargo, were rigged to the big Liberators' gas tanks and the precious fluid was pumped into empty drums. Just enough has was left in the Liberators to enable them to make the return trip to Italy. As the drums were filled, the 500-pound bombs and .50 caliber ammunition unloaded, crews rushed then to fighter refueling points on the field. And the fighters took off to continue the support of the 7th, then well beyond Lyon.

The unprecedented conversion of heavy bombers into half-protected transport aircraft amazed the curious Frenchmen who came by the thousands to the airdrome to view the four-engined bombers which only five days before were blasting installations in the LYON area.

Discipline was strict for everyone. No smoking was permitted within 300 yards of a plane. Everyone had to police his own area, keeping the civilians away, and then get out as soon as the plane was unloaded.

All in all, between September 10 and October 2, the Liberators flew 704 transport sorties without escort, carrying more than 800,000 gallons of high octane gasoline and more than 1,000,000 rounds of ammunition for the Tactical Air Force.

As the ground situation improved supplies were flown deeper into the interior, providing quicker supply for the hard working



Off-loading at Lyon, France (September 1944)

fighter-bombers. The greatly extended supply lines of the 7th correspondingly lengthened supply for the supporting Tactical Air Force, but the promptness and thoroughness of the supplying Liberators took up the slack, and supply lines were maintained.

Total supplies transported by the Liberators: 847,046 gallons of aviation gasoline; 10,994 empty drums; 1,276,030 rounds of .50 caliber ammunition; 24,360 gallons of oil; 602 tons of bombs; 500 pounds of grease; and 90 fin crates.

Stories like this were put out by wire services and public relation departments in rampant and unbridled form. Though they did much to give the folks back home a sense of what was going on; there was not the detail, nor human experience, that we, as participants encountered. True, the media was hampered, as they are now with what are called, "bites" of both time and space to tell a story. But in our case we have the luxury of time - and retrospect - we can delve more into the particulars of that part of our history.

In that regard, I'm asking you for your stories about those supply missions. I won't say that we will be able to use all that are offered, but we can composite what we get and make them into a story that is more complete and historically documented.



After Clipping "Gang Bang's" Wingtip; P-47 Augers In



461st Bomb Group Suffers Fire Loss (10 September 1944)

ECHOES FROM FAIRMONT, NEBRASKA

During my revisit to Fillmore County, 23 January 1991, I visited some of the people and sites that made our past reunion so memorable. The community of Fairmont is still agog by our "invasion." Needless to say I was walking "knee deep in clover" as I visited with the folks that worked so hard to give our homecoming such dramatic results.

I saw Don Pieper, past President of the Fairmont Chamber of Commerce (Master of Ceremonies at the Base) and reviewed some of our past Chamber/451st meetings. I had the chance to meet with the current Chamber of Commerce President, who oversaw the operation of the soft drink stand on the base. He told me that the sales of soft drinks exceeded, in our visit, what their pop stand usually garners them for a full day city event.

I took the opportunity to visit with Tom Boyer, President of the Farmers State Bank. Tom was my first contact in Fairmont as we began laying out our agenda for our Group's visit. Tom brought myself, and our 451st committee, together with the local Chamber. It was under their guidance we began to pull the various strings together.

I enjoyed seeing Imelda McCoy, and again thanking her for her contribution to our effort. Imelda was in charge of the "Home-baked Cookies and Iced Tea" concessions. She was the past President of the Fairmont Legion Auxiliary, and was our refreshment coordinator when our plans were first being formed. She easily came up with the refreshments by "tapping" the other Legion Auxiliary Posts of Geneva, Shickley, Exeter, Milligan and Ohio for 102 dozen cookies and 50 gallons of iced tea. Like in November 1943, the ovens of the area were once again commandeered for our benefit.

As luck would have it, the day I was in town the Fillmore County Historical Museum was open. It sets in a sturdy brick building that once housed the Doctor's Ashby practice. I took the opportunity to drop by and visit with its curator, Ms. Ruth Black. As all curators will, she was bemoaning the fact that the museum is still wanting. There is a need for written articles and artifacts from the era when the 451st was the dominating factor in the community. I couldn't promise much, but did offer to put an appeal out, through our AD-LIB, to you guys that had been stationed there in "43." It may be that some of you have photos, letters, PX items, and/or memories that you could put to paper about your remembrances of Fillmore County, the old air base, and/or the cities of Fairmont and Geneva. These could be sent to Ruth Black, Fillmore County Museum, 709 -6th Avenue, Fairmont, NE 68354. In-as-much as they adopted us back in "43," I'd like to think that our Group could reciprocate and do special things for them in return.

Ruth Black told me that a compilation of material relevant to our reunion had been assembled. The pamphlet contains 17 pages of newspaper clippings; 6 pages of memorabilia items; 14 pages of name and addresses of those attending (taken at in the hanger during our event); 30 pages of "Thank You" letters sent in by you members. (You certainly put me in the "tall cotton" by responding to my wish to have the community know how grateful we were).



The Fairmont, Nebraska Depot

In the preface they noted the return of our Group into the community. With eloquence and feeling, these were the words:

"Once again, September 7, 1990, Fairmont and the surrounding communities were reminded of World War II. Every day we can view the remains of the air base that was once used, but the impact of the 451st reunion was overwhelming. The communities brought to surface, the emotions long withheld; some sad, some humorous, some of love and tragedy, but memories, nonetheless. The sound of the planes seemed to create a 'hush' atmosphere, a silent prayer."

"Memories of the many homes that were opened and welcomed the men, wives and children. The surrounding communities extended every effort possible to make them comfortable, thinking of their families being elsewhere serving our country and there was so little they could do." (by: Mrs. E. Korbelik)

Another stop along my route was with the Fairmont Post Mistress, Georgia Schropfer. She was pleased that our members liked the envelope cachet (Special Cancellation to commemorate OUR day). She has had numerous requests from across the nation for our cachet.

One visit that was right in tune with what we're all about was with Don West, President of Fillmore County Historical Society. We spoke of the old airfield, and how the Historical Society wants to keep alive the impact that it (as a military airbase) had on the community. Although the Society has no jurisdiction over the airfield property, it was hoped that the State of Nebraska would grant consideration to having a "Marker" placed along Highway 81. This marker would note the location as one of Nebraska's Historical Sites and in so many words, describe the history, and purpose of its existence.

I asked Don if there was any way that we could help. At the time of our chat Don said that this was only in its primary stages, but he could foresee no barriers to its concept. But as is often the case, monies may be somewhat difficult to generate. I offered, as plans became more definite, we could solicit our membership for the needed funds to underwrite this effort. This is of course, that the 451st be recognized on the memorial in some way.

I know that some of you fellows are wondering why I place so much emphasis in Fairmont and the surrounding areas, especially those of you that could not make our 1990 reunion. Those that did, know what I mean. Small towns, such as Fairmont, are the typical hometowns that many of us came from when we entered military service.

Those of us that equate to "small towns" remember the warmth of its citizenry, both to its own, and the occasional visitor. Fairmont is one such town. Whether we had come into the community just as a errant traveler, or, as in the setting we ultimately developed: our reunion, I'm sure the feelings would have been the same.

Like many small towns, (small; except in heart) they do show charity, not only to their own, but to others. And on September 7th 1990 we fit the category of "OTHERS." Thus my preoccupation with Fairmont.

SEARCH FOR MID-AIR COLLISION GRAVESITES

The study of our Group's history isn't limited solely to members of our organization seeking documentation of facts relevant to their personal experiences. Every once in a while someone outside our immediate circle finds a purpose in researching some specific, or statistical occurrence, generated by the 451st. The following article is self explanatory.

ODERTAL OIL PLANT - GERMANY - 17 DECEMBER 1944. (by Manuel F. van Eyck)

Since 1984 I have been researching American aircraft lost over occupied Czechoslovakia between February 1944 to April 1945. Since that time I have researched in detail over three hundred incidents when aircraft of the 8th, 9th and 15th A.A.F. crashed for different reasons in occupied Czechoslovakia, or were forced down over Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Germany, Belgium of the North Sea. In most of these incidents I have been able to establish what happened to the entire crew and find the present interment of men who were killed. However there are at least twelve men whose remains were not recovered after the war ended. I spent many hours going over documents and maps and writing many letters to villages where these men crashed with their ships. Here I would like to describe to you one such an incident which kept me very much occupied for many months.

During the mission to ODERTAL, Germany, by the 15th Air Force, there were ten ships which were shot-down over occupied Czechoslovakia and I have details of all these crashes recorded. Some time ago I obtained information about two B-24J's lost during this mission to Odertal on 17 December 1944. Thinking that I have missed these two ships in my earlier research I started my work and learned that this incident happened near FRIEDLAND, Germany. After I checked maps of Czechoslovakia I learned there are two FRIEDLAND's, and both in Northern part of Czechoslovakia. However the German document stated that one B-24 crashed at RINGWITZ, 5km northeast of FRIEDLAND at approximately 1245 hours. I also learned from archives that on 17 December 1944 two B-24J's of the 451st Bomb Group (H), 726th Bomber Squadron, collided and were last seen at 50~31'N - 18~08'E over Germany.

There were two eyewitnesses to this collision. They were tail gunner S/Sgt Thomas E. McHale and ball gunner S/Sgt Kenje Ogata, both of them gave the following account of what happened.

S/Sgt Thomas McHale:

I, Staff Sergeant Thomas E. McHale, 32625830, was tail gunner on an airplane in the same flight as First Lieutenant William T. Shelton, flying aircraft number 42-52045. On 17 December 1944, Lieutenant Shelton lead our flight on a mission over the Odertal Oil Plant in Germany. Shortly after passing over the target I saw Lieutenant Shelton veer off to the right and the number two ship tried to fly over

him to take over the lead. As the number two ship let down his tail hit the number one propellor of Lieutenant Shelton's airplane as Lieutenant Shelton was coming back into his former position. I last saw Lieutenant Shelton's aircraft at about 1256 hours, at approximately 50~31'N - 18~08'E, in Germany. The weather was clear and I saw three parachutes leave the aircraft, which appeared to be under control. (end.)

S/Sgt Kenje Ogata

I Staff Sergeant Kenje Ogata, 16037445, was ball turret gunner on an airplane in the same flight as First Lieutenant Theodore C. King, flying aircraft number 42-51941. On 17 December 1944, Lieutenant King was flying number two (#2) position, deputy flight leader, on a mission over the Odertal Oil Plant in Germany. Shortly after passing over the target the lead airplane seemed to be pulling out of the formation and Lieutenant King, in the deputy lead position, moved to take over the lead. As Lieutenant King let down, his tail hit the number one propellor of the lead ship, as it was coming back into its former position. I saw Lieutenant King's airplane spiral down and go into a flat spin. The tail of Lieutenant King's aircraft was sheared off. The weather was clear and just before the plane hit and burst into flame, I saw one parachute open. This was at about 1255 hours at approximately 50~28'N - 18~04'E, in Germany. (end.)

1st Lt. Lawrence E. Robertson (726th Intelligence Officer), adding a further statement of clarification, wrote on 18 December 1944 the following:

First Lieutenant William T. Shelton, 0-823719, was pilot of aircraft number 42-52045, no nickname, on a combat mission to bomb the Odertal Oil Plant, in Germany, on 17 December 1944. Lieutenant Shelton was flying in the number one position of his flight. After passing over the target the formation started the rally to clear additional anti-aircraft fire. During the turn Lieutenant Shelton appeared to pull out of the formation and the number two ship moved in to take over the lead. At this time Lieutenant Shelton moved back into his original position, flying underneath the former number two ship. Lieutenant Shelton's number one propellor came into contact with the tail of the other airplane, cutting it almost completely off. The other aircraft went into a spin and was seen to crash and burst into flame. Lieutenant Shelton was last sighted at about 1256 hours, apparently still under control, at approximately 50~31'N - 18~08'E, in Germany. The weather was clear at this time. Three parachutes were seen to leave the aircraft.

Nothing further has been heard from Lieutenant Shelton or his crew and the undersigned has no opinion as to their fate. (end.)

The three men who bailed out from 1st Lt. Shelton's aircraft were bombardier 2nd Lt. John L. Sullivan, Jr., nose gunner S/Sgt Edward G. Anderman and navigator 2nd Lt. Eugene F.



2LT John L. Sullivan, Jr. (KIA)
Bombardier

Becker. All three men bailed out from the nose escape doors almost simultaneously after hearing the signal to abandon ship. 2nd Lt. Sullivan opened the nose escape doors and bailed out, after noting all others were ready to go.



C. W. Atterholt Crew

Standing: 2LT Eugene F. Becker (N.), 2LT John F. Holmes (CP), 1LT Charles W. Atterholt (P), 2LT John L. Sullivan, Jr. (B.)
Kneeling: Arnold B. Cheatham, Victor B. Rutledge, Russell B. Combs, Harold E. Parcell, Frank J. Brovelli, Stanley O. Dyer

The nose gunner, S/Sgt Anderman, from his turret position, hollered over the intercom, "GET ME THE HELL OUT OF HERE!" Navigator 2nd Lt. Becker opened the turret, passed him oxygen and helped him out of the turret. He then bailed out after S/Sgt Anderman patted him on the shoulder. S/Sgt Anderman put his chute on and bailed out. During his descent he passed out from lack of oxygen and when he came to a Luft-waffe fighter was circling him and he thought that he was going to shoot him, however the enemy fighter tipped his wings and left.

S/Sgt Anderman landed in snow 4-5" deep. Strong wind scooped him up and he fell on his right side injuring his right side and right foot. He was captured and taken by motorcycle to an unknown place where he was tortured for six days and six night. I believe that place was at the airport where other members of the crew were kept. There S/Sgt Anderman met navigator 2nd Lt. Becker who, after noticing the bad condition of the nose gunner, said that he would put him in for a Purple Heart. However that was the last time they saw each other.

During the time at the airport, where three crew members were held, one of them was called on to identify a body. He was not able to do so, but from the description he gave to 2nd Lt. Becker, he believed it to be 1st Lt. Bernard W. Schams, co-pilot of the other ship. The man called upon to identify the body was S/Sgt Joseph Weisler, the cameraman on the other ship and the only survivor.

The German documents reported the following information:

On 17 December 1944 at approximately 1300 hours one Liberator crashed 5km northeast of FRIEDLAND. There we captured three men; 2nd Lt. E.F. Becker, S/Sgt E.G. Anderman and S/Sgt J. Weisler. All captured at 1330 hours. There were also recovered dead; 1st Lt. T.C. King, 2nd Lt. J.L. Sullivan, T/Sgt F. Anderson, S/Sgt H.G. Miller, and two dead that couldn't be identified.

In the German documents there is no information about the five other members of the crew, and there is no mentioning of location of cemetery where the men killed were buried.

The ship piloted by 1st Lt. William T. Shelton continued flying until they reached Yugoslavia where the remaining eight members of crew bailed out. They were assisted by Yugoslav partisans and returned safely to their base in Italy.

During my investigation of possible crash locations I contacted people in FRIEDLAND in Czechoslovakia and was told that three aircraft crashed in the immediate area. One German

fighter and two American aircraft, but all three at different dates. I contacted the office of the Czechoslovak Cartographic Company in Prague and RNDr. Eva Aunicka provided me with the information I have been seeking. De. Aunicka said that FRIEDLAND in German documents stands for KORFANTOW in Polish and RINGWITZ is the German name for RZYMKOWICE, also in Polish. RNDr. Eva Aunicka also provided me with a map of Czechoslovakia and the area of Poland with the location of the crash. The "crash-location" of B-24J, #42-51941, is located

southwest of OPOLE and northwest of KRAPKOWICE in Poland. This new information meant that I am not able to include this incident project due to location of crash, however I was so intrigued that I continued in search of any information about the eleven men killed on 17 December 1944 over RINGWITZ (RZYMKOWICE), Poland. I learned that bodies of eleven men were not found after the war ended and they are memorialized in France at the EPINAL AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETERY among the 424 names of missing. Their names are inscribed on the walls of the "Court of Honor," which surrounds the memorial. Epinal Cemetery is located four miles south of Epinal (VOSGES), France.

I was not satisfied with this information knowing that sometime, at a later date, the remains are recovered and either returned to the United States or buried at one of the American Military Cemeteries in Europe. I proceeded with my investigation and learned the following.

As soon as the war ended American Graves Registration Teams investigated all cases of missing men. In this particular case, search teams conducted operations for the first time on 6 November 1947. During this investigation, conducted in the vicinity of the crash-site and with interrogations of eyewitnesses and town officials, there produced no conclusive information relative to the burial locations of eleven (11) American airmen.

Field investigation disclosed that American deceased from aircraft crashes in the area were normally buried in the Prisoner of War cemetery at LAMSDORF (LAMBINOWICE), 5 miles northwest of RINGWITZ (RZYMKOWICE), Poland. However, investigation of this cemetery revealed the fact that there are remains of many nationalities buried in several mass graves containing as many as 1,800 remains. It was discovered that about 100 British POW's were buried in this cemetery in marked graves and the American Graves Registration Team disinterred a number of small isolated mass graves which were found in the same portion of this cemetery, but found only naked bodies which could not be in any way identified as American. The other collective grave is located near the former British STALAG 344 Camp. This grave has not yet been opened and, as testified by witnesses, there are supposed to be Americans buried there. The rest of the British graves are

situated on the left side of that collective grave.

There are 45 British soldiers buried in graves which are marked with inscriptions and registered with the Grave Registration Field Team.

Altogether there are 111 British graves, but not all are registered and not all are marked. From testimonies given by the local population it appears that in these collective graves - without crosses - are supposed to be buried American airmen.

The second investigation was conducted on 7 April 1948 and was unsuccessful. The site of the cemetery was part of a Russian Anti-aircraft artillery range and American Grave Registration Team was refused admission to this area. There were however, several statements and letters from Polish civilians living in the area of B-24J #42-51941 crash.

For example at RINGWITZ (RZYMKOWICE), the American Grave Registration Team visited the home of Fr. Kisiel. He stated (7 April 1948) that he knew of one airman being killed in the crash and taken to LAMSDORF (LAMBINOWICE), but does not know where he was buried. He also stated that one airman was seen to land safely by parachute and was taken to a prison camp in LAMSDORF, STALAG 344.

Another statement by Augustyn Koczula provided the following information. He said that he saw one American airman who died on the same day that the aircraft crashed. This airman parachuted out and his chute did not open. The aircraft was flying over RINGWITZ (RZYMKOWICE), Poland and apparently still under control. He also stated that the German army took charge of the body and he thinks it was carried to LAMSDORF (LAMBINOWICE).

Mr. Augustyn Koczula also stated that an American aircraft crashed and burned in the forest about 3km southeast of the village of RINGWITZ (RZYMKOWICE). Six airmen were burned and taken to the camp at LAMSDORF (LAMBINOWICE).

There was another statement by farmer Paul Kirshmeier, who stated how he saw one American four engine bomber crash. He also said that he found one dead airman in the field and brought him by vehicle to the County Council's House. The authorities brought him from there to LAMSDORF, but he didn't know where.

After reading these statements it is fairly clear that bombardier 2nd Lt. J.L. Sullivan, Jr. bailed out and for some reason his chute collapsed and he was killed. His body landed on the property of Carolina Przybyla in RINGWITZ (RZYM-KOWICE).

The widow of S/Sgt Howard G. Miller received a letter from Mr. Pawel Loahotta in Poland, who stated that he was witness to the aircraft crash of the B-24J. He further stated that the remains of S/Sgt Miller are interred in a marked grave in a forest, presumably near the crash-site.

On 10 July 1950, the Investigation Section of the American Grave Registration Team recommended that all remains from the crash of B-24J 42-51941, and those of 2nd Lt. John L. Sullivan, Jr. be listed as non-recoverable and their next of kin advised. Letters addressed to the parents of 1st Lt. King and S/Sgt Miller have been returned undeliverable.

There is no doubt in my mind that the situation has now changed in Poland and it could be possible to locate the remains of all eleven men and give them proper burial.

They are:

Navigator; John L. Sullivan, Jr., (2nd Lt. - 0-1638624)

Pilot; Theodore C. King, (1st Lt. - 0-820033)

Co-pilot; Bernard W. Schams, (1st Lt. - 0-824910)

Navigator; Sidney S. Grapey, (1st Lt. - 0-719850)

Bombardier; William G. Navins, (1st Lt. - 0557995)

Upper Gunner; Paul P.C. Banis, (T/Sgt - 11057199)

Lower Gunner; James N. Wood, (S/Sgt - 35320174)

R Waist Gunner; Linn S. Arbogast, (Sgt - 37537640)

L Waist Gunner; Frank Anderson, (T/Sgt - 19101445)

Rear Gunner; William D. Fry, (Cpl - 33916793)

Nose Gunner; Howard G. Miller, (S/Sgt - 37539423)

I would like to also mention that in STALAG 344 at Lamsdorf were some 108 American POW's and some of them, if still living, might know the exact grave location of the 11 American airmen killed on 17 December 1944. At this time I am trying to locate any of these 108 men. During my investigation I was trying to locate 2nd Lt. Eugene Becker, but without any luck. I located the brother of S/Sgt Joseph Weisler and learned that he died 24 years ago. I also located the brother of bombardier Lt. Sullivan, who told me that 2nd Lt. Becker visited their family after the war and told them that he was devastated when he learned that Lt. Sullivan was killed. It was his belief that all three were POW's.

(Editorial Addendum) For years I've been laboring under the impression that Odertal Synthetic Oil Plant was located in Germany. But in checking the coordinates, as given in the Group's Intelligence Reports, we find the target located in Poland.

I suppose the justification could be that it was German occupied territory, but why then was the target for 26 December 1944 listed as Oswiecim, (in) Poland? The distance between the Oswiecim target and the Odertal target was perhaps a mere 80 to 100 miles apart and definitely in the same occupied country. AH! the questioning mind stumbles again.

It should be noted that these two crews (Shelton's and King's) were, in part, a composite crew. Lt. Shelton's crew was made up of components of Lt. Charles Atterholt's original crew: flying as co-pilot and flight commander, Lt. Atterholt; the bombardier, Lt. Sullivan; and navigator, Lt. Becker made up the fill-ins. Later Lt. Atterholt was to become Captain Atterholt, 726th Squadron Operations Officer.

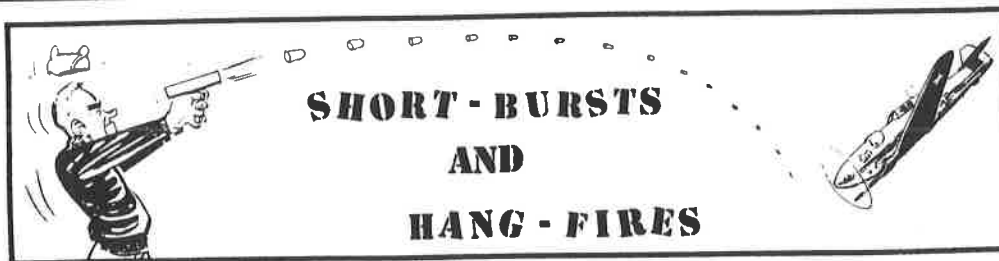
On King's crew, co-pilot Bernard W. Schams, and navigator Sidney S. Grapey were fill-ins. It is unknown at this writing just how many of the enlisted men were fill-ins.

To those that may wish to add to, or expand upon, what has been offered in this article, the writers mailing address is:

Manuel F. van Eyck

12365 Cohasset Street

North Hollywood, CA 91605



Larry March, 724th ... Eddie and I have just returned from the 50th Anniversary of the P-51 at Santa Maria, CA. It was an auspicious occasion with more P-51s in one place than I have seen since WW II days. Most of these were beautifully restored airplanes as is Collings' B-24, the "All American." The gathering lasted five days and there was much flying, hanger and real. I was re-elected Vice President of the Southeast Region, P-51 Mustang Pilots Assn.

(Editor .. Congratulations on your elective office. You old reconstituted bomber pilots do make "hot fighter jocks," given a chance. I can't imagine the Army having classified you to the wrong aircraft in WW II. Maybe that's why I never got beyond a gunnerhood and into pilotship, I was wrongly classified!)

Sam Miller, 725th (by phone, paraphrasing) ... That guy you had pictured on page 32 of your history supplement was really a "Big League Baseball Player." He is Jess Dobernic. He was a tentmate with me in the 725th. He played before service, and went on to play for several more years in the professional ranks. Look him up and lock him in as a member, he lives in St. Louis, and he can give you more about his baseball career.

(Editor .. Got'cha Sam. I'll work on his re-enlistment from this office. But in case your dis-remember, his full name is Andrew J. Dobernic. ---FLASH! Jess is now a bone-fide member. Look to page 28 for update!)

Charles M. Thomas, 727th ... I thought there was more mixing among the members of the Group than at any previous reunion. Perhaps the revival of memories by the wonderful stories in our great history book, and the activities at Fairmont brought us closer together.

(Editor .. You may be right about the interaction of our attendees. There has been a lot of good vibes from those that attended. Hey!, how's about that serial number on that donation check ... #0451 - like our FAX number. It certainly begged to be made out to the Group. Thanks Chuck and Inez.)

Byron F. Balliet, 725th ... Wish I had some of your magic touch on fund raising. It takes a lot to run a refuge of this size and I find myself getting in deeper every year.

(Editor ... For those wondering what Byron has reference to; Byron, and other dedicated folks, operate the "Balliet's Wounded Knee Wildlife Refuge, Inc." As you can imagine, they tend, mend, and care for all the helpless forest and meadow critters that come their way. If you have a soft heart for our little woodland critters, Byron Balliet (former pilot, now animal curator and healer) could use some financial help. His address is: 8 Eldorado Drive, Tabernacle, NJ 08088.)

Grant Sturman, 726th ... Following our conversation, I decided I couldn't send just one book to my Grandson and not one to my Son. - So enclosed is check for \$210. Use the balance for expenses.

(Editor ... Thanks for your sizable donation, and too, for your continued interest in our doings. Sorry that your health hasn't been up to attending our reunions. Losing a leg could slow you down a bit. Hopefully there is an improvement so you can make

our next one.)

Frank Vernon, 724th ... First off, all my memories and typing skills are slipping. In answer to your letter of 8 December 1990 about the Oswiecim, Poland mission we flew in December of 44. I was in the #4 slot looking up at Sanford/Jackson in #1; lead position. He took a hit in the wing tank and I told them to bail out. I believe Rollins took over the lead. I had a lot of damage on this one (my 25th); got the DFC. ... It is nice for someone to stay behind this association like you have, otherwise we'd miss out.

(Editor ... This response from Frank was motivated when he offered me a photo copy listing of his missions (July 44 to February 45). My perusal showed that many of our missions coincided, thus I probed his recall for more info. Something else that Frank mentioned in a previous letter, and I repeat, since it relates directly to the Mihailovic story found elsewhere in the AD-LIB. "Crew #13 had engine trouble going into Ploesti, were last over the target, got hit hard and had to land in a corn field near Belgrad, Yugo. Were met almost immediately by Chetniks, not Partisans. We headed up a nearby mountain to escape from nearby German patrols. L.K. Murry (AEG, now deceased) stayed behind and set the plane on fire. Our plane was Windy City II. Later on we were going to our rendezvous and met a dirty, bearded, straggly bunch sitting by the trail. I asked where they were from. I failed to get their names, but they were 724th shot down sometime before in of all things, Windy City I. Anyway, we got rescued August 10-11 back to base, and flew 30 more missions." At the time of Franks statement I had only a hint that this must have been the Harris/Smith Crew. Now I am more convinced this to be the case. ... I'm always pleased when my various questions spur a response. It certainly gives this office a chance to "flesh out" some things that time may be left unanswered. Of course, some of my questions are just plain dumb, but you guys take it in stride and grant me access to your recollections, regardless.)

Roger Johnston, 724th ... Another thought .. On page 104 in the "Fight'n 451st book; four of us crew members appear in the "On the way to Fairmont, August 1943." As shown in the book the names of two persons are either misspelled or improperly identified. The names should read; Roger Johnston, Russ Crans, Paul Johnshoy, and Robert Stone. The first two names are identified as Roger Johnson and Russ King.

(Editor ... Sorry, Rog, about the errors that placed the two of you into another family tree. There have been several other errors that have come to light; but isn't that the way it goes. A tome of such preponderance seems to have these faux pas. And being one of the principles, makes these glaring faults hurt a little more. I know it is particularly painful, since these type errors cannot be easily erased. Somewhere's within the configuration of getting all the material together and having it typeset, these mistakes do happen.)

William C. Anderson, 725th ... I don't know what there is about paying my income tax that makes me think of the old 451st. Maybe because in both instances I have suffered an

aerial attack. But believe me, compared to the vultures of the Infernal Revenue Service, I'll take ME-109s anytime. ... Nevertheless, when the smoke cleared I found I have enough left to pay Big Red's booze bill for the year, my bombardier's psychiatrist (you remember Lennie Baltzer), and a stipend for my favorite Bomb Group, which I am enclosing.

(Editor .. Thank you for the representative tithing you offered. In response to your involvement with the IRS, I only wished I had the cause to which they would show concern as to my income. "Drawing blood from a stone," is the term they use in my case. With you its probably, "Easy plucking.")

Karl Eichhorn, 726th ... Since I last wrote to you RE: the death of George Ahearn, I have written to both Sidney Winski and Charles Morfit, whose addresses you kindly sent to me. Morfit could not offer much new information for me; understandably, I suppose, he has forgotten many of the details of the accident, most of which I already have. He says he cannot even remember the names of all the crew from that day. Winski, however, has filled in some details for me. I have enclosed a copy sheet from his reply. .. You will note that he confirms my records that five crewmen were killed in the crash and added that a sixth, ball-turret gunner Taylor was also killed. Thus, from my journal and info from both Winski and Morfit, I believe the full crew that day was made up of: Charles B. Morfit, P.; Curtis H. Skinner, CP. (also, 726th Asst. Operations Officer); Joseph K. McSpadden, N.; Kenneth P. McDowell, B.; Warren G. Callison, NG.; Charles E. Walks, UG.; Curtis G. Taylor, BG.; George L. Ahearn, WG.; Frank M. Fowle, WG.; Edward F. McGoldrick, TG.

(Editor .. Again Karl took up the challenge to set the record straight. From our quote in AD-LIB (Issue 19) about the quest of Ahearn's brother to find answers to the puzzling question of his sibling's demise, Karl took it upon himself to ferret out the facts. Karl further confirmed that these six; Skinner, McSpadden, Callison, Walks, Taylor, and Ahearn were the fatalities on that ill-fated July 22, 1944 take-off crash. Karl has not only contributed to our records, but has, through correspondence with Edward Ahearn, also put Ed's mind at ease.)

Herbert Guinness, 726th ... We enjoyed seeing you again and meeting some of our 451st neighbors in Southern California. ... I am enclosing one of the best videos of Ploesti I have ever seen. ... If anyone in the 451st wants one copy, I will be happy to send them free (I'm still in the video business) - just let them pay the postage.

(Editor ... Mighty kind of you Herb. Indeed this is of good quality, and if I'm correct, its part of the Walter Cronkite series. It does cover a lot of the overall military (Air Force) strategy that relates to the demise of the Ploesti Oil Refineries. Some real good aerial shots are captured in it's filming. But so your "video business" isn't hurt by our members requesting a copy; how's about setting a price of \$4 to cover postage and packaging. Unless you've just left town, or will, after you read this, your present address is: 30 Vista Mar, Laguna Niguel, CA 92677.)

Lew Lowry, Complimentary Member ... AGAIN! - I didn't go to Vegas! You keep up the good word!

(Editor ... AGAIN - I accept your short message and generous \$75 donation. I'll add it to the donations you've already sent this year. And another thing, I'll make sure I don't venture anywhere's near Vegas for fear they'll have my hide for accepting your money.)

Ned Humphreys, CEO "Bombardiers, Inc" ... As you are aware from recorded notices on your answering machine, I have sought to contact you by telephone to personally offer my apologies for the mixup which I apparently have created due to problems in my operation. My failure to perform stems basically from two factors - One; repeated trips to Keesler AFB, MS for doctor's testing and treatment of a problem I am having with my legs. Two; the inexperience of newly hired office personnel to act in my stead.

(Editor ... Hey!, no harm done, Ned. As my previous letter noted, we're all finding it difficult to expect instantaneous, positive, and rewarding follow-ups to even our most humble of requests. In your case I have to grant you absolution from any guilt. Although I wasn't a Bombardier, your newsletters (CROSSHAIRS) makes for enjoyable reading. The half page spread you gave us in your March 1991 issue garnered us another member. Now if we can reciprocate by including your address, perhaps you'll gain a member. -- BOMBARDIERS, Inc, 200 Van Buren St., #2109, Daphne, AL 36526. Phone (205)626-3920)

Milton Radovsky, Author/Historian ... I'd appreciate very much your notifying some people in your Group I am trying to contact. I have already heard from some of them. ... I omitted a couple of names - Eckenroth and James - in my letter of March 1st. Could you inform them, also, that I would like to hear from them? *Address is: 10710 Lockridge Drive, Silver Springs, MD 20901*

(Editor ... Here's a guy with a mission. Milt is trying to pull together all the various components that made up the 25 July 1944 mission to Linz, Austria. So far our office has been able to contact many of our people relevant to Milt's quest. I hope if you were contacted, you found time to respond. A copy letter just arrived from Lindley Miller (725th) giving more "fodder" for Milt's effort.)

James H. Williams, 725th ... I noted your story of being shot down by "friendly fire." I was on that mission on 12 March 1945. I flew with pilot Thorne, as a nose navigator in the lead of 'C' Flight. My notes show that Vienna was the intended target, but we diverted to Graz, then again altered plans and finally bombed Zeltweg with a PPF run. I recall that the crews received a 'chewing out' after the flight, with good reason, about test firing their guns.

(Editor ... Thanks for reminding me about getting shot down by another B-24, Jim. It was an incident I wouldn't want to repeat, but under the circumstances it turned out okay. Joe Wood (Crew Chief) still has his eyes peeled looking for that ship. And to think, all we've got to show for our efforts that day is some photos of a burning aircraft on the landing strip at Zara, Yugo. But it wasn't our guys that should be blamed, I found out from the Washington Archives that the culprit was the Group ahead of us; either the 461st of 484th. Some young "whipper-snapper" wanting another "Cluster" to his Air Medal thought we were fair game. My navigator, John Dilks, asked me if I noticed the 50 caliber holes that "happened" between my nose turret and his map table. My response was that I was to preoccupied getting out of my turret - finding my chute - putting it on - and getting into position to jump to even notice. I do remember the nice holes in the #2 engine cowling, and the red glow as the fire developed. All this while I was awaiting those awesome words to "Bail Out!" They were never said, since the air strip "saved our day!")