



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

ISSUE 21

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OPERATION: WEST COAST

1992 Reunion Plans Contains Some Nice Surprises for New and Experienced Attendees; Alike

With two Committee Meetings under their belts, the local folks in the Los Angeles area are all geared to putting together another of the renowned 451st Bomb Group Reunions.

The first full-fledged working meeting was conducted in early July (1991) at the Red Lion Inn & Hotel, Costa Mesa, California. There the Committee got a handle on how our operation is conducted, and what could be expected as we neared our reunion dates, 17 to 20 September 1992. At that particular meeting the final hotel site had not been determined. The Red Lion was under strong consideration.

The second meeting took place at the Hyatt Regency Irvine (city of Irvine, CA) in early November. Those in attendance were: Leonard A. Baltzer, 725th; Douglas Denton, 725th; Walter C. Downing, 724th; Herbert A. Guinness, 726th; Jerome H. Keilman, 727th; Lewis D. Lowry, Complimentary Member; Duane C. Maybay, 724th; and Dale C. Mayswinkle. As is the custom, in that fast moving world of glitter and glitz, some 7 potential committee people couldn't make the meeting for various reasons. From 50th Wedding Anniversary, in the case of the Hector Sapien's, to various hospital stays as noted by the Macey's and Gruenwald's. Others begged off for one reason or other, but pledged their presence at the next go around.

A small "scouting party," made up of Dale Mayswinkle, Bob Karstensen, and Walt Downing visited the March Air Force Base --at a nod from Lt. General Robert Beckel, 15th AF Commander--to evaluate what potential the base would have for our Friday, September 18th visit. We were pleased to note that our requests for Base participation had been channeled to those lower in command. Tentatively scheduled at the Base will be a Military Briefing, which should bring us up to date on the current status of the Air Force. A luncheon at the Officer's Mess, and an in-depth look at the 15th Air Force Base Museum before taking the busses back to the Hotel.

A visit to the Headquarters of the "Band of the Golden West" (Captain Dennis M. Layendecker, Commander) "nailed down" our request for band participation at the Hyatt Regency on the evening of 18 September. S/Sgt Jack Ryder, Director of Operations, offered us a verbal peek at what could be expected, by just dropping the words, "Glenn Miller Program."

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Hyatt Regency Irvine
Host Hotel for September 1992 Reunion

The Committee agreed that we should have a very special program for Thursday evening, 17 September. It was agreed that this program would be a professional in-house production so as not to tax the energies of those just arriving. More on this subject will be forthcoming in the Registration Packet when mailed from this office. But as of now it looks like you can dust off whatever parts of your old uniform that will fit you - even the tattered garrison cap - and bring it along!

Day tours of the California sights for Saturday, 19 September agenda was a hard one to decide upon. There are so many areas of interest that I'm sure not everyone is going to be pleased at

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451st Bomb Group (H), Ltd.
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Compiled and Published by Bob Karstensen

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what will be offered. But to try and touch both ends of the visual spectrum, it was decided that an "Old California" tour was a must for those with an historical vent. For those that lean more to the contemporary, we are scheduling a "L.A./Beverly Hills Tour." Both will be explained in detail with the Registration Packet when it is mailed out prior to the Reunion.

To those that are planning a more extensive visit to California, remember the Hyatt Regency is offering the \$55 room rate for two days prior to and two days following the reunion. And as a follow-up to these prices, the Hyatt is also offering their Regency Club Floor rooms at a discount price during our Reunion Dates. What goes for \$149 singles, will cost you \$75; and what goes for \$169 doubles, will be \$95. To those of you familiar with the Regency Club will know of the extra amenities offered.



**John Wayne/Orange County Airport - Official Greeter
"Welcome Pilgrim"**

It is hoped you will consider starting your stay by checking into the Hyatt Regency on Wednesday, 16 September. This will give you the chance to get together with your tentmates, or crewmembers, and to just take it easy. Registration will be set up (for sure) on Thursday morning, 17 September.

Your Airport of destination is the John Wayne/Orange County Airport. The Hyatt has a check-in counter and shuttle vans adjacent to the pick-up baggage section.

If you prefer, and can get a better air fare to any of the other air terminals in the L.A. area, a "Super Shuttle" bus is available (for a fee) to take you to the John Wayne/Orange County Airport, where you can transfer to the complimentary Hyatt Regency bus. Be sure to ask your Travel Agent about this particular service.

Another aspect of air travel that could save the traveler a bit of money. That is the pre-purchasing of, "Senior Citizens Coupon Booklet." These coupon booklets are sold in packets of four, or eight, one way, Cabin Class tickets to any air terminal that particular airline flies to. Only one family member per booklet. The coupons are good for up to one year from time of purchase, and only for use within the contiguous 48 States. Once purchased, and anytime thereafter, there is a 15 day waiting period before your flight can be booked. In all, if you can use an extra trip somewhere's in the U.S. during the life of the coupon, you can enjoy *that* excursion within the price of a single round trip to our reunion. Let your Travel Agent brief you on this feature.

To those coming by rail; I don't know what to tell you. We find so few using that mode of transportation, we're at a loss as to how to get from the depot to the hotel. Come early, walk fast!

For most of our "Die-hard Camping" members we haven't, at this time, looked too deeply into campgrounds. We know that Disneyland has facilities, but they are a distance from the Hyatt Regency Irvine. The Hyatt has open (that is uncovered) parking behind the property. But living in your unit while the reunion is in progress is prohibited. You must be a guest of the hotel in order to park your unit there. But, I should add, most all campers seem to be able to "do their thing," without our help. Most franchised campgrounds have directories available that offer choices on what's nearby, costs, amenities, and how to set-up.

Remember, in case you are assuming this reunion will be a generic type gathering, we've worked a lot of extras into our program. Plan to attend and be surprised.



MY NIGHT TO REMEMBER

by: Bob Karstensen

Tooling down the Illinois Tollway between Marengo and Des Plaines IL, and completely oblivious to what was about to happen, this old soldier merrily chatted with his daughter, Ann, recalling the times they had traversed this same route and how things had changed over the years. (A hint of advancing age.)

Where were they heading? They were headed for the Ramada O'Hare Inn, site of the very first 451st Bomb Group Reunion in 1980.

For what purpose were they headed there? Because the Chicago Committee (the ones that set the standards for later reunions) had indicated their desire to "get together" to celebrate the 10th (or thereabouts) anniversary of the first Group get together.

Why set the date for 10 August 1991? Well, as any good committee would function; they sought out good weather by checking the depth of the perch in Lake Michigan, felt the woolliness of the Woolly Worm, and ran a bear up a tree to see how active he was. With all these indications in their favor, and the fact that it was Bob Karstensen's birthday, they proceeded with this "small and intimate" gathering.

"SMALL AND INTIMATE," did I say? Truly an understatement! What Ann and I encountered was completely apart from SMALL, and though INTIMATE, (depending on how you use that word) I wondered if I hadn't entered the wrong hotel. For there, off to my right, was a registration table and what I thought was my friend, Johnny Anderson (727th), trying to crawl under the carpeting. But no, my eyes (those that could spot a FW-190 at 50+ miles) must be playing tricks on me. With disbelief I turned to Ann and said, "I need help, my eyes are going bad, but wasn't that John Anderson and his daughter, Pam, over there?" But as I refocused, from far to near, I saw the hotel bulletin board (a scrolling TV monitor) showing the words "451st Bomb Group." I had to stand there and wait till it scrolled past again - then I realized the magnitude of what I was about to encounter. Indeed it did say "451st," and along with that was "Birthday Bash!"

Another look back at the registration table and John and Pam had vanished. They had, as we approached, melded into a bunch of 451st people that were sitting to the rear of the area. But to my surprise these weren't all Chicago Committee people as I had been led to believe they would be. Rather they were "out of towners," that had been invited to take part. The scope of those that came, and where they came from, was recognized when I spotted Stanley Jackson (724th), and most of his crew "hot-footing" it into the gift shop when they spotted me. Their home bases ranged from the East Coast to the West Coast. In all, they didn't do too good a job of hiding as it's hard to move 6 or 7 milling people out of sight, even when led by a worthy "lead pilot." I was reminded of the "Peanuts" comic strip, showing Charlie Brown and his entourage making a dusty and hasty deployment - in all directions at once.

For all the "hemming and hewing" that took place, as I encountered one "out of towners" after another, I came out of each conversation with the feeling that I was somehow at fault for having arrived early. It was a strange feeling to see all these members, and to understand that they had traveled so far just to join-in on the celebration of my 66th Birthday. My understanding was that this had evolved and been in planning from the time of our Omaha/Fairmont Reunion.

At the registration table I noted a "whole bunch" of name-tags that were yet to be picked up. Many, many more than those folks I just encountered. Among them was name tags for Pete and Clara Massare, Vice President of the 451st organization. Later I was told that there were more than 90 guests expected. And still later I was told that John and Pam were responsible for all the nametags and their distribution.

The "surprise party," if, at this time it could be called such, started out with a Cocktail Hour at 6 PM. The "Toastmaster" for the occasion was Jack Hoppock, Master of Ceremonies for our very first reunion in 1980. He was skillfully, artistically, and oratorically augmented by members of the Chicago Committee; by Pete Massare; and by Sedge Hill (author of our 451st book, and President of the Nebraska Flying Box-cars). It was through Hill's "NFB" that a partial mailing list was obtained to contact those present; and those not present, but involved.

Our "Toastmaster" had, previous to the party, informed those attending that in place of a "roast," they were to "eulogize" my old carcass with impromptu statements. I guess they know that I cry easy, thus they avoided telling the whole truth; if any. Ground crew and air crews (all friends) came forward: even my tail gunner, Leo Cegla, (a guy never known to say more than, "Your okay Colonel, the formation is still with you.") offered some of his remembrances. I'm sure glad he didn't tell all!



Jack Hoppock
"Silver TONGUED Toastmaster"



Durable Tail Gunner and Nostalgic Nose Gunner
Leo Cegla & Bob Karstensen - Crewmates, 724th

But what would a Birthday Party be without presents. The party alone would have been one of the greatest highlights of my life, even without gifts. But the Chicago Committee saw that I wasn't forgotten.



Rog Johnston & John O'Connor
Man, was that a "COOKIE!"

From Fairmont, Nebraska (my newly adopted city) Sedge and Wilda Hill had transported one of the biggest cookie (singular) that ever came through the doors of the Ramada O'Hara Inn. It was baked by the family and friends of Don West, President of the Fillmore County Historical Society, in appreciation of what we had done for the community with our 1990 Omaha/Fairmont Reunion. It was a suspenseful moment as Rog Johnston and John O'Connor unpacked it from its traveling wrapper. And it came forth with nary a crack, or crumble, in its appearance. It was inscribed with, "Happy Birthday - Bob - From the Fairmont Chamber & Fill. Co. Historical Soc." Also shown on the cookie were various scenes indicating our intrusion into the lives of the Fairmont citizens.



Airman Statuette
Pete Massare - Showing; Rog Johnston - Viewing; Bob K. (background) - Awing

A statuette of an airman in full flight regalia and inscribed, "THE FLYING OSCAR AWARD - 15 Years of Dedicated Service - 10 August 1991" was presented. I found out later that this was an original casting commissioned by John O'Connor during the course of putting together all the amenities. It's a real beaut!

From Archie Piirainen (727th) a dozen "Stringed Bolo Ties," such as he had for sale at the Omaha/Fairmont Reunion sales counter in 1990. These were beauti-

fully embellished with a 3 dimensional B-24 (with Group tail markings) on polished thin-cut black rock. He made no mention how I was to dispose of them, so I'll hold them till the next reunion.

But the presentation they were holding back till the near the



King Sized \$7,560 Honorarium Check
Too big for the Drive-up Tellers Pneumatic Tubes



Sedge Hill Presents a Negotiable \$7,560 Honorarium Check
Bob Karstensen accepts. Johnston & O'Connor Witness

end, for fear that I'd suffer a seizure, was a huge check, literally in size and amount. Sedge Hill, who had taken over the microphone for this occasion, pulled from behind the podium this enormous simulated check made out to me for the amount of \$7,560. This Sedge indicated was an honorarium for the hours, days, and years spent in furthering the heritage of the 451st. The monies had been solicited from the membership, without my knowledge, by the Nebraska Flying Boxcars, who, with their non-profit status, could approach this event without endangering the givers' tax free exemption. It was further noted that none of this fortune was to be put back into the 451st treasury, as when Pete and I first organized. Needless to say I was flabbergasted! I admit, the years of building and molding the Group, have taken a toll of my time and monies. I finally had to close down my own business in favor of maintaining what we had started. My hours, in pursuit of this worthy cause, have been ongoing and without let-up. Still, had no "honorarium" been given, I'd be doing as I am now - continuing the cause, and staying the course, we've set. But my thanks goes out to all that contributed to my honorarium - T'was appreciated!

After being "bowled over" with such a fine memorial of appreciation, Sedge announced that our 1990 visit to Fairmont was not without a special reward. He related that Don West had formulated, and received approval of the Nebraska Historical Commission, to have placed on Highway 81, between Fairmont and Geneva, a state approved Historical Marker that indicated the presence of a former World War II training facility. Not alone is that a feather in the collective caps of us 451st people, but the Historical Marker is going to single out the 451st in both TEXT, and as partial SPONSOR of the project. It will read thusly:

FAIRMONT ARMY AIR FIELD

Construction began on the Fairmont Army Air Field September 17, 1942. Located East of here, it was one of eleven built in Nebraska during World War II.

The 1,980 acre field began as a satellite of the Topeka Army Air Base. Early in 1943 the name was changed to Fairmont Army Air Field. A short lived training school gave way to the 451st Bombardment Group, which arrived in September 1943. Other groups were the 485th, 16th, 98th, 467th, and 489th.

Hangers of various sized housed B-24s, B-17s and B-29s. Extensive Concrete runways and other structures were built. The field had barracks for nearly 6,000 officers and enlisted men. Its 350 bed hospital was the largest in Nebraska.

In September 1944 Lt. Col. Paul Tibbets visited Fairmont and selected the 393rd Bomb Squadron of the 504th to join the 509th Composite Group at Wendover Field, Utah. This group dropped both atomic bombs on Japan.

The field was declared surplus in 1946.

Nebraska State Historical Society

Fillmore County Historical Society

451st Bombardment Group (H), Ltd. - Robert M. Karstensen

I am indeed proud to have our Group so recognized, and I take my hat off to Sedge Hill for maintaining the pressure to bring it along this far. Placement of the Marker is planned for spring, or early summer, of 1992.



Cake: 1 - Size: Huge - Flavor: Chocolate - Taste: Excellent
Inscription: *Happy Birthday; Bob*

It seemed that the conclusion of the B'Day Bash has not, as yet, been reached. The large, and scrumptious cake that had been languishing in the corner of the room had yet to be violated. With a touch of ceremony, and a unified "hurry up!!," and, with the assistance of Kay Hoppock, I made the necessary mutilating hacks that made it fair game for the rest of the guests. The cake was decorated with the wording, "Happy Birthday Bob," and along the left side was pictured an aircraft (type & style, unknown) with the wording "451 Bombardment Group." It set all diets, and proposed diets, askew.



Kay Hoppock Helps "S/Sgt. Thumbs"
Cut Birthday Cake

To bring a happy and musical conclusion to this evening, John O'Connor brought along his trumpet. And attached to, or following, that trumpet were two long time associates of John's. (Surely John must be holding IOU's on them.) One was the lovely and talented Dena Vermette who has charmed me out of my tree on numerous occasions. The other was Woody Woodward who came along to tickle the ivory's, as is his forte when he joins the "Medicare 6, 7,

or 8" and they go on tour around the country. The music was spirited and inviting. Inviting enough for us serious minded baritones to either join-in, or, in saving our voices and just listening to good music.



Peter Massare Shares Reflective Moments

For this super clandestine operation I have to especially thank the shifty, dubious, and questionable "Chicago Committee." It was their clever undercover front that allowed this party to come about. Had any other ploy been used, other than "We're going to have another HURRAH!! to celebrate our good fortune - Oh, it's your birthday, too!" I might have had deep suspicions. But these folks are so damn open and honest, that I felt it was going to be as advertised - an informal get together.

These "Damn open and honest" folks are:

John Anderson (and Dau. Pam) (727th)

Jerry & Dorothy Bowker (727th)

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

- Jack & Kay Hoppock (727th)
- Roger & Bea Johnston (724th)
- Tom & Bobbi Kelly (727th)
- Frank & Lois McNerney (725th)
- John & Erma Jean O'Connor (724th)



Part of "The Visiting/Home Team"

L to R: Tom Kelly (deceased); Carmine Paceleo; Bob Karstensen; John Anderson; Pete Massare; Leo Valliere

And, too, you can add the names of my daughter, Ann, Pete & Clara Massare, Sedge & Wilda Hill; for these folks kept the secret even though we had frequent and involved contacts. They, along with all the invited guests and contributors, kept me in the dark till the day of the happening. Bless all their inner motives - Lord, keep them all safe.

Fairmont, Nebraska Update/Review

On October 7th, one day before the meeting of the Fillmore County Historical Society, I received an invitation to take part. I was pleased to have been invited, but was confronted with a timing problem in getting there. Nevertheless I bid a hasty and temporary good-bye to family and pets and headed for Fairmont, Nebraska. Needless to say I arrived in plenty of time, as I knew that route better than some of the roads back here in Illinois.

I was not surprised to run into Sedge and Wilda Hill, as I knew they were operating closely with Don West, President of the Fillmore County Historical Society, and Ruth Black, curator of the Fairmont Museum; all in furthering the wartime relationship of the 451st to Fillmore County. (The Hill's had made numerous contributions of memorabilia, relative to our 1943 trespass. Most recently a heated flying suit -located from somewhere [?])

The purpose of the invitation was to appraise me, as President of the 451st Bomb Group, and Sedge Hill, liaison for the



Route 81 South - Site of Future Fairmont AAF Historical Marker

Group, on the progress of the Historical Marker that was to be placed on Highway 81, west of the old field. (Text and progress of the Memorial can be found in the "My Night to Remember" story, Page 3 .)



Can You Picture This?

Disregard whatever you may see written on this Historical Marker and visualize the inscription to be about the Fairmont Army Air Field. Then, as the crowning touch, picture our 451st Bomb Group being credited as participants and sponsors.



Hopefully, Second Marker Location on Rt. 6

Further discussion was for future placement of another Marker to be set on Highway 6, north of the Air Field. But this was tabled, awaiting the placement of the first Monument, and,

granting time for the State to give due consideration to the unusual request of having two (2) Monuments dedicated to the one (1) site. A request such as this is very much out of the ordinary, but knowing the tenacity of the Fillmore County Historical Society, headed by Don West, not out of the realm of possibility. Don promises that after the first Marker is placed, effort will go into getting State approval of the second one.

Ruth Black, museum curator, spoke to the need of more artifacts that relate the 451st to the Fairmont AAF. She was most appreciative of what had been offered, both in official documents and pictures. She singled out Bob Barnd (726th, AEG) as a most generous and frequent contributor. She noted that there were others, but her focus was on Bob Barnd. Although her wants are for specific items that relate to the Fairmont AAF, she isn't above accepting a monetary donation for the upkeep and expansion of her facility. They have, in conjunction to the main Museum, an annex building (across the street in an antiquated store) that they wish to convert to give added museum space. They offer a lifetime membership to the Fillmore County Historical Society for the sum of \$50. If you wish to join, since you may not have been a part of the original 451st Group that served on the base and would now like to show your concern, you may mail your check to: Ruth Black, Box 373, Fairmont, NE 68354; or Don West, 625 - 1st Wyoming Ave, Fairmont, NE 68354 - and made out to: "Fillmore County Historical Society."



Fairmont Museum - Repository of Lore, Legends and Facts

Joining us at the meeting was Douglas E. Rung, History Teacher at the Geneva Jr/Sr High School. Doug, in developing a 1990/91 project for his students, brought a team of students out to our reunion and videoed some of the happenings as they occurred. From this small intrusion, Doug caught the interest of his students and together they amplified on what was started. The results, as Doug related them, has brought about the making of 3 video tapes; one of the actual reunion; one of follow-up photography on the empty base; and one of footage taken from some of the historical films shown on commercial TV. With a bit of student skill, and teacher supervision, they consolidated the three films to a one hour adaptation of what the 451st was/is all about. Admittedly, these aren't of the "John Houston or Alfred Hitchcock" school of film making, but they aren't bad. Their efforts have already been acclaimed by the public as they were shown a couple times on local cable TV. Doug, and his students, are making these VHS's available to the public for \$23 each. Any profits derived (which may be in the neighborhood of \$5 per sale), will be diverted to the Fillmore County

Historical Society. If you wish to order a video cassette of what I've described, you can write to: Douglas Rung, 1225 D Street, Geneva, NE 68361. Make the check out to "Douglas E. Rung, Video Productions."

I think we have, in the Fillmore County Historical Society, an excellent cause to champion. In the past we've been asked to promote many, and various, causes to our members. In most cases these causes are worthy of consideration. But in this instance the Fillmore County Historical Society and the Village of Fairmont, by their actions and kindnesses, (and without asking us directly for help) has bought about, what I think is a proper and viable cause. I maintain that the 451st should offer whatever help and assistance it can. Help me out fellows by showing them that we are 4 square behind them.

ADDENDUM

To those, since our 1990 Omaha/Fairmont Reunion, that have been nostalgic about the old Base Chapel, let me inform you that it is still standing and active. It was structurally moved from the Base, after the Air Field was declared inactive, to its present location at 217 Main Street, Friend, Nebraska, some 8 miles distant.



Friend Berean Church - Freind, NE



Interior View of Friend Berean Church
Many 451st members exchanged vows with their loved ones at this altar.

BELATED DFC AWARDED TO PAUL BEAM

DECEASED CREWMATE ALSO HONORED

Every once in a while our efforts in chronicling a military saga pays off. Although in this instance we weren't instrumental in the actual achievement of what follows, this office tried to offer whatever aid we could in finding the most accessible governmental channel in which this effort could be routed.

The following letter, dated June 22, 1991, was mailed to the surviving crewmembers of William C. "Chuck" Paddock (725th, Pilot)

22 July 1991

Greetings to all of you:

I am absolutely ecstatic! Both claims filed for the DFC have been approved.

On Saturday, June 8th, Paul called to tell us he received a letter advising he was to receive the DFC. You have no idea how excited Doris and I were.

After the excitement of talking to Paul and Mary, our first concern was Al's claim. After losing Al I wrote to the Review Board to report Al's passing. (*editor - Alvin M. Watts passed away 17 July 1990 while processing for his DFC was in the works*) I made sure the status of his claim would not change under the circumstances. My concern now was the disposition of Al's claim. I wanted to call Edith, but I was afraid, thinking something may have happened to his file. I sat here on pins and needles as each day passed getting more and more worried.

Finally, on Wednesday morning, June 19th, while I was out playing golf, Doris received a call from Edith. Edith had just received her letter from the Air Force advising Al was to receive the DFC.

You have no idea how delighted and satisfied I was after the work, time and cooperation from each of you. I hope that all of you received the pleasure and satisfaction in hearing the good news. I am sure that you will.

The Air Force allows a few options as to the delivery of the citation and the DFC. The citation with the DFC may be mailed; both be presented during an informal ceremony at a local military installation; or both may be presented during a formal ceremony also at a local military installation. I mentioned to Paul, if he elects to either an informal, or formal ceremony, Doris and I would try to attend. I want to be there, and North Carolina is not that far away..

Al's son, Gary, wrote on May 1, 1991. I responded on May 5. Gary is stationed at Ft. Rucker, Alabama where he entered Rotary-wing flight training. Edith is thinking that it would be nice if the citation and the DFC were awarded at Ft. Rucker. I think that would be great.

Doris and I are so pleased the issue is behind us. Thanks again for your cooperation. Interestingly, so many AF men I met have no idea where their former crew members are located. They are amazed we have maintained contact over the years and that we were able to assemble all the affidavits 45 years later. Hopefully, this good news reaches all of you while you are enjoying the good life and good health.

Each of us must be either, just approaching 70, or years beyond. This is the time the body begins to falter; but, we hope this is not the case with any of you.

Perhaps you may have received notification that our next reunion is planned for Anaheim, California sometime in September 1992. Specific dates have not been established; however, if the Good Lord continues to keep us in good health, Doris and I are planning to attend. Meanwhile, Edith indicated she would like to attend since the reunion is close to home. It is much too early to establish the final plans but as the plans materialize, I will keep you informed.

Meanwhile, each of you take care; stay in contact; keep me posted on any news that you would think I would want to know, and thanks again for your interest and cooperation with the DFC claims.

(signed) Doris & Chuck

10 August 1991

Dear Bob:

The early part of this week we returned from our annual jaunt to the lake in Maine where our family assembles. It would not be possible to be with you tonight. I cannot let the BASH pass without a few comments. They are:

1.) The first tapes you sent me in 1977 I kept in my files. The first arrived on April 7, 1977 after you and I responded to Harry Fox's ad in the February issue of the VFW. The family and I had an exhilarating evening listening to you. It was like a long lost friend coming back from the dead. My response produced your tape of May 18, 1977. Out of this action the Association grew. These tapes are fourteen years old and if you are like me, you would want them in your history file. They were reproduced and I return the originals. It is an honor to have been part of the beginning of the Association. Thank you.

2.) You recall, the crew and I worked on a project to have the military records corrected on two crew members. Only eight of us received

the Distinguished Flying Cross and the other two were also entitled to the honor. So I contacted you for advice to assemble records. You provided addresses of military records retention centers and saved me considerable research time. For this help,

Alvin M. Watts



Colonel Bailey makes formal presentation of DFC

the crew and I are appreciative.

3.) The most important assistance provided was pulling from your computer files information of other squadron crews. This information was paramount in establishing the facts to support our claims. For this assistance, the crew and I are particularly happy because in June crew member Paul Beam and the family of Alvia Watts were advised they were to be awarded the DFC. The appreciation is boundless and sincere thanks from all of us. Sadly, Al is not with us to receive the honor and the citation. The family may have the citation delivered at the military installation where Al's son, Gary, is stationed. Bob, there are not enough accolades to praise you for your work.

May you celebrate many, many more birthdays.

(signed) Chuck

ADDENDUM TO DFC PRESENTATION

Paul Beam requested the Air Force to make a formal presentation at Pope Air Force Base outside Fayetteville, North Carolina any time during the middle of August.

Edith Watts considered having the citation and DFC presented to Al's son, Gary, at Ft. Rucker, Alabama, where he is attending Rotary-wing flight training. Later the family decided it would be better to have the award forwarded to the family home in Modesto, California. Considering that Al is no longer with us, and the extensive family travel to Alabama, I can understand the reason for this action.

SUB-ADDENDUM TO DFC PRESENTATION

15 November 1991

To all concerned crewmembers & friends:

Never in our wildest dreams did Paul, Mary, Doris and I expect the extravaganza put on by the Commanding Officers of Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base on Saturday, 18 September when Paul was presented with the Distinguished Flying Cross. What a stroke of good fortune for Paul.

When the approval notices were received, I immediately heard from Edith Watts and Paul. Both had options as to how the presentations was to be made. Paul opted to have an informal ceremony at Pope Air Force Base and Doris and I wanted to be there.

Weeks passed without any instructions until after Labor Day. Then Paul was told the Air Force wished to make the presentation at the Fort Bragg/Pope Air Force Base Open House on the 28th of September. Paul agreed, was advised invitations will be sent him and his family; and to Doris and I.

The invitations came from Lieutenant General (3 stars) Gary E. Luck, Commanding Officer, XVIII Airborne, Fort Bragg; and from Colonel Maxwell D. Bailey, Commander, 317th Tactical Airlift Wing. We were invited to a "Distinguished Visitors" reception at the Officer's Club and to the Open House.

The Chief of Protocol, Sandy DeCastro, welcomed us warmly and took us into the reception area. There Paul and the three of us met many officials including several multi-star Generals.



Lt. General Gary Luck in Casual Conversation

Paul was the "Guest of Honor."

After the reception we were escorted to the flight line and Paul was taken to "front-row-center," with the three of us at his side. Paul was introduced to Lt. General Luck and talked for at least twelve to fifteen minutes. After the first event involving the Golden Knights and the National Anthem, Paul was then introduced, and Colonel Bailey presented the DFC to Paul. They estimated there were more than 100,000 visitors at the Base.

The Golden Knights put on several events. One involved two men jumping together at 12,500 feet; free

falling; parting; coming together; passing a baton, then deploying their chutes. After completing their events, the Golden Knights formed on the ramp about fifty feet in front of Paul. The announcer requested Paul to step forward and the Knight's Commander escorted Paul to the line up, was introduced to each. The Knights congratulated Paul and then Paul was given the baton. The baton was inscribed for the occasion.

Later, while partaking of some after ceremony amenities, Lt. General Downing, Worldwide Commander of All Special Forces introduced himself to Paul and I. He was down to earth and wanted to hear about the awarding of the DFC. We talked for about 20 minutes.

The day was moving and emotional. We were all happy for Paul. From time to time my thoughts drifted to Al and how badly I felt not having him involved in a similar honor. Both deserved the same recognition.

Best regards - and stay in touch.

(signed) Chuck & Doris Paddock

(editorial comment;)

So, what was an oversight on the part of the Army Air Force, and the War Department back in 1944 (presentation to the rest of the crew of their DFC's was in October 1944); the slate has been wiped clean. We congratulate the effort of Chuck Paddock in accomplishing this final mission for his "boys." Perhaps we can devise another type award and call it the "Tenacity Medal." Chuck deserves as much for all his work.



PADDOCK'S CREW

Standing (L-R) Karl Keyes, Alvia Watts (dec.) Jack Waggoner;
Paul Beam, William Paddock

Seated: Stan Leitner, Harry Reinhart, Jack Perry, Henry Giasson

"SMW" MEMBERSHIP SLOWLY GROWING

Back in 1984, when we first realized that the legacy of the 451st had been continued by the 451st Strategic Missile Wing, we wrote about it in the upcoming (Issue 12) Ad-Lib.

Major William F. Meyers (Ret.), Launch Control Officer in the 724th Strategic Missile Squadron, was the first to alert this office of it's history. Major Meyers (Membership #1091) sent me photos and documentation as to how its designation was chosen, and how it functioned during it's tenure, 26 April 1961 to 25 June 1965. What Major Meyers could not supply was more names to contact in order to solicit them to be included in our mailings.

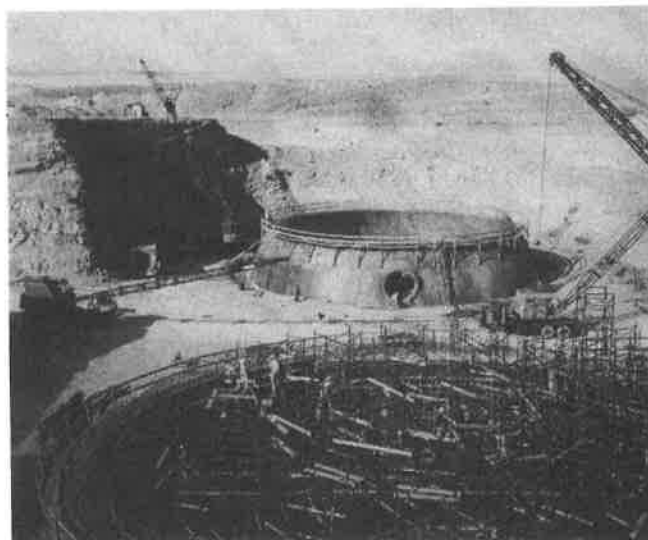
As luck would have it, Colonel Frank Halm, founder of the 94th Bomb Group Association (8th AAF), from Corvallis, OR, started a series of correspondence with this office in regards to our mutual interests. He casually mentioned that he spent part of his military career by serving in the 451st SMW. I countered with how we had been searching for him, and those that served with him. Frank was kind enough to pass on some addresses of former 451st SMW people that he still had contact with. And from that list we have gained another half dozen members; with the possibility of still more.

My approach to these men was, that though they may not consider themselves as 451st "BOMB GROUP" people, we would, for the present, act as an umbrella organization that they could rally to. And, until there were sufficient numbers of their own to "go it alone," act in their behest.



LTC JAY TAYLOR, 724th COMMANDER, ACCEPTS AWARD
724th Missile Squadron gains recognition in Titan Missile readiness

From the documentation that Bill Meyers supplied came this quote: "..... for the 724th Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, was inactivated at Dow Field on 26 September 1945. Thus ended the first incarnation of an outfit that had seen nearly two years of active duty in Italy; Had flown 245 combat missions; had attacked targets in a dozen European countries; had participated in the first, perhaps the only, 100% perfect bombing mission flown by a Fifteenth Air Force Group; and had been awarded



Construction of Titan ICBM Launch Sites, Lowry AFB, Colo.

three Distinguished Unit Citations, awards that entitled members of the Group to display two Bronze Oak Leaf Clusters on the gold-bordered blue ribbon worn above the right breast pocket of shirt or blouse. It was indeed, a distinguished unit.

The name and record of the 724th survived its 1945 inactivation, and now there is an organization inherit and carry on the name and that record. For, on 26 April 1961, after more than 15 years of inactivity, the 724th Bombardment Squadron, Heavy, was re-designated the 724th Strategic Missile Squadron (ICBM-Titan), activated, and assigned to Strategic Air Command for organization at Lowry Air Force Base, Colorado, on or about 8 July 1961. Thus the 724th lives again."

(though directed at the 724th, it also included the 725th that made up the only two Squadrons involved in the reconstituted 451st SMW infrastructure.)

I hope you original "Bomb Group" people will keep an eye open for any more "SMW" guys that may be looking for a place to hang their hats.

KARL EICHHORN'S 726th JOURNAL

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

AND THE WAR GOES ON

On 5 April we bombed the Astra Oil Refinery and marshalling yards at Ploesti, Rumania. For this mission the 451st received its second Distinguished Unit Citation (Oak Leaf Cluster). Thirty-four planes took off, but six returned because of mechanical trouble. On the way to and over the target they were attacked by over 100 ME-109's and FW-190's, as well as by heavy flak batteries. The Group claimed 20 fighters shot down and 12 more probably destroyed. We lost five B-24's, one of which exploded over the target. All planes lost were from the 724th and 727th Squadrons.

We had a stand-down the following day and since the weather had cleared a bit, several of us went to visit an Italian family at the nearby farm. The farmer's wife had been doing our laundry for us so we took along some candy, cigarettes, soap and a few other things we swiped from the mess tent as gifts. In return the old man broke out several bottles of typical "dago-red" wine and we had a very pleasant afternoon. I took a number of photographs while there.

Our Armanent Section was supposed to leave by plane on 7 April for our new field. We took our tents down and packed all of our bags and waited - and waited - and waited for orders. Nothing happened. We ended up having to sleep in the open on the ground that night. Fortunately it was a clear night, though by morning we were covered with dew. We did leave the next morning by truck convoy and arrived at our new base at 1630 after a long, hard and dusty ride. We managed to get our tents up that night, but not our bunk beds.

Our new field was located near the small town of Castelluccio de Sauri, about 25 Km south of Foggia and west of Cerignola. It was constructed by the Corps of Engineers on a high plateau, overlooking a broad valley. The 5,000 foot runway was covered with steel matting and had a cleared crash strip on either side. It was a beautiful sight to behold after our experiences at Gioia and San Pancrazio! Surrounding the runway were taxiways leading to dispersed hardstands, or revetments, which were also covered with steel matting. One end of the runway simply aimed out over the valley, while near the other end was a large building which had apparently once been

the landowner's home. This was the only building of any sort on the field and was immediately claimed by Col. Eaton for Group Headquarters.

Specific areas were designated for each Squadron. The runway ran roughly northwest by southeast and our Squadron was located near the northwest end. The 725th area was just east of us, while the 724th was at the other end of the runway, near Group HQ. The 727th Squadron was located on the other side of the runway, near the center. Finally our 60th Air Service Squadron was located on the opposite side of the end of the runway from us. There was a small stream flowing in the valley around our side of the plateau. The very next day several of us went down and jumped in the ice-cold water for our second bath since leaving the States.

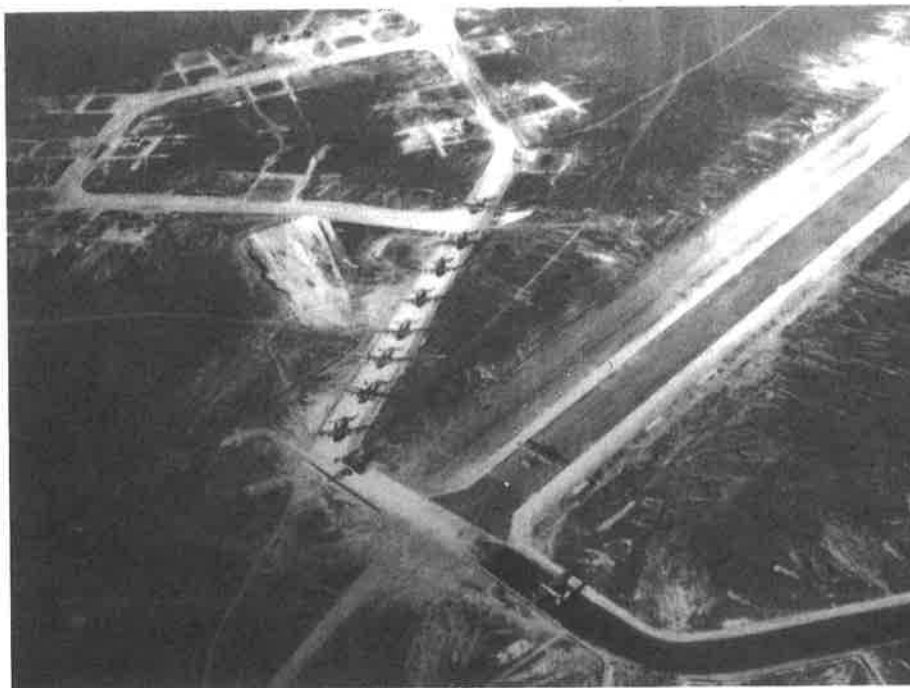
Within a few days we had our tents, stoves and bunks all fixed up and were really comfortable, since it was fairly dry at our high location. We also got our line armament tents all set up, and equipment pretty well organized. Because we were now well within range of Luftwaffe fighter airstrips in central Italy, we dug slit trenches around each tent in case the Krauts came to call. Our first mission from Castelluccio was on 12 April against marshalling yards at Zagreb. We flew twelve missions that month, mostly against marshalling yards and airdromes in

northern Italy, Yugoslavia, Rumania and Hungary. We also hit the submarine pens at Toulon again on the 29th.

The weather continued cold and towards the end of April we had heavy rains which flooded some of our tents. There were many former Italian soldiers in the area and the Air Force hired some of them to help our cooks (no more K.P. for us!), and to construct buildings from local stone. They were good masons and by early summer they had



Admiral's Villa (Group Headquarters)



Castelluccio Air Field (Tower Call Sign; "Hiccup")

erected a mess/club building for the officers and had put up several permanent buildings as work shops on the line. We got an armament building and a nice extension for our bombsight maintenance shop. Later, after the officers's club was built, a similar one was constructed for the enlisted men, but we had to wait a while.

One of the roughest nights we had came on 22/23 April. Our planes had bombed Bucharest marshalling yards on the 22nd and at midnight, in the middle of a red alert, when we had almost finished re-loading with 500 pound bombs, we received a change of orders to load double clusters of frags instead. After dropping the 500's, we waited until 0600 for our Ordnance people to bring up the fragmentation bombs. Takeoff was scheduled for 1000 and we just barely made it! I was still connecting arming wires in the open bomb bay while Lt. Miller warmed up his engines and made his pre-flight checks.

After we got established at Castelluccio, I began to go up with Lt. Miller on occasional practice flights to run power turret and gun tests. The gunners were usually happy to let me do that, as they could skip the flights and thus not tempt fate once too often. I enjoyed flying and was really fascinated by the rugged mountain ranges over which Allied and German troops were waging such bitter struggles.

May 1944 was a busy month, with our Group flying 20 combat missions. The month opened with an attack on targets in the Budapest area. That night we had an anniversary show at Group HQ to celebrate the formation of the 451st in May of '43. On the 3rd we received a new "G" model B-24, #250, produced by North American, which was basically the same as the "H" models made by Consolidated, Ford and Douglas. There was one difference - this was one of the first planes we received in plain aluminum finish, as contrasted with the camouflage paint on all of our original planes. This plane was assigned to Lt. Miller so I had a new plane to work on for the next couple days. He later named her "Goosey Lucy" for his wife. On the 5th I flew on a test flight to check out all the turrets and guns. "Lucy" flew her first combat mission on the 7th and Miller was lead pilot for the entire Group on a mission to the marshalling yards at Bucharest.

On 19 May, during takeoff for a mission, the elevator cable on "Lucy" somehow came off its pulley. Miller was more than half way down the runway with a full bomb load when he realized he had no pitch control. Had he continued the takeoff he would almost surely have crashed, but it was nearly too late to abort. Nevertheless, he hit his brakes hard and screeched towards the end of the runway with blue smoke coming from the tires. At the last instant he executed a ground loop and finally came to a stop on the crash strip right at the end of the runway. One tire blew in the process, but the plane was otherwise undamaged. I think it was the finest example of pilot control I ever saw. The crew all jumped out of the plane completely shaken.

Early in April, as the weather turned mild, we began to modify



Take off at End of Runway - Over the Valley

our pyramidal tents by extending three of the side panels outwards and adding wood support walls. This greatly increased our floor area and made the tents more comfortable for the coming hot weather. Every tent was a bit different, with each group of men incorporating their own ideas for design and decor. Some tents even had skylights made from discarded plexiglas astrodomes from wrecked aircraft. This sort of tent modification was largely confined to the tents of the enlisted men. The officers, who lived in a separate tent area across the road from us, seldom did anything special with their tents. Since there were only four officers to a

tent, contrasted with eight enlisted men to the same size tent, they were far less crowded and hence not inclined to make such modifications.

We had a stand down on the 11th and I took a pass to Cerignola. That evening I pulled guard duty. We had armed guards on the planes every night against the possibility of sabotage. By this time we were having movies at Group HQ almost every night so those who weren't working on the line or on guard duty usually piled into a weapons carrier and drove over for the movie after chow. It gave us something to do on free evenings, even if some of the films weren't all that good.

We had a Wing inspection on 16 May, but I managed to avoid it as I was replacing a damaged gun barrel jacket on the ball turret of my plane. I had another pass on the 18th and went to Cerignola and Foggia to take photos and visit the service club. When I got back to the base that night I learned we had orders to load 2,000 pound bombs, which meant that we first had to mount in each bomb bay the special bomb racks that held those very large bombs. The racks never fit very well and there were instances when we actually had to use the winches to pull the sides of the bomb bay in enough to get the mounting bolts in place. We worked all night loading those bombs and then the mission the next day, to a viaduct in northern Italy, was aborted because of weather. A day later we had to unload all the 2,000 pounders and remove the special racks from each plane.

The oil refineries at Ploesti continued to get our attention - we bombed them three times in May, which was indicative of the remarkable ability of the Germans to repair bomb damage in the surprisingly short time.

By this time I was receiving one or two films in every package I received from home, and my parents were also sending me packages of hypo, tubes of MQ developer and photo printing paper. It was my intent to develop and print my films so that I could send pictures home. For this work I had arranged to use an almost ideal facility. As part of its basic maintenance equipment, each squadron had a bombsight maintenance shop. This was a small building, the upper half of which was designed to fit into the lower half for shipment. When set up it had good head room and plenty of shelf space. The building, which we called the bombsight shack, had its own power generator and lighting system, as well as a temperature control system with filtered air supply. I had become good friends with the three bombsight maintenance men and sometimes helped them

calibrate sights when I had free time. They agreed to let me use the building to develop and print films on a non-interference basis with their needs, which meant that I used it mostly during the night.

I had no equipment for this work at all. An ordinary 40 watt light bulb painted red served for my printing safelight and for processing trays I started off using pans borrowed from the squadron kitchen. Later on I made up some nice trays using plexiglas. For printing I first used simply a piece of glass over the film and paper, with an overhead bulb for a printing light. Later in the year I fabricated a fairly decent contact printer using a discarded ammunition box.

The biggest problem was how to wash the film and prints, since, of course, there was no running water available. At first I carried everything down to the creek to do the washing, but the water was simply not clean enough. Finally, I just used the multiple soaking bath method with drinking water from one of our Lister bags. It was a slow, tedious process, using perhaps twenty or thirty changes of water. I am truly surprised that such a crude process actually worked fairly well. I still have all those negatives I exposed overseas and after forty years they still show no sign of fading or staining, though some are scratched and have a few dirt particles imbedded in the emulsion. Even most of the prints which I sent home to my parents are in good condition, with only minor fading.

After the word got around as to what I was doing, several other fellows asked me to process their films for them, which I did as long as I had enough supplies. When I ran short of paper I was usually able to con the Group photo lab boys out of a few sheets. Consequently, when I had a free evening I usually spent it developing and printing in the bombsight shack. And often after the bombs were loaded in the evening I would work the rest of the night printing and then walk to the line before breakfast to see the planes off.

Around the middle of May the Group began to receive a few B-24's equipped with target-identifying radar installations. We called these planes "Mickey Mouse" aircraft because of all the strange equipment we didn't understand. The name "Mickey" stuck and everyone called them that till the end of hostilities. These planes were painted a very dark color, almost black, and though they were attached to our Group they normally didn't fly with the Group. Instead they usually went on solo missions, often leaving at dusk and not returning until first light. These missions were highly classified and we never knew where they went or how successful they had been. They were parked in special locations and maintained under constant armed guard. Specially trained technicians were brought in to maintain the radar equipment, but the Squadron people did the regular airframe and engine work. We also loaded the bombs and maintained the armament on the Mickeys.

On my birthday, 4 June, I got a pass and went to Foggia and also to Lucera, where I visited an old Roman amphitheater. That was also the day when American troops first entered Rome, which Kesselring had declared an open city. Two days later Allied troops invaded Normandy and we began to think we might see the light at the end of the tunnel.

It was not always easy to know what was really going on in the war for those of us who were there. The Army published a monthly newsprint magazine called "Yank" for the troops overseas but it did not contain current news. There was also a newspaper, "Stars and Stripes" which was published for the

troops in Italy and we had our own Group newsletter called "Ad-Lib." The best current news coverage was from the Armed Forces Radio station in Naples, or from the BBC. After we finished loading bombs I would often turn on the plane's radio for a while in the hope of getting a late news broadcast from the BBC. I also often tuned in Berlin to listen to Axis Sally. She had an incredibly sexy voice and her program included recordings of the latest songs from the U.S., interspersed with blatant propaganda line. I have always wondered how she acquired all those up-to-the-minute records. Her favorite line was to "feel sorry, for the G.I.'s fighting overseas while their wives and sweethearts were undoubtedly sleeping with rich Jewish war-profiteers and 4-F's at home. Having neither wife nor sweetheart, this didn't bother me a bit and I rather enjoyed her program, especially the music. When I saw a photo of Mildred Gillers after the war, I was rather disappointed, as she was not the gorgeous creature of my mind's eye.



Down at the "ole' swimming hole"



451st "Beach Attire"

L-R: Sgt's C. Epperson, P. Asp, R. Sholtis

As the winter of '44 had been cold, wet and miserable, the summer was quite the opposite, very hot and often windy and dusty. The planes would churn up clouds of dust while they warmed up engines or taxied for takeoff. We were very thankful for the small creek where we could cool off and wash most of the grime and dust from our bodies. There were several teen-aged boys who came to our camp from Castelluccia and each tended to "adopt" one or two tent-groups. Our boy, Pasquale, did chores for us and helped keep our tent clean in return for whatever food we

could scrounge for him. He also took our laundry home for his mother to wash for us. We provided the soap, with enough extra for use by the family, and she did a very good job, considering it was all done by hand. Even so, when I look at photos of myself wearing my work coveralls, I am struck by how dirty I must have been most of the time. Working on guns and bombs was a dirty, grimy job and after a while the grime was so ground into our work clothing that nothing could have remo-

ved it.

It was my observation that most American soldiers were very considerate of the Italian civilians who were terribly impoverished and without adequate food. But there was a limit on how much food we could filch from the mess for our "tent boy." I can still recall vividly one day when I was on garbage detail at San Pancrazio and we took a truck-load of garbage to a nearby dump. There were scores of local people there waiting to grab whatever they could find to eat. I saw one teen-age boy hit an old lady on the side of the head with a heavy stick to prevent her from picking up a can of something he wanted. The truck driver leveled his carbine at the



"Garbage Detail"

boy and I thought for a moment he was going to shoot the kid, but he only intended to warn him not to do that again.

By 9 June our Squadron had flown 51 consecutive combat missions without the loss of a single plane. Our CO said it was the best record in the entire Air Force. On the 10th, however, Lonesome Polecat (114) was shot up and crashed in the Adriatic with a loss of two killed and seven injured. That night we had an unusual bomb load. By using special cables we double-loaded 250 lb. demolition bombs, managing to get 18 on each plane, rather than the usual 12. We could not get two bombs in the topmost position.

By 12 June the Air Force decided that summer had arrived and we were ordered to turn in our wool O.D.'s and two blankets. That very night the temperature dropped into the 40's and we shivered with just two blankets. We were also finally issued regular Army canvas cots, so we dismantled our homemade bunks for the last time.

On 15 June we heard the good news that B-29's had bombed Tokyo and that the Marines had invaded Siapan. We received very little news about the Pacific War, but this was an indication that progress was being made.

I had a pass on the 17th and spent the day visiting Foggia, Cerignola and Barletta. Since we were located within the Eight Army zone in Italy we saw far more troops of our Allies than G.I.s on the streets. In addition to the English, there were Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, Poles, Free French, Scots and colonials such as Sikhs, Gurkhas, Rajputs, Algerians and Goums from Morocco. It was a fascinating kaleidoscope of men and uniforms. The Gurkhas and Goums (or Goumiers) were



Lt. Herb Guinness' Crew (Ditched in Adriatic 10 July 1944)
Top L-R: Lt's. Pickard, N.; Guinness, P.; Bird, CP; Schwab, B.
Lower: Flint W. Gardner, NG (KIA); Robert J. Anderson, BG (KIA); McPeck, UG; Wathen, TG; Loglais, AEG; Schuler, ROG

fabled knife fighters and were generally used against German sentries and outposts at night. Many a German in Italy had his throat silently slit by these troops during the bitter fighting before Cassino. The Goums were fond of taking ears from their enemies and for a while the British were said to have given them bonuses for these grisly trophies. From the standpoint of nationalities involved in the conflict, Italy was probably the most unique battlefield of the war.

On 24 June Dale Miller's crew finished their 50th mission and their war was over. Most of our original air crews were completing their combat tours in June and July and we were beginning to get more replacement crews in the Group. Another event on the 24th was completion of our new Squadron shower facility by our Italian workmen. We now had the luxury of not only bathing but also of being able to cool off quickly during the hot summer months. Once the shower was operating I often took two showers a day just to cool off.

The following day we had the hardest rain we had experienced in Italy. Our dusty roads turned to quagmires and many tents flooded. This encouraged us to speed up the modification work on our tents - to finish the floors and sidewalls which we had been working on without a great deal of determination. I completed my corner within a few days and even built in a little alcove for reading and letter writing. We quickly went from the flood back to drought and on the last day of June a grass fire got out of control and burned down two tents in the officers' area.

Sometime, probably in May or June (my journal didn't mention it), our Armament officer, Lt Luhrs, was transferred and we got a new officer, Lt. Adams. He later made Captain and got an assistant, Lt Cone, who had absolutely nothing to do and was well qualified for the job! On the 3rd of July I was finally promoted to Corporal. I had about given up hope! For some time I had known that on our section "Table of Organization" (T.O.) I was listed as being in line to become a "Buck" Sergeant. I never made it. The problem was that whenever a gunner was taken off flight duty for medical reasons (we called it being "Flak Happy") he was almost invariably transferred to the Armament Section. Since every gunner had the rank of either Staff or Tech Sergeant, it meant that our T.O. was always filled at those levels. When Adams sent in a promotion request for any of the rest of us, Air Force H.Q. turned it down because we were already above our authorized quota for Non-Commissioned Officers. And there was nothing anyone could do about it.

During the heat of July we started getting rumors about moving to another theater, with Russian and India being mentioned as possibilities. This was more than the usual Army outhouse rumor. Lt. Adams was requested to start making packing estimates for all of our equipment and spares and several of us participated in the work. Eventually, however, nothing came of it.

Though we flew some 22 combat missions in July, we were hard pressed to get enough planes in the air for lack of crews.

Our original crews were completing their 50 missions faster than we were receiving new crews and some days we were only able to put four to six planes, as compared with the norm of twelve for a squadron. Some of our first crews had started home by the tenth of the month.

On 14 July our Group CO, Colonel Eaton, flew on my plane. The target that day was an oil refinery in Hungary. The following day we hit another refinery near Ploesti. Most of our targets during July were refineries, marshalling yards and aircraft factories.

On 16 July our remaining original crews, including Miller's, left for home via truck to Naples, where they embarked on a troop ship. In early '83, when Jack Garrison, Miller's tail gunner, visited me, I learned that they went home on the maiden voyage of the troopship U.S.S. General Meigs. This was the same ship which was to take us home less than one year later.

On 22 July we bombed Ploesti once again. On takeoff, my plane, "Goosey Lucy" (#250) seemed to be lifting normally, but suddenly started to settle near the end of the runway. Just beyond the end of the runway the land dipped a bit, then rose to a small hill and finally dropped away abruptly to the valley below. I thought the ship would just clear the final hill, but instead it slammed into it and instantly caught fire. Several of us who were watching at the end of the runway ran over to the wreckage to help any survivors. Just as I approached the site, two of the 1,000 pound bombs aboard exploded, one after the other. There was nothing else we could do. In all, five men were pulled out alive, though badly injured. The other five died. They were members of Major Winski's crew and I knew them all very well. Winski had been serving as our Operations Officer and so was not the pilot that day.

I was deafened for two or three hours after the crash from the concussion of the bombs. I was also sick at heart over the deaths of friends and the loss of a plane that was part of my life. I spent most of the day in my cot, simply washed out.

Our planes flew quite a few practice missions during July for the purpose of training the new crews in formation flying and bombing techniques. Overall the quality of the replacement crews was far below that of our original crews. They generally seemed to lack motivation and interest in what they were doing. The gunners took little interest in their equipment and seldom cleaned their guns properly.

After our original crews (those who had not been lost in combat) returned home there was never again the genuine feeling of camaraderie which had previously existed between air and ground crews. Somehow, we could never seem to establish that close bond with the replacement crews. Even now, I am not sure why. It was at least partly because they seemed far less competent than our original crews, but also, I suspect, because they had not

shared with us the long training at Wendover and Fairmont and had not suffered with us during the miserable winter days at Gioia and San Pancrazio.

Curiously, I had the same sort of feeling with regards to our aircraft. It would be difficult to explain to most people, but I developed a very close feeling of attachment (if that is the word) to "Big Mogul" and "Goosey Lucy," which I never again felt for any other plane I was assigned to after July of '44. This was partly, I suppose, because we had a greater turnover in the planes after that date. Our Squadron lost at least four times as many planes in the second half of '44 as it lost in the first half of the year. Why this was true is difficult to say. It could not have been because of Luftwaffe opposition, because our bomber flights had far better escort protection during the latter part of the year. During the early part of the year our planes were escorted only part way to their target by Spitfires and P-38's, which simply didn't have enough range to escort all the way. Later in the year, however, bombers were escorted all the way to the target and back by long-range P-51's and P-47's, using belly drop tanks. In addition, the effectiveness of German fighters decreased significantly during the latter part of '44. The power of the Luftwaffe was in sharp decline, from which it never recovered. Flak, however, was another matter - it remained a very serious threat well into '45 and most of our losses were from that source. Still, I doubt if our targets and their protective flak batteries were any more difficult in late '44 than earlier in the year. Thus, I cannot but think that our heavier losses later in the year were at least partly because of factors relating to crew training and discipline.

The numerous training flights which were scheduled during the summer required more work of the armorers. For practice gunnery missions we had to remove the combat ammunition and replace it with practice ammo. The later consisted simply of lead bullets and tracers, whereas our combat ammo was belted in sequence of two armor piercing bullets, two incendiary bullets and one tracer. For the practice bombing missions we actually had to load our old friends from training days, the 100 pound "Blue Screammers." It has always seemed incredible to me that the Air Force would have used up precious shipping space to transport training bombs to a combat area in the time of war. Such training should have been accomplished in the

States and the fact that it was not done indicated incompetency somewhere along the way.

On 25 July our Squadron led the entire 15th Air Force in an attack on the Hermann Goering Tank Factory at Linz. Our Squadron had no losses and the Group claimed eleven German fighters destroyed. The following day on another mission "Three Feathers" (636) was damaged over Albania and was forced to land at an emergency field at Lecce. On the 28th "Ice Cold Katie II" (541) was



"Lethal Cargo"

shot down over Ploesti. On many occasions after missions, planes failed to return to base and we might have no idea what happened to them for days - they were simply missing. Fortunately, in many such cases the pilot was able to make an emergency landing at some other field in southern Italy or elsewhere. The Partisans had carved out several emergency landing fields in Yugoslavia and on islands off the coast. There was also an emergency field on Corsica. After the planes were repaired and refueled they were flown back to our field, often weeks later and often in very bad condition from being exposed to salt spray, dust, etc.

Around the end of July we started to receive 500 pound bombs with the words, "Component B" stenciled on them. It meant nothing to us, until sometime later that summer when a significant event occurred. I did not record the date in my diary, but one day the Ordnance men from another Squadron (I believe it was the 727th) were loading bombs at the railroad yard for transfer to the bomb dump at our field when something went wrong and one or more bombs exploded. The men, their vehicle and bomb trailer were blown to bits. Naturally, Ordnance officers from the 15th Air Force Headquarters launched an immediate investigation. It turned out the men were loading "Component B" 500 pound bombs and the investigators concluded that they had either dropped a bomb on the concrete loading pad, or had allowed two bombs to roll into one another with enough force to cause the explosion. The investigating team also discovered that no one at our base was aware that these new bombs contained, not T.N.T., but the new and far more sensitive explosive identified as R.D.X. We had simply "never gotten the word" from anyone in A.F. Hq. In the course of their investigation they also discovered, apparently to their horror, our improvised method for unloading bombs from our planes by simply dropping them from the bomb rack to the ground. Belatedly, all Armorers and Ordnance men were given stern lectures on the inherent danger in handling these R.D.X. bombs and our "drop" method for unloading was forthwith prohibited. From that point on we handled these special bombs with tender loving care and when we had to unload them we used the winches. However, as long as none of the officers were around we continued to use our quick drop method for unloading T.N.T. bombs. We heard, and I have since verified through documented reports, that at least two Eight A.F. B-17's were blown up, along with their armorers, because of careless handling of R.D.X. bombs. So far as I know the accident cited above was the only one to occur in the 15th Air Force. It would appear that a number of ex-armorers may yet be living on borrowed time!

On 1 August I had a pass and I went to the Eighth Army area with the intent of trying to locate some German 9mm ammunition for an Italian pistol which I had obtained. I first went to a British tank training area where I managed to get a few rounds, then I headed towards the front on a British supply truck. Finally, an M.P. suggested I had better not go any farther without a helmet, as artillery was firing just a few hundred meters ahead of me. I was standing at the intersection of two roads talking with a small group of soldiers from New Zealand. The M.P. was directing traffic and there were a couple other soldiers on the other corner. Coming down the road from the front we saw a group of men marching towards us at route step. As they came closer we realized they were German prisoners being led by one of their own officers - a Major - and guarded by two armed British soldiers, one on either side of the column. There

were perhaps 18 or 20 men in the group. When they were about a hundred feet from us the Major barked a command and the soldiers all snapped to smart march formation. It was clear to us that he wished his men to look and act like professional soldiers as they passed by us. Then an incredible thing happened. The six of us, five Kiwis and one G.I., without a word being spoken, suddenly snapped to attention and saluted this enemy officer and his men! The British M.P., noting our action, came to present arms and as he did the German Major returned the salute and held it till they were past the intersection. It was not a "Heil Hitler" Nazi salute, but a conventional military salute. That tableau of mutual military respect between victors and captives is forever etched in my memory. Why did we, without conscious thought or agreement, tender that salute to our enemy? Was it an automatic response to the officer's uniform, or a deliberate reply to their shift from route-step to marching cadence as they passed us? To this day I really don't know. At the time it seemed proper thing to do. One of the New Zealanders summed it up for all of us when he said, "I've fought those blighters for two and a half years and I'll have to say this for them, they're bloody good soldiers."

Whenever I was around a British outfit I looked forward to the chance of watching a parade formation, especially Retreat. I was fascinated by the professional way they marched; the way they swung their arms and executed maneuvers. British soldiers were, and I suppose still are, masters at marching. Virtually every British outfit I ever saw in formation looked like a professional drill team. By contrast, most Americans marched very poorly, on the average. Perhaps it is because the British take more pride in their military heritage and in their regimental history, while Americans, especially citizen-soldiers, tend to take a dim view of military spit-and-polish and regimentation in general. There surely must be an intrinsic difference between serving, for example, in the Grenadier Guards or the Black Watch, as opposed to the 123rd Regiment of the 78th Brigade.

On the 5th of August we had another very heavy rain which flooded most of the tents. Italy seemed to have a climate of extremes; either we were wading in mud or choking in dust. We often wondered where the expression "sunny Italy" came from! The following day we got a new plane, #484, which was mine, to replace "Goosey Lucy." She was assigned to Lt. Olds, who named her "Merry Barbara" after his wife. She was to last for just six missions - after another raid on Ploesti on the 17th Olds had to ditch her in the Adriatic. Only he and one gunner survived. I worked on her for two days before her first mission.

Some evenings after our work was done several of us who were close friends would have a sort of party in the bombsight shack. We shared food which we received in packages from home and sometimes we even had boiled eggs which we had purchased at fairly high price from a local farm family. One of the bombsight technicians had somehow managed to find a small hotplate which we used to heat up C rations and to toast bread from the mess hall. Our regular meals at the mess hall, which the Italian workers had built for us, were reasonably good, but monotonous. We never had any fresh meat or vegetables, of course, as everything came from the States canned. There was canned butter which was awful and canned Spam which we could hardly face any more after the first few months. And then there was the ubiquitous chipped beef on bread which we called, "shit on a shingle." But we survived!

On 10 August we flew our 100th combat mission - once again against the Ploesti oil refineries. The next day "Three Feath-

ers" returned to the field after her forced landing on 26 July. She was in terrible shape. Much of the loose equipment, including several guns, had been thrown overboard in the emergency and the remaining guns were badly rusted from exposure. Under normal operations we and the gunners covered all turrets and guns with heavy canvas covers to protect them from rain and dew. We spent several days cleaning and replacing guns and other equipment before "Three Feathers" could go back to work.

On 12 August five members of our Armament Section, in accordance with orders received a few days earlier, left for home. Neither they nor the rest of us had any idea why they were being shipped home. We always assumed they were being sent to be assigned to a B-29 Group or to help train new armorers.



"Cannon Fodder" over Italy

On 14 August the entire 15th Air Force pounded the southern coast of France to soften up the beach-head for the invasion which took place the next morning. The aircrews reported seeing over 800 vessels of all types headed for France. This came as no surprise to most of us, as ships had been concentrating in harbors on the west coast of Italy for several days. On a practice flight two or three days earlier I had seen hundreds of ships in Naples harbor. On the 15th, while taking off on another mission to southern France beach area, one of our planes, "Cannon Fodder" (#102) crashed, killing three crew members.

In early July the Air Force had established a policy of granting three day rest passes to Rome for enlisted ground crew personnel who had served overseas at least six months. There had already been a rest and relaxation (R & R) policy for the air crews, for whom a rest camp had been established on the Isle of Capri. My turn for a pass to Rome came on the 17th. I, with eight or ten others, flew to Rome on "Skipper," a tired old B-24 which had been converted to transport duty; which included flights to Cairo to pick up liquor for the Officers Club. The flight took 45 minutes. I bummed a ride into the city and located a place to stay which had been recommended to me by one of our other guys who had recently returned from his pass. It was a flat owned by a very nice middle aged lady whose husband, a Colonel in the Italian Army, had been captured by the British in 1942. She had not heard from him since his capture, but had been notified he was safe in a British prisoner of war camp in Canada. She had one extra room which she rented out to G.I.'s for 150 Lira.

Before I left the field I had managed to "requisition," from our kitchen, a half can of coffee, some chocolate, a couple cans of Spam and one or two other things which I stuffed in my duffel bag for the trip. My buddy Johnnie had told me how kind the lady had been to him and what a tough time she was having just trying to survive. She was absolutely overjoyed with this small amount of food and told me I could have the room at no charge. I wouldn't agree, of course, and as I recall, gave her about 800 Lira for the three nights I spent there. The room was small but pleasant, with a fairly comfortable bed and immaculately clean linens.



Reception upon 100th Mission Return

After arranging for the room I took my camera and went to the nearby Red Cross Service Club to get a light lunch. There I also managed to get a map of the city and I promptly set off to see all the Roman ruins I had read so much about in ancient history. That afternoon and for the next two days I really walked my legs off visiting and photographing every ruin within walking distance. Fortunately, most of them were concentrated around the Forum. As a history buff, I was in "hog heaven," and I knew it was my once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

It was very hot most of the time, but I was on the go almost from first light till dark. I grabbed quick meals at the Service Club. On the 18th I spent most of my time at Vatican City, seeing St. Peters, the fabulous Vatican Museums and the Sistine Chapel. Cameras were not allowed in the church and museums, but I carried mine under my shirt and managed to sneak several pictures, constantly wondering whether, if caught, one of those Swill Guards would cleave my skull with his halberd!

Each night, after supper, I returned to my room and usually visited with my landlady. During the previous six months I had tried my best to learn Italian from our "tent boy," and from the Italian kitchen helpers. I was able to converse reasonably well with them by this time and was anxious to try out my hard won new skill with my hostess. It proved to something of a disaster. There are, it seems, very distinct dialects in Italy and the southern peasant variety which I had been trying so hard to learn was looked upon with disdain by educated Romans, such as my kindly landlady. In addition, I had the distinct impression that some of the words I had learned were simply not used in polite conversation. She very patiently corrected much of what I tried to say, but nevertheless we got along fairly well.

On the 19th I visited a number of places I had missed the first day, including the Pantheon. Sunday morning, the 20th I took a Red Cross sponsored tour of the Catacombs, walked along part of the Appian Way and went for one last time to gaze, wonder, and awe, at the Coliseum. Then, late in the afternoon, I bid good-bye to my landlady, and caught a G.I. bus to the airport. I flew back to our field on "Flabbergasted Fanny" (#242).

(To be Continued Next Issue)

"I SEE BY THE PAPERS" STORY #1

Back when we first organized someone sent me a clipping out of a New York City newspaper relating the crash of a B-25 into the Empire State Building. I think most of us remember that tragic incident. The sender inferred that one of our people was on board that doomed aircraft. I researched with my limited ability to verify who was aboard, and of those noted, none were from the 451st. Since I could find no linkage to the victims of that tragedy, and the personnel of our Group, I let the matter drop.

Now, after a number of years I get this batch of pictures and newspaper clippings from Bill Schafer (725th), that give evidence that a traumatic crash did occur involving one of our people. Whereas the crash did take place in New York City; and it did involve a high-rise type building; it still leaves many questions yet unanswered.

The article is reproduced as follows:

Five Die as Plane Hits Skyscraper Hole Torn in 58th Story in New York

NEW YORK, May 21 (UP) -- Fog was blamed today for the crash of an Army transport plane into the 58th floor of a 70-story Wall Street skyscraper.

All five persons on the plane were killed. No one in the building was injured.

The ship tore through the concrete and steel wall of the Bank of Manhattan Bldg last night as the pilot groped by instrument for the Newark, N.J., airport. The plane was traveling an estimated 150 miles an hour when it hit.



Lt. Ross Maj. Campbell
Two of crash victims.

Apparently the five persons aboard did not realize they were among New York's skyscrapers until a few seconds before they crashed.

WAC Lt. Mary E. Bond, a passenger, crossed her fingers as the building suddenly appeared out of the fog. Her fingers still were crossed when her body was removed from the plane's crumpled fuselage inside the building.

The army early today announced the names of four of the victims after their next of kin had been notified. They were Lt. Bond of Newtown, Pa.; Lt. Robert L. Stevenson, an overseas veteran of the Bronx, N.Y.; Capt. Tom L. Hall of Austin, Tex.; Lt. Angelo A. Ross of Whitehall, N.Y., and Maj. Mansel R. Campbell of Pontiac, Mich., pilot of the plane.

The plane left Lake Charles La., for Newark. It refueled at Smyrna, Tenn.

Plane Ahead of Time

War Department statement said the plane was due at Newark at 8:46 p.m. Apparently Maj. Campbell was ahead of schedule and did not know that he had passed to the north of the airport.

At 8:10 p.m. he contacted the Newark control tower and reported that he was flying blind at 6000 feet.

The plane crashed into the 927-foot tall building a few seconds later.

The hurtling plane ripped a hole eight by 10 feet in the masonry wall. The wings were torn off. The fuselage came to rest in the pine paneled office of the Atlas Corp., whose president, Floyd Odium, is the husband of Jacqueline Cochran, famous woman flier.

The plane, a C-45 Beechcraft, exploded in a ball of fire as it hit and sent a cascade of flaming gasoline down the side of the skyscraper.

Officials said the pilot perhaps mistook the East River for the Hudson in the low overcast and banked for what he thought was the glide into Newark Airport. The craft plunged into the north side of the building at 40 Wall st., heart of the city's financial district. About 500 people, mostly maintenance workers, were in the building.

Wreckage of the plane tumbled down the side of the building, littering the parapet and the street below with debris.

All five of the bodies were found in the Atlas Corp. Office. The bodies of Lt. Bond and two of the men were in the wrecked fuselage. One body was hurled clear of the wreckage, landing on an overstuffed sofa. Another was found sprawled on the red-carpeted floor. One of the victims was decapitated.

Last July 28 an Army B-25 bomber crashed into the 78th floor of the Empire State Bldg., killing three passengers and 10 office workers.

District Deserted

Last night's crash occurred after the workers in New York's financial district quit for the day.

Although the financial district is

usually deserted at that time of night, the narrow streets quickly filled with people as news of the crash spread.

Police searchlights played on the building all night long to speed the work of removing the wreckage.

The canvas-wrapped bodies of the five victims were removed three hours after the crash.

Maj. Stevenson served overseas with the 386th and 854th Bomb Squadrons and had won the Air Medal with 11 oak leaf clusters. Lt. Ross had served overseas with the 725th and 451st Bomb Squadrons.

The Army Air Forces launched an immediate investigation of the tragedy.

With the basic facts of the story now known, some questions still arose. Since neither clipping had noted the year of the incident(s), a bit of research showed that the Empire State Building crash occurred in July of 1945, while the Bank of Manhattan crash happened in May of 1946. It seemed that the July incident with the Empire State Building received much publicity, while the Bank of Manhattan crash was not that well publicized. At least this writer couldn't recall it.

Several items of interest (above the fact that one of our personnel was killed) was the type aircraft flown. The C-45 was not in any known inventory that I'm familiar with. A bit of research brought to light that it was a small twin engine cargo/transport aircraft commonly called the "Expeditor." One is on display at the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio.

The name of Angelo A. Ross was researched and found to have been in the 725th Squadron, at least from 5 April 1944 till his return from overseas. Just what his duties were has not been ascertained as of this writing; nor to whose crew (if he was an aircrew man) he was attached to. It is hoped that one of our readers will have the answers and let us know.

"I SEE BY THE PAPERS" STORY #2

This second story comes by way of Joe Garde (727th). When I first read it I was intrigued to know more than the article offered. So a bit of local library investigation turned up what I'll offer to the right of this article. The article reads as such:

SON LOST LIFE ON PLOESTI FIELDS

First reported missing in action, Staff Sergeant Robert J. Wood, 23, son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles B. Wood of No. 46 Manchester Place, Buffalo, former Bergen residents, was later determined to have been killed on April 5th while raiding the Ploesti oil fields in Romania.

Mrs. Wood said she learned through communicating with the mother of the pilot of the bomber on which Sergeant Wood flew that her son was killed. The War De-

(story, as originally printed, continues)

prisoner of war. The War Department then confirmed Sergeant Wood's death.

Sergeant Wood was born in Buffalo on October 18, 1921 after the family moved there and, a few years later, they returned to Stone Church for several years before going back to Buffalo.

Staff Sergeant Wood who was inducted October 29, 1942, formerly a student at State Teachers College and had been graduated from McKinley Vocational High School. He won his wings at Laredo, Tex.

His last furlough at home was in September, 1943, and shortly before Christmas he left for overseas duty. He was a direct descendant of Daniel Bissell, who received the first Purple Heart award from General George Washington.

Surviving are his parents; four brothers, Chester A., technician fourth grade, stationed in Hawaii; Franklin M., apprentice seaman, at the Sampson Naval Training Station; Jerry B., of the Buffalo Police Department, and Leonard E., of the Buffalo Fire Department, and a sister, Mrs. Thomas J. Blewett, also of Buffalo.

Memorial services will be held for Sergeant Wood at 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon at the First Reformed Church at Lafayette and Herkimer Streets in Buffalo with the Rev. Robert Vanderney officiating.

REVELATIONS

S/Sgt Robert J. Wood was waist gunner on the Wilfred B. McAllister crew (727th). On that fateful 5 April 1944 mission were: 1LT Wilfred B. McAllister, Pilot - KIA; 2LT William L. Story, Copilot - KIA; 2LT Jack T. Sargent, Navigator - POW; F/O Alphonse Szymanek, Bombardier - POW; S/Sgt Joe D. Schermerhorn, N Gunner - KIA; T/Sgt Charles R. Bistline, AEG - POW; T/Sgt John R. Oprisko, ROG - KIA; S/Sgt Robert J. Wood, W Gunner - KIA; S/Sgt John B. Massa, W Gunner - POW; and S/Sgt Milton A. Wexler, T Gunner - POW.

Of the afore named survivors to that mission, Reverend Charles R. Bistline and Milton A. Wexler have been located and are members of our 451st organization.

Although it is not know how the lineage from Daniel Bissell (Revolutionary War) to Robert Wood (WW-II) evolves, it will have to be accepted as stated.

In my research to clarify the news article, I encountered quite a bit of history about the "Purple Heart" which both men received. Though we can equate with the incident that took the life of Sergeant Wood, and know the climate in which his medal were won, the research into Daniel Bissell proved enlightening.

Sergeant Bissell was a member of the 2nd Connecticut Regiment, Continental Line, serving, as best we could, uncover, behind enemy lines. It was said that Sergeant Bissell left his Regiment in a rather covert manner so as not to enhance his chances of being shot as a spy in the event he was captured. But, with the cloak of being a deserter from the Continental Army, he could gain access to how, and what, the British forces were doing. In this guise as a spy, and upon his return, Bissell was to go directly to General Washington, who alone, knew of the task that Sergeant Bissell was to perform.

For this service Sergeant was to be awarded the "Badge of Military Merit," forerunner to what we know as the "Purple Heart." This became the military's oldest decoration, established 7 August 1782. During the Revolutionary War only three such "Badges" were awarded. The first going to Sergeant Elijah Churchill; the second to Sergeant William Brown, both on 3 May 1783. Sergeant Daniel Bissell was presented his on 10 June 1783.

The "Badge of Military Merit" was originally designed and created by General George Washington, not for wounds received in combat, as we now know it, but rather for "Singular Meritorious Service." It fell into disuse after the Revolutionary War and was not revived until George Washington's 200th birthday on 22 February 1933, when Brigadier General Douglas MacArthur brought it out of obscurity. It was announced by the War Department on 19 September 1942 that the Purple Heart would be awarded to all U.S.A. personnel killed or wounded by enemy action during the Second World War.

The original "Badge," as issued by Gen. Washington, was made of cloth and not altered till 1931 when the current design was accepted.

The Army regulations defining the conditions of the award reads thusly: "A wound which necessitates treatment by a medical officer and which is received in action with an enemy, may in the judgment of the commander authorized to make the award be construed as resulting from a singularly meritorious act of essential service."

GUNNER SAYS, "IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU!"

(Editor's comments) Since our September 1990 Omaha Fairmont, Nebr. Reunion I have been the recipient of numerous newspaper articles about the Collings Foundation B-24 (All American) as it goes from locale to locale. These newspaper clippings are usually accompanied by notes and photos of the sender standing by the "old warhorse" that we once flew in training and combat.

More recently I received, from Doran (Dick) Podoloff, (727th, Gunner) a summary of his recent experience with the Collings' B-24. What set his letter apart from the rest was the fact that he took part in a flight from Orange County Airport in New York to Republic Airfield on Long Island New York.

Dick has not been the only 451st member to go aloft with the "All American" since its restoration, as Bob Henbest (727th, Bombardier) rode the aircraft from "Back East" to Omaha when we scheduled the aircraft as part of our Reunion. Then we have Frank Tedesco (727th, Pilot) as a "frequent flyer" having been one of the workers on bringing it back "on line." There may have been many others, but they have not come forward to tell us of their experiences.

When Dick phoned me of his pending flight, I requested that he send me his impression of how it went. Podoloff should be remembered as the author of the story "A STEP BACK IN TIME," (revisit to Castelluccia Air Field) that ran in the AD-LIB, Issue 19. The following text and photos are as a result of Dick's recent mission.

MY LAST FLIGHT ON A B-24 (Doran "Dick" Podoloff)

Many of you have been fortunate this past summer to visit with the "All American," a B-24 that made its way around the country for all us old members of the Air Force to see and touch, and to show our children, as I was able to do at Tweed New Haven Airport this past September with my two sons.

It was a thrilling sight to see the B-24, in company with a B-17, make a low pass, pull up, circle, and land. It brought back a lot of memories of 45 years ago.

I've seen hundreds of landings and take-off's in Italy and participated in many of them as a crew member. We just took them for granted and did it as part of our job.

Last year the "All American" made a stop at Stratford airport, and down we went to see it. We were able to board after a donation was made. We went up through the aft (camera) hatch,

through the bomb bay and out at the forward end of the bomb bay.

The flight deck, navigator station, and all the turrets were sealed off.

I offered to make another donation just to sit in the nose turret where I had flown 29 missions, from October 1944 to the end of the war. My offer was refused, so I had to be satisfied with pictures and doing a lot of hand flying with all the old crew members that showed up.

Well, the "All American" showed up in New Haven this summer and thousands showed up, including my sons and myself.



"Family Portrait" All American, Son, Dick, Son

I was able to talk with the pilot and for a donation I was allowed to sit in the nose turret. You kind of go back in time and you would have had to experience what we as crew members went through to understand the feeling just sitting there.

I inquired if it was possible to get a ride, not expecting a positive answer. To make a long story short, he turned my name into the Collings Foundation Headquarters and the following Monday I received a call from Bob Collings about getting my ride.

A deal was struck (another donation) and I met the "All American" at the Orange County Airport in September 12, 1991.

It was on display with the B-17 that the Collings Foundation also owns.



"All American" Photo: L. Lowry

I was there about noon and take-off time was supposed to be at 3:30. The flight was from Orange County to Republic Airfield on Long Island, about a 45 minute flight.

We were supposed to fly down the Hudson River to the Statue of Liberty, around New York City and out to Republic Airfield.

I had engineered enough flights to know that the putt putt is started prior to engine start-up and the engineer checks all the fuel and loading of the plane. Needless to say, without a lot of preflight, the pilot, with a third pilot standing between them, fired up the engines and off we went.

Our take-off positions (there were three other passengers) was a shelf at the aft end of the top of the bomb bay with four seat belts.



Dick at Waist Window; Recalling "Procedures"

I was asked to put on a set of headphones and microphone and check the gear, as to it being down and locked. Also check on the flap position on take-off and landing. The flaps had numbers at the different positions painted on them. This was not the way I remember the start-up and take-off of a B-24.

Needless to say, the old girl got off the ground. The noise of the engines, the vibration, the gear and hydraulic noises were all there. It all came back just as it was, 45 years ago.

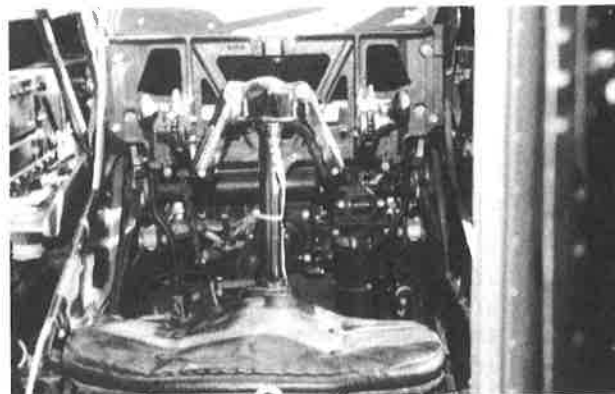
As soon as we were airborne I went forward (a little tough going through the bomb bay, not that I'm that much heavier, but I'm a lot older and the balance and coordination isn't what it use to be), under the flight deck, careful not to step on the nose wheel doors, and finally into the nose turret at 2,500 feet.



"Funny Thing Happened On My Way To The Nose Turret; I Met A Bombsight"

As we flew down the Hudson River I went back in time. Reality and the present seemed to fade away and I let it go for those few minutes as I imagined missions to Brux, Blechhammer, Vienna, Munich, and all those targets that I went on that were so well defended by flak.

The fighters were not as prevalent at the end of 1944 to the conclusion of the war, so I remember the flak more vividly.



Dick Podoloff's Wartime Office

None of the turrets are operational. All the guns are obviously fake, but the nose turret gun charging handles are there, the switches, the control stick, the oxygen control and the heated suit switch but above all, just sitting there with the wind whistling around the openings, it all came rushing back.

At our ages the imagination does funny things to you. Maybe we all have a bit of Walter Mitty in us.

We fought in a war that the whole country was behind. We were fighting for our way of life and we did it with honor.

At those ages, in our twenties, it was high adventure and an experience that will live with us to our dying day.

Two years ago I took a trip to Europe and was able to spend a couple of days visiting our airfield at Castelluccio de Sauri, or HICCUP TOWER. I found a 6,000 feet wheat field and a town built up around the Admirals house that we had used as Group Headquarters.

All in all it has been a wonderful experience to once again fly and relive a part of my youth; but I question if I would do it again. I think my luck might be running out.



HISTORY UNFOLDS THROUGH UNPUBLISHED JOURNAL

The fascination of historical research is greatly rewarded when documents come into play that can clarify and stimulate ones thoughts. I believe this office holds almost all the 451st Bomb Groups' Missing Air Crew Reports (MACR) that are archived in various Air Force repositories. (There are a few missing that even the Air Force Archives have no information on.)

Having these MACR's in-house has both, rewarded and confused me in the stories they disclose. But above all this, they have shown the resolve, fortitude, and courage of our 451st combat crews. I frequently seek their contents to review what I think is the incredible record of our World War II Bomb Group.

But from the smoke and confusion of these MACR's comes an occasional added document that has the ability to clear the air and fill some of the gaps in these exhaustive, but simplified, governmental overviews.

One such paper came to me by way of Millard E. "Pete" Mulry. It was a journal written by his late crewmate, Lyle A. Baker, fellow mission survivor and prisoner of war. Pete offered it to me since it seems to relate the hardships,

loneliness, and deprivation that many POW's, on the average, endured while in captivity.

But before I turn you loose on this informative narrative, let me tell you as much as I know about its author, Lyle E. Baker. Lyle was a practicing Veterinarian from Pennsylvania. He and his wife, Barbara (Bunny in the story) raised 4 sons.

Lyle was killed in a car accident in December of 1981.

To further enlighten you about the story, Lyle was the copilot on the "READY TEDDY" that fateful day in July of 1944. The following is the statement given to the interrogation officer by eye witnesses upon return from the mission.

18 July 1944

STATEMENT

Captain Francis L. Fort, O-322684 and crew were in plane #42-52087 on a combat mission to Wiener Neudorf, Austria on 16 July 1944. Enroute to the target at 0950, position at approximately 47°15' N, 17°20' E, a sheet of flame was seen in the number 3 engine. The plane peeled off and went about 1000 yards from the formation. The

flame appeared to be extinguished and the plane banked as if to rejoin the formation and went into a very close spin. It dropped down out of sight in the ground haze and an explosion was seen shortly afterward. No parachutes were observed. It is very unlikely that any member of the crew were saved. There is a possibility that after the plane dropped below the haze it salvaged its bombs and pulled out of the spin or there is a possibility that some members of the crew were able to bail out. Both possibilities seem unlikely due to the tightness of the spin and the high rate of descent. This opinion is based on the interrogation after the mission.

No information has been received from the crew and it is believed they did not survive the crash. The following named officers and enlisted men were on the plane at the time of the crash.

Fort, Francis L., Captain; Baker, Lyle A., 2nd Lt.; Campbell, George S., F/O; Mulry, Millard E., 1st Lt.; Hopper, Frank S., Sgt; Booker, Joseph H., Jr., Sgt; Butler, Aaron E., S/Sgt; Broster, Kenneth J., S/Sgt; Feldman, Norman E., Sgt; Kilcoyne, William J., Sgt.

Signed by: David D. Beitmen, 2nd Lt., A.C., 0-880880 Ass't S-2 Officer.

THE LYLE A. BAKER WARTIME JOURNAL

L.S.M.F.T.- Lucky Strike Means Fine Tobacco
T.S. P.O.E.- Tough Stuff - Port of Embarkation

What a title for a short story - yet how apropos. Little did I realize, as we jokingly uttered this little ditty at Grenier Field, NH, just how much significance it would have a few weeks later when one "Lyle A. Baker" was to be suddenly changed to "Kreige 6844." Helluva situation. And after everything was going so well too. We had flown the 5,000 or so miles from the U.S. to Italy with nary a hitch, via Newfoundland, the Atlantic, French Africa, Tunisia, and finally Foggia. The requirement for a trip home was 50 missions; with everyone flying four or five a week; a brand new B-24 all set to go, and the entire crew of the "URGENT VIRGIN" eager to get started and to finish the job as quickly as possible; as we all optimistically expected to do. Then our ship was taken by another squadron which had suffered some high losses of late and we were told that we could fly various ships in our own squadron. Of course, we hated to part with the "U.V." since we had become rather attached to the crate by this time, but we had no choice in the matter. Besides, S-2 claimed that the maintenance in combat was wonderful, so we didn't figure it

made much difference what ship we flew. (Like all others who learned about S-2 the hard way, my opinion of that organization, then, was much higher than it ever has been since.)

Our crew was split up for the first few missions for obvious reasons - Ploesti, Toulon, and Budapest being no places to send 10 new men. Then finally, on that fateful day of July 16, we were briefed for Wiener-Neustadt; our first mission as a complete crew. The ship was a decrepit battle-scarred veteran of 64 combat missions, well riddled with flak holes, and barely cooled off from a trip to Ploesti during which it had limped back to the base on engines #1, #2, & #3 due to a defective turb on #4. As we collected around the ship that cool A.M., we thought little of this fact; this seemingly unimportant incident that was to prove our undoing. I remember the wisecracks we pulled before we took off - kidding Campbell, the navigator, about the extra flak suit he was taking along to sit on in order to avert a certain catastrophe he had heard about. And then when the bombs were loaded, I wrote my little cousin's name (Ned) on one, as per promise, and Fort did likewise for his little son. I recall thinking of what a big a joke the war must be to their immature minds, and how glad I was that they and my sister, and other American kids would never suffer like the kids in Europe. It was a beautiful Sunday morning, not unlike many I have seen back in Pennsylvania, and when I saw on the poop-

sheet that "Bombs Away" was due at 10:30, I couldn't help but think that people over here would be in church at that hour, same as in Osceola, PA. "Oh, well, this is WAR" and I have nothing to say in the matter." Even so, I could do a little prayer that the bombardier would do a good job of synchronizing today and drop the missiles on nothing but the engine factory.

Two hours after takeoff and things are running smoothly. It is true that #4 has a tendency to "run away" making it necessary for Fort and myself to deviate from the usual plan of flying 15 minutes alternate shifts. This is because it is impossible for one man to maintain uniform manifold pressure and still fly the perfect formation necessary in combat. However, this problem is by no means insurmountable. We changed to a system by which one pilot works the throttles and the other does nothing but fly the ship; i.e. Fort would fly 15 minutes while I worked the throttles, keeping a close check on #4. Then we would reverse the process; he working the throttles and I handling the controls. Not the better of the two systems, but the only means of keeping #4 in line. For some time now I have noticed the cylinder head temperatures rising consistently, especially on #3. This we attribute to the fact that we spent an hour circling at around 6,000'.

Now we near the target and are still short of the 24,000' we are suppose to have, so the leader has been climbing at a much faster rate than he should. Maybe his new ship can do it, but some of these old jobs can't take it, especially some like this one which flew several hundred miles only the day before on 3 engines - a sever strain - even on a Pratt & Whitney. One, then another, ship breaks formation. Now we are pulling 45" with 2,400 RPM just to stay in formation. "Why in Hell doesn't that guy slow down for a while?"

Now it is Fort's turn to fly, and I turn my undivided attention to the throttles and instrument panel. #4 is no better, and the #3 cylinder head temperature is so high as to be alarming. Soon I have to increase the RPM to 2500 and the M.P. to 47". We seriously consider turning back, but hell, we've come this far with the bombs; we'll take 'em all the way or bust.



2nd Lt. Lyle A. Baker
(Deceased December 1981)

balancing power on #3 & #4, has thrown us over.

Fort and I exert all our strength trying to pull out, but to no avail. It was like trying to put out a hotel fire with a glass of water. He pressed the alarm bell; signal for the crew to bail out. We went in at 21,000'; - perhaps there was still time to pull out. We continued our efforts, but the controls were like granite. Finally at 5,000' Fort said we'd better try to jump. I

barely recall what happened in the next few moments, my head feeling like a top from the terrific rate of decent. Somehow, I managed to rip off my helmet and flak suit and leave the seat, but try as I might, I couldn't make my way to the bomb bay due to the pull of the spin. What must have been moments seemed like hours. Then a lucky movement of the ship threw me forward and I managed to grasp the iron rail in front of the bomb bay. Thank God Pete had dropped some bombs and left the doors open. Fort was right behind me.

I jumped, pulling the rip cord almost as I left the ship. I felt two hard jolts; the first as the chute opened and broke my tremendous rate of fall, the second as I met the ground. There wasn't a second between them. I looked up and saw a huge mass of flames not more than



Captain Francis L. Fort's Crew (726th Bomb Squadron)
Back Row, L-R: Sgt Frank S. Hooper; Lt. Lyle A. Baker;
Capt. Francis L. Fort; Lt. Millard E. Mulry; F/O George S.
Campbell; S/Sgt Aaron E. Butler; Sgt William J. Kilcoyne
Front Row L-R: Sgt Norman E. Feldman; Sgt Joseph H.
Booker; S/Sgt Kenneth J. Broster

With exception of Baker and Mulry, all were listed as KIA

10 feet away. My first thought: "I'm in Hell." Then I saw the chute and felt the wind pull me away from the burning ship. Talk about miracles! I unhooked the straps, and ran from the withering heat until I was out of danger.

Conscious of a pounding in my ears, I realized that I had fallen over 4 miles without clearing them. I did so at once, but the results of that quick change of pressure left a hum that lingered for days. I looked in the sky for chutes for I felt sure that someone must have gotten out. You can imagine how I felt when I saw not a one, and then glanced at the flaming wreckage, flames from which were now several hundred feet high.

Since I could see a farm house in the distance, I knew that people would be there shortly, and it behooved me to make tracks. I took stock of the situation. I had landed on the edge of a corn field, surrounded by forest on three sides. In fact I had come dangerously close to landing in the trees. Add another miracle! The soft freshly cultivated soil was all that prevented a broken leg. As it was, my nose was bleeding, and I had bit my lip when my head hit the ground. Small matter that, though. I had on a green flying suit, almost identical with the color of the leaves in the woods. Why not hide in the underbrush near the plane? They will probably search a wide area and may never think of looking in the most likely of all spots.

I had about 15 minutes before the crowd came which gave me enough time to leave a false trail. I walked towards the edge of the forest, leaving plenty of tracks in the soft soil. Then I followed the edge of the forest back to the plane, and lay among the bushes, completely covered.

The crowd gathered from all directions; men, women and children, all very excited and speaking strange dialect. Sure enough, they saw my foot prints and began a wide search which lasted from 10:30 till after dark, and all the time I was no more than 100 yards from the plane.

A small town was nearby and the people came by the hundreds. An hour or so passed - then a loud bang. A 1,000 pounder that Pete hadn't released had gone off. I never saw a more frightened outfit in my life, people running in all directions. I was afraid some of the closer ones had been killed, but I found out later that all anyone received was a bad scare.

Knowing it was useless to move till the crowd dispersed. I opened my escape kit and debated my chances for escape. I found \$48 in escape money which I hid in my socks. Other articles were a tiny compass, silk maps of Europe, concentrated food pills, water purifying tablets, etc.

The first job was to locate myself, then with a few hundred miles of walking in the right direction, I might be able to reach Italy; a long shot hope at best, but my only chance.

The rest of that day was the longest I have ever experienced, never knowing but what some searcher would stumble on to me. One peasant did pass within a few yards, but failed to see me.

I looked at my watch - only a little past noon. I thought to myself, "The folks back home aren't even up yet, it's only 6:00 AM in Pennsylvania." The folks back home. Oh, my God, what will they think. Here I hadn't even thought about that. After all they've suffered since Burdette went down, now to have me reported missing and go through it all again. What will the grandparents think? Will Grand Dad Baker be able to stand the shock? Or will they dare tell him? If I could only let them know in some way that I am alive. But no chance for that. All I

can do is hope for the best. If I had only gotten a letter from Bunny before I went down. "I love her so much," and the last word I'd had from her was the morning I took off from Topeka. No mail had caught up with us in the five weeks we'd been gone.

I knew it was useless to move until the crowd dispersed. Six o'clock and still as many people as ever. Now and then a motorcycle drives up on the nearby road. Seven PM and it starts to rain. The trees keep most of the moisture off, but the mosquitoes are so thick as to drive a guy crazy. Shortly after dark, I was chilled through, but the crowd still lingered. Why'n Hell don't they go home to bed so I can get moving? "Baker, this is a Hell of a situation you've got yourself in; hiding in a dark mosquito infested woods 5,000 miles from home and you don't even know what country you're in."

Then I would think of the others who had just crashed to their death and think that perhaps I was lucky enough just to be alive, or was I? I was so miserable, I would just as soon have been one of them. But no, I have to get back for the folk's sake. Perhaps it wouldn't be so bad if I was the only Baker, but after Burdette's misfortune, I just have to get back for their sake. Perhaps that was the reason I had been spared by such a narrow margin. The Lord surely wouldn't let them suffer a second time.

But enough of thinking about the past, the situation at hand is something new and one for which I am not well prepared. I had never considered it. I always figured I'd either get back okay, or if I did get it, I'd never live to know the difference. And now, here I am. "The crowd seems to be dispersing; perhaps it is safe to try a get away."

It must have been around 2 AM when I felt the coast to be clear. The rain had stopped and the moon was bright enough to enable me to follow a narrow path through the forest. I had to walk slowly because my knee was becoming worse as time went by. In the excitement of the plane crash and my haste to escape the flames, I hadn't even noticed that I had twisted my knee when I hit the ground. Now I was limping more than somewhat, and hoping it would not become so bad as to stop my progress altogether.

As dawn began to break I could see a huge wheat field all over the countryside and a prosperous farm house in the distance. I hugged the edge of the woods to avoid being seen. Before long I came to a railroad which ran north and south, the southern end running directly through a heavily wooded section. My plan: to walk south along the tracks (walk only at night and hide for sleep in the forest in the daytime. The railroad would eventually lead me to a town by which I could locate myself on the map).

Since it was still early, I decided to walk another half hour or so before I took a nap for the day. So far, all well and good. I had evaded the crowd of the day before, and my chances of detection in this forest were small. Imagine my consternation as I rounded a small bend to see a woman with a nursing child in her arms standing among the trees. Where did she come from? She spoke to me in a strange dialect. How I wished I could talk the language. To run might cause her to become more suspicious. I waved my hand and continued nonchalantly along, hoping she would not suspect anything out of the way.

But my costume was a dead give away. Next thing I knew, a pair of men with pistols were cutting ahead of me and admonished me to halt. They searched me for a weapon, then took me

to a small house completely hidden among the trees. Before long, no less than 30 people had gathered, from where I had no idea. What a collection. Girls of no more than 12 or 13, each obviously pregnant, or with a nursing child. And everyone, especially the old men, very dirty. (I later found out that these people were all peasants working for a wealthy land owner. The houses were made of logs, dirt, sticks, etc. and were scattered through the forest. A good deal like the old feudal system.) However, they all seemed very friendly and one woman brought out a hunk of brown bread and a piece of dirty raw pork along with a knife (I wasn't hungry).

Since neither they nor I spoke a common language, we resorted to signs and motions. When they pointed to the sky and then demonstrated a crash, I nodded my head. One woman of perhaps 35 or so, seemed cleaner and more intelligent than the rest. She brought out a faded letter dated 1925 and written from Wisconsin in broken English. Then she sighed and asked me to read it. I referred it was a son or brother who had gone to America for a new start on life. Evidently she had never heard from him except that once and she couldn't even understand this one. One little girl seemed out of place among these dark haired people, as her hair was a golden blond. I had a picture of my sister in my pocket and pointed to the girl then to the picture.

The woman smiled. She had no reason to fear me and we suddenly became friends. It was plain to see that she was the law and God of that clan. She told the man with the pistol to put it down. When he hesitated, she picked up a stick and chased him in the house.

I had heard that there were anti-Nazi groups in the Balkans; my only hope of escape was through their assistance. But were these people willing to help me? If I could only speak their language and find out where they stood. They pointed to a town in Hungary on my map. I then pointed to Italy and tried to make them understand I wanted them to help me. The woman nodded her head.

Soon a car drove up and out stepped a pair of uniformed soldiers - with long feathers in their hats. Maybe I was dreaming. When I assure myself I was awake, I thought, "Surely no army would have a motley uniforms like this - they must belong to the friendly groups I've heard about from S-2."

They drove me to a town. Cars were scarce and we had to drive slow to avoid large flocks of geese and a few cows that strayed, at will, up and down main street. Every man, woman, and child crowded around the car eager to get a look. A man ran out of the main building with a tray and 3 glasses of red wine. The soldier raised his glass as in a toast and drained it in a gulp. I followed his example. "Egad!, what manner of concoction is this. Tastes like liquid fire."

Ten more miles and we repeat the process in another town. And still another. "Does this guy drink this much everyday, or just when he has guests." I was beginning to see double already. Then fortunately, we stop and enter a building with a room full of silk (from parachutes) and pieces of burned metal. A short man speaks to me in broken English. "Thank God they have someone who talks English, maybe I can find out about the crew." He shows me a picture of Hooper, the Martin turret gunner. My heart leaped. He must have gotten out, else his wallet would have burned. Then I heard that they had found him at the far end of the corn field. His chute had failed to open. Then the man told me that they had found 7 bodies in the plane. 5 in

the back - 1 (Fort's) on the flight deck -and one in the nose.

So someone was still alive. Probably Pete since he would have had the best chance. The guys in the tail never had a chance with their chest chutes. (Made in 2 parts to facilitate movement around the ship; and for ease in getting into turrets, only the harness is worn. The chute itself has to be strapped on, after word to bail-out is given, requiring an extra amount of time.) The only thing that saved me was the "seat type" (one piece) chute that each pilot wears. I never would have made it had I been forced to find and fasten on a chest type chute. Food was brought out. I had been famished, but I couldn't eat a mouthful now.

With an interpreter, I could now talk to the soldier who had driven me here. He asked if I was afraid or fearful of my life. I said no. British or Yankee? I told him. Then I asked if he would help me get to Italy. He laughed and replied, "No, I can't. You are a prisoner of the Hungarian government and will be detained in a camp until the war is over." A fine state of affairs. He then asked if I was tired. I hadn't slept in 48 hours and was practically out on my feet. He told me I could take a nap on his bed, which I did. He aroused me at supper time. Menu: Hungarian goulash, bread, string beans. Not bad at all.

That night I found out that the English speaking man had lived in Brooklyn 15 years; returned to the old country in '38. All evening crowds came, peering in the window. I created more excitement in that town than a 3 ring circus. They all wanted to find out why the Americans were bombing them. "Why do you try to destroy us?" And damned if I could find an answer. I hadn't even known we were at war with Hungary. From their viewpoint, Russia was the enemy. Hungary's soldiers were all at the Eastern front fighting Bolshevism, and from their point of view, America had no business meddling in. Maybe they are right. I don't know. I do know that war isn't right. But how can it be prevented? At any rate, I couldn't for the life of me find an answer when they asked me what I was doing over here. All I wanted to do was fly 50 missions and get home. And here I was less than a month away from the States - Egad!

My soldier friend quizzed me about America. He said he was going there after the war and wanted to look me up. I hope he does. I couldn't have asked for a better host. Beer is rationed, but he couldn't buy me enough. I tried to talk the boy from Brooklyn into helping me get to Italy. He shrugged his shoulders and said "I'd like to, but there's nothing I can do." All my arguments were to no avail. T.S.

The following afternoon I took a train ride to the county jail. The jailer was a young fellow who removed my belt, shoe laces, etc. before locking me up in a bare cell. Reason: I might hang myself. "What the hell does he think we Americans are?" The bed was a wooden slab - I think it was solid oak. Bedding consisted of 1 dirty blanket. I raised a fuss and finally got another. I still spent one miserable night.

The next day seemed like an eternity. This solitary is terrible. I amused myself by killing the bed bugs which crawled freely about the room. Dinner consisted of brown bread (foul stuff) and bean soup with a little meat. Mid afternoon and my jailer brought me some pastry his girl friend had made. Very proud he was. I could understand that.

Next day he takes me to a train bound for Budapest. The first passenger I see is Pete. We stared at each other like we were seeing ghosts. Then we exchanged stories. He had gotten out at 15,000 feet or so and watched the plane fall, but had seen no

chutes leave, not even mine. We went over all the details of what had happened; curse the Colonel for sending us up in a ship like that, and came to several conclusions which can best be told by mouth.

A young German officer was on the train. We talked to him in English. He had spent a year in England, and said the German people wanted the war to end. All the cities were masses of rubble, etc.

Every now and then a civilian would come up and shake a fist at us and yell, "Gangster." Luckily our guards kept them away. The European trains are old and slow, but we finally reached Budapest and walked to the center of the city. People kept yelling, "Gangster." One old woman even made a pass at me with an umbrella. I wouldn't have traded my guard for a million bucks.

Pete and I spent 2 days in a small cell with a wooden cot apiece. Those things are hard. Next Geneva Convention I'm going to propose a motion that all cots be made of soft pine for the POW's. To pass the time, we drew a checker board on one cot - used bread for checkers. It wasn't good for anything else and the soup we got with it was even worse. A young Jewish political prisoner took care of us. He gave Pete cigarettes once in a while. He asked me for my wings as a souvenir. I gave them to him. We asked him why everyone called us "Gangsters?" He explained, "American flyers are dropping toy dolls, etc., which little children pick up. These then explode and blow their hands off." I told him he was crazy - German propaganda. He explained the yellow patch on many of the people we had seen - "Jews." In the cell next to us was a young Jew who whispered to us when the guards were absent. He had escaped from a work camp and was to be shot soon. So this was the world that until a week ago had been merely something to read about in the paper.

Then we were taken to a big prison in another part of the city. Here things really got tough. We were stripped and completely searched. One young sergeant had trouble getting his jacket off. The guard hit him. There were 18 of us, but we could do nothing. Soon all 18 of us were placed in a small room. What a motley looking crew; all with week old beards. It seemed good though, just to be with other Americans. There we met Pat for the first time - later to become one of my best pals. I remembered that he was the first to speak, "Well, here we are - just like the bull with one horn and one testicle. He can't fight and he can't f---. All he can do is bellow and sh--." That broke the tension. We all laughed and discussed our fate. Pat and Hood had gone down over Ploesti. A P-38 pilot had got it over Vienna. A bombardier over Budapest. Plumford, Williams, and Hanson had gone through phases with us at Tucson. It was their 2nd mission, too.

A couple hours passed. We wondered what would happen next. They surely wouldn't keep all 18 of us in the same room. Now the door opens and we are led to a shower room. We sure needed showers like never before. Our clothes are steamed before we donned them. Then we were split into groups of three and placed in small cells. I did not get out of that cell for 8 days. "By this time I was beginning to feel like Al Capone." My cellmates were Hanson, who had been at Tucson with me, and a young Sergeant belly gunner who had gone down over Ploesti.

The first day wasn't bad since we each had stories to compare. The next 7 days were almost unbearable. The cell was six feet

wide and perhaps ten feet long. There was a small window to let in air, but every time one of us would look out, a guard would point a gun at us. Not a very friendly chap. Sanitary conditions were nil. We did have a rusty iron jar in one corner and the odor was not too pleasant. Each morning a guard gave us each a small round loaf of bread, our only solid food. I couldn't swallow it at first, but I soon learned to eat the sour stuff. At the time we got our bread, we got a tin bowl of thin liquid, looking like dishwater and tasting even worse. I never did figure out what it was. At noon we got a bowl of watery soup, usually pea, but once I found a couple dozen beans in mine. At night, another bowl of soup. We had a pair of dirty blankets to cover us at night.

The days were warm, but at night my knee would get cold and cause trouble. The days were endless. Luckily, I still had my pocket service copy of the New Testament, which Uncle Hugh and Aunt Margaret had sent me. We took turns reading it and found it helpful. We took turns pacing the floor at first. After a few days we were too weak to do even that. This liquid diet was also playing havoc with our kidneys. On the 5th day they took the Sergeant away. I never saw him again. Hanson and I talked endlessly. He had worked in a Kotex factory. I learned everything he had ever done since he was a boy and vice versa. His wife expected a baby the last week in July, and here he was. Perhaps she was having it now. Would they dare notify her he was missing - the poor guy was frantic.

July 25; my birthday. What would my folks feel like today? They wouldn't even know I was alive. In the back of my Bible was a small collection of songs (America, Star Spangled Banner, Rock of Ages, and other hymns). We start to sing. Soon a guard pounds on the door. Hanson says, "I wonder if he wants us to stop. Let's test him one time and find out." We sing all the louder. In walks the guard. (Rasputin, we call him. A big ugly guy with a black moustache) and he proceeds to beat us up. We could cheerfully have killed the son-of-a-bitch, but it would have got us nowhere. Perhaps, even now, there is a day of reckoning (as I write this - November 14th - the Russians are fighting in Budapest).

One day the air raid sirens blew and the guards are all inside. We look out the window and watch the 24's and 17's high above. "I hope the blow this jail off the map." By now we are bitter. One 17 gets hit by flak and we see him fall in flames. "I wonder if anyone will get out." If they end up in this hole, they may be better off if they don't.

8th day and it seems like we can stand it no longer. Then a guard comes and takes me to a small office. A German officer speaks in perfect English and offers me a cigarette. I notice that it is American. He asks for my name, rank, and serial number which I give him. Other than that, I am not required to divulge according to the Geneva Convention. He does not press the point. In fact, he doesn't need to. He already knew more about me than I knew myself; even my hobbies. My Squadron and Group he knew from the markings on the tail of our crashed ship. A little book he had listed every Group as to insignia, C.O., etc. This German Intelligence man was really on the ball. He told me that Pete had just been interrogated and had asked that we go to the same prison camp. The request was granted. "Twenty five of you will leave tonight for Sagan, Germany. There you will be treated as an army officer instead of a Hungarian criminal." I asked about Hanson. "Yes, he will go too."

Before departure we were given a large loaf of bread apiece, plus a piece of raw sausage. Also a 4 ounce piece of cheese to be split among two men. It was to last the entire three day trip. We went to the train on a truck. At the station some civilians spit on us, and otherwise got nasty, but no violence occurred. Our home for the next three days was a box car, the bottom of which was covered with a bale of straw. Our guards were five German soldiers going home on furlough. One said, "Do not try to escape. If anyone tries, the entire 25 will be shot." No one tried. The trip was uneventful. Nights were cold, but the days were swell. But what a way to see Europe; from the door of a box car. A seven hour lay over in Vienna, due to rail road yards being bombed out. As time passed our guards became friendly. One pilot from N.Y. could talk German so we had an interpreter. We showed them pictures of our girls; they showed us their "Fraus." Several times we stopped at stations where the German Red Cross gave us hot soup and ersatz coffee. One time a guard asked Bob Hood to hold his gun while he got a drink. "These boys are okay. They want the war to end as bad as we do."

We finally reached Sagan and say good-bye to the guards. New ones lead us to a camp enclosed by masses of barbed wire. We get a shave and shower. How wonderful it is, my itchy beard was driving me nuts. Then a German brings out a couple Red Cross parcels; our first sample of Red Cross food. And a pot of steaming American coffee. We stuff ourselves unmercifully; raisins, cheese, crackers, prunes, jam, etc. Needless to say, none of us slept a wink that night. We were too miserable. But it was worth it. Next day we were issued Red Cross supplies. I got a Canadian jacket, a pair of pants, two sets underwear, three pair socks, five handkerchiefs, two shirts, tooth brush, tooth powder, soap, razor blades (5), sewing kit.

Then we were taken through another barbed wire enclosure into the midst of a milling crowd of Americans. They formed a double line and as we passed through, each pair of eyes was searching for a long lost pal. Every now and then I heard a shout of joy. Someone had been recognized.

"BAKER" I hear! I looked around. It was Loar, a Pennsylvania boy I had gone through Cadets with. Not only was he here, but so was Harry Cacchus, my roommate at Advanced. I later met several others who had got their Wings that same day

at Columbus, Mississippi. Little had we realized that happy day, just where the road ahead was to lead.

We are taken into a theater to hear a talk by Colonel Spivey, himself a POW: and even he isn't the highest ranking officer here. The Germans have a Brigadier General in the bag; General Vanaman. The talk was very good. He told us that we were in Stalag Luft III, strictly an officers' camp (i.e. pilots, bombardiers, and navigators). A few sergeants are here as orderlies (easy work - strictly voluntary - and they get extra privileges). Every man here is from a flying crew. A good deal.

"Your pay will continue to be the amount you were getting the day you went down. All promotions are frozen the day you became a POW (T.S., I had one coming up) Do not feel bad about ending up here. You did the best you could and that is all the government asks. You weren't as lucky as some, but then, think of all those that made the supreme sacrifice. You are luckier than they because some day you will go home to your loved ones. We have seven Colonels and six Lt. Colonels in this camp alone, in addition to a General. You aren't the only ones to have hard luck. Your family will be notified through the Red Cross. Do not expect any mail for at least six months. You can write three letters and four cards a month. You are all worn out mentally and physically from your ordeal. Just relax and take it easy for a few days."

It was a hot day - August 1st - but I was freezing to death. I went directly to bed with all my clothes on and put on both blankets we had been issued. I still froze. Cold chills all over. I had a fever. That night I was taken to the hospital with the flu. The exposure and lack of food had lowered my resistance and the drafty box car had finished the job. In addition I had not had a bowel movement for 12 days. Now I was visiting the abort (German for latrine) every 15 minutes. For 4 days I was half delirious and didn't eat a mouthful. Then I commenced to get better. I was put on a limited diet to get my digestive system back on schedule. I wrote my first cards; one to Mother and one to Bunny. My knee was nearly well. After ten days in the hospital, I was ready to join my friends and adjust myself to this new strange life that was (is) to last for the duration.

(Continued Next Issue)

AH, THOSE/OUR MELODIOUS VOICES

(Taken from a clipping as appeared in a Miami Paper. No date given. Probably 1942, 43 or 44.)

Thank God For Singing Army, Colonel Chides Critics Here

The Army Air Forces in training in this area will continue to sing as they march, despite any complaints that may be lodged with headquarters, according to a letter received by the Miami Daily News from Col. Ralph M. Parker. Presumably the Colonel had received complaints from citizens who didn't like their slumber disturbed. The Colonel's letter follows:

"My Dear Neighbor:

I have your several letters of recent date, requesting the elimination of the soldiers singing in the early morning hours and hope that you will accept my answer in the spirit in which it is written.

THE SINGING WILL CONTINUE!

Moreover, please arise at the first sound of military activity each morning and get down on your knees with all the members of your household who are disturbed thereby and offer thanks to God Almighty, with me and the rest of us, that those are Americans singing American songs for you and me and not Germans or Japanese singing vile victory war songs in American streets!

Will you do this? Yes? That's swell! Many thanks. Please believe me Very Sincerely and

Faithfully yours,"

Ralph M. Parker,

Colonel, Air Corps,

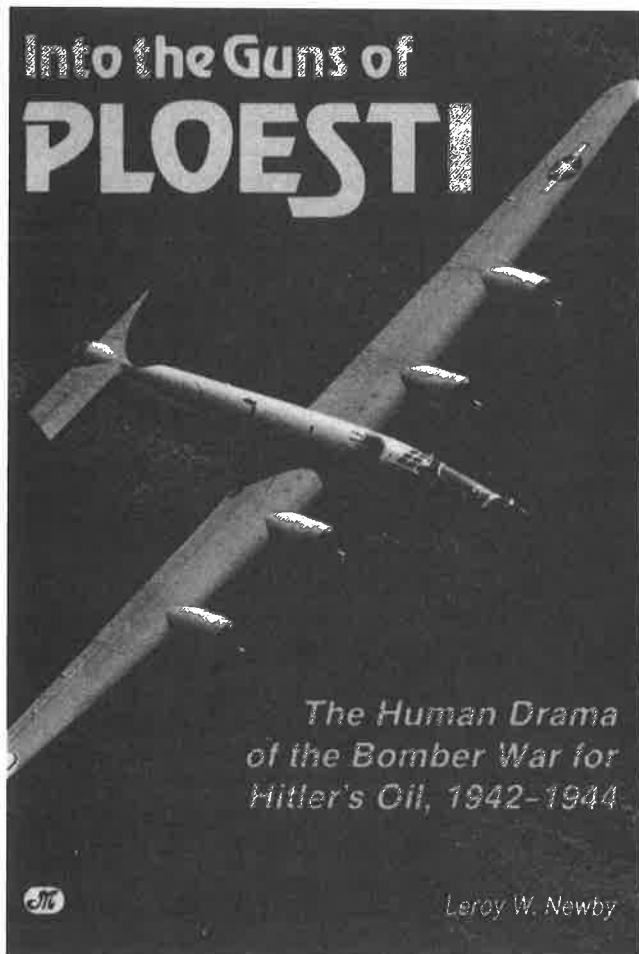
Commanding.

BOOK REVIEW

2 PLOESTI BOOKS: OVERKILL OR GRIM REMINDERS?

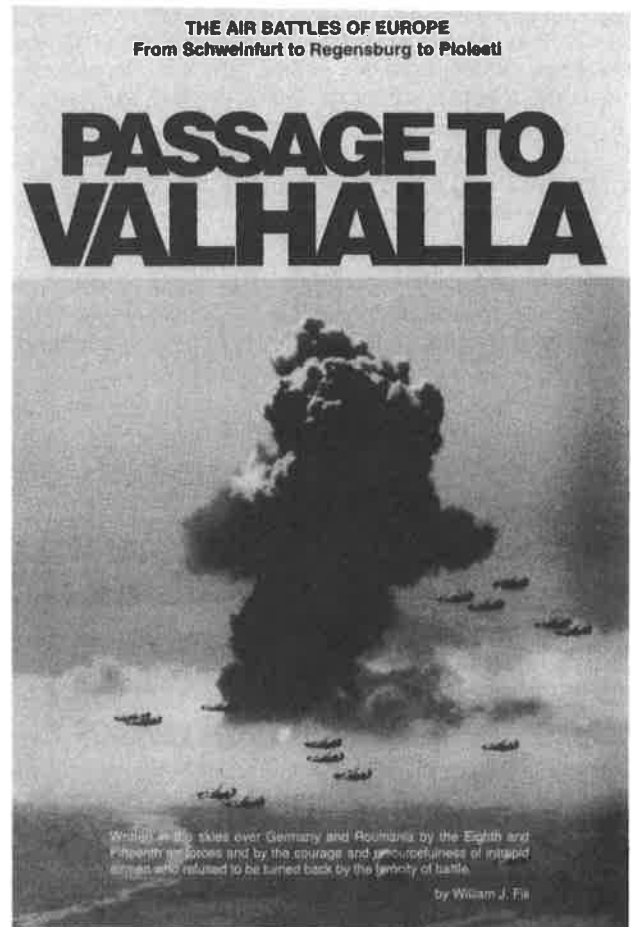
Two recently published books have been reviewed by this office. Both deal with our infamous Rumanian target; Ploesti. One reads as a true historical documentation of the target; from its earliest importance to the enemy, to its final destruction by the 15th AAF. While the other book is the life of POW, as lived by a 450th Bomb Group Enlisted Man.

Leroy W. Newby, former 460th Bomb Group bombardier, weaves his tale of Ploesti through the book called "INTO THE GUNS OF PLOESTI." A finely written book with numerous references to his own involvement, and those of whom he chronicles. He compresses much viable information into this 192 page tome as is possible. This is Newby's second book, the first being "TARGET PLOESTI - View from a Bombsight," which proved to be an outstanding success - as I'm sure this will be, also. You wouldn't go wrong in having this on your bookshelf. Ted tells me that he has still another book in the works.



A personalized, inscribed copy of "INTO THE GUNS OF PLOESTI" is available from Leroy "Ted" Newby for \$14.45 (S & H Inc). His address is: 346 Pineview Drive, Venice, FL 34293. Mention the 451st and how you heard about his book. - No cigars, but just to show we care!

William J. Fili, in his first attempt at writing, "PASSAGE TO VALHALLA," tells of his crew training, early missions, and finally his "one way trip to Ploesti." (his, and probably the correct form of spelling, Ploesti) I found his story highly enlightening, but, whether it was only my early review copy, I was distracted by all the errors that I found in grammar, spelling and capitalization that should have been edited out with proper proofreading. Nevertheless his self-blandishment of his experiences does warrant your indulgence. During the course of reading his book, I was distracted to what later peaked my curiosity; which prison camp was he incarcerated in? Other than for a few mentions, what happened to some of these former comrades? I noted three 451st men included in his narrative: Sergeants' Charles Isherwood and Peter Bereyle, and Major James Beane. When I had occasion to personally visit with Bill Fili at the 15 the AF Association Reunion, the name "Beane" came up. To the best of Fili's knowledge, Beane died in the east, somewhere in Tennessee, and much apart from the Hollywood mystique that I inferred upon him in our last newsletter.



Bill's autographed 297 page book, with 16 pages of pictures, is available through his office, by writing to: Filcon Publishers, 33 Northgate Village, Media, PA 19063. The cost is: \$18.95 plus \$2.50 (S & H). Bill is also "hawking" a 1 hour 55 second VHS video of Air Battles of Europe; titled, suspiciously enough, PASSAGE TO VALHALLA. It sells for \$16.50 plus \$2.00 (S & H). Same address as for the book.

OUR DEPARTED COMRADES

THIS HERITAGE

by: Mary E. Richardson

They are not dead, who leave us this great heritage of remembered joy.

They still live in our hearts, in the happiness we knew, in the dreams we shared.

They still breathe in the lingering fragrance windblown from their favorite flowers.

They still smile in moonlight's silver and laugh in sunlight's sparkling gold.

They still speak in the echoes of words we've heard them say again and again.

They still move in the rhythm of waving grasses, in the dance of tossing branches.

They are not dead; their memory is warm in our hearts, and comfort in our sorrow.

They are not apart from us, but a part of us.

For love is eternal; and those we love shall be with us throughout eternity.

Taken from the Memorial Program, 15th AF Association Reunion, Las Vegas, Nevada, 1991.



ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETARY

WASHINGTON, DC

Those we have lost since our last report:

Grady B. Adams, 16 February 1990	724th
Robert H. Auflick, 1990	725th
Edgar F. Baskett, 1988	725th
Thomas F. Brannan, November 1989	725th
Howard Y. Bryan, 25 December 1991	727th
Thomas R. Casey, Jr., 21 June 1991	726th
Francis H. Fleishman, 22 February 1988	724th
Arthur R. Formanek, 21 June 1991	727th
William E. Garrity, 22 March 1991	724th
Walter F. Hack, 3 April 1991	725th
Curtis L. Hall, Jr., 20 July 1991	726th
Moses Hanna, 21 February 1991	724th
Albert C. Hartland, 15 April 1991	725th
Harry D. Henderson, 27 May 1991	727th
Edward F. Hengy, Unknown	724th
Edward N. Herbert, 21 April 1990	727th
Francis M. Hunt, 16 January 1991	725th
* Thomas J. Kelly, 27 November 1991	727th
Elmer E. Knapp, 6 March 1990	725th
Albert K. Kremer, 25 August 1988	724th
Elmer E. Mattscheck, Unknown	726th
Donald Milligan, 16 August 1991	724th
George F. Nixon, December 1989	724th
Edward M. Pelt, 5 October 1991	724th
Joseph E. Petrovic, 24 June 1991	725th
Raymond L. Pinette, 4 September 1990	725th
Alva J. Salsburey, 13 August 1991	726th
Donald E. Smith, April 1988	727th
Lawrence J. Stauth, 29 October 1991	727th
Joseph F. Urban, Jr., 30 March 1990	727th
** John R. Whisler, 16 November 1991	724th

* Memorial Consideration to the Memory of Thomas J. Kelly from the Carmine Pacleo and the Audrey Smelski Families.

** Memorial Consideration to the Memory of John R. Whisler from Chester Wade

(editor's note; This increased number of listings is due in part to the large 1st class mailout performed last July/August 1991. Family members responded, where before they had failed to offer any recognition of their/our loss. This extra effort on their part helps us to maintain our roster so friends and crew mates are made fully aware.)

A THOUGHT TO PONDER

I dreamed death came the other night,
 And Heaven's gate swung wide.
 With kindly grace an angel came,
 And ushered me inside.

And there to my astonishment,
 Stood folks I'd known on earth.
 Some I'd judged and called unfit,
 And some with little worth.

Indignant words rose to my lips,
 But never were set free.
 For every face showed stunned surprise,
 Not one expected me.

(editor: A little something from Woody Woodman's notepad.)

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FOOLS FOLLY

by: Karl E. Fisler

*She was my mistress
 for many a time.
 Oh, how high she
 could lift me.
 Almost beyond the always
 sky we would climb.
 As I heard her perfect
 hum. We had
 reason to smile chum.
 And thru the fright
 I should see a light.
 This too she did
 for me
 For ever so lightly
 I could brush the
 Hand of God.
 This is a lot
 for a small clod.
 When, we were both
 down to earth.
 I know she gave a sigh too.
 For we will never
 again be brand new.
 That airplane
 and me*

(editor's comment: Since Karl Early Fisler, AEG, 727th, left the ranks as a wartime soldier he has been rightly, and highly, acclaimed as a poet of stature. He has, as recently as 1991, been awarded the "Golden Poet" trophy from the "World of Poetry" organization, Sacramento, California. Karl is making this a habit as he has taken home the Gold and Silver Awards since 1985. He has published a book of poems, entitled, "NOT THIS WAY" - Heritage Press. We thank Karl for our complimentary copy. It's fascinating reading.)

LIGHTNINGS IN THE SKY

Oh! Hedy Lamarr is a beautiful gal,
 And Madeline Carroll is, too;
 But you'll find, if you query, a different theory,
 Amongst any bomber crew.
 For the loveliest thing of which one could sing
 (This side of the Heavenly Gates)
 Is no blonde or brunette of the Hollywood set,
 But an escort of P-38's.

Yes, in days that have passed,
 When the tables are massed
 With glasses of Scotch or Champagne;
 It's quite true, that the sight was a thing to delight;
 Us, intent upon feeling no pain.
 But, it's no longer the same, nowadays in this game,
 When we head north from Messina Straights.
 Take the sparkling wine,
 Every time just make mine,
 An escort of P-38's.

Byron, Shelly and Keats ran a dozen dead heats,
 Describing the view from the hills.
 Of the valley in May, when the winds gently sway,
 An army of bright Daffodils.
 Take the Daffodils, Byron; the wild flowers, Shelly;
 Yours is the Myrtle, friend Keats,
 Just reserve me those cuties, those American Beauties,
 An escort of P-38's.

Sure, we're braver than hell;
 On the ground all is swell,
 In the air it's a different story.
 As we sweat out our track through the fighters and flak,
 We're willing to split up the glory,
 Well, they wouldn't reject us, so Heaven protects us,
 And, until all this shooting abates,
 Give us courage to fight 'em --
 And one other small item --

An escort of P-38's.

Sent in by Kent Gillum (724th)

WINGLESS VICTORY

I dreamed I died last night,
 The earth was cold and opened wide
 To intercept my heart's last flight
 As it raced on the bloody tide
 Of life's last sullen act. I died!

No plummeting to earth in flame,
 No crimson meteor spelling my name;
 Uncharted skypaths then I tried;
 But . . . cruel the Gods an airman bound
 And made him die upon the ground!

(Taken from Puptent Poets, circa 1945
 Written by F/O Doug Wallace - Unit unknown.)

POT-POUR-RI: OF SORTS

LOST, DIED, STRAYED, OR ERRANT

Over the course of our 451st operation we are always losing; or sometimes at a loss, to find those whose mail comes back marked: UNDELIVERABLE; RETURN TO SENDER. Whenever these mailings come back they are always accompanied by "Return Postage Due" notice. Attempts by this office, when this occurs, to find the subject by phone often proves futile. I ask your indulgence in helping to locate the following:

Nick Arleo Annandale, VA
 James H. Cochran Longwood, FL
 George E. Dewey Miami, FL
 Leon L. Dupont Norwich, CT
 Henry B. Ford Coleman, TX
 Edward J. Galenas Detroit, MI
 Henry G. Giasson Southgate, MI
 Leon Gold Congers, NY
 Edward T. Griffin Brooklyn, NY
 John P. Grillo Brooklyn, NY
 Stewart J. Hayden Birmingham, AL
 Herbert O. Klossner Boulder City, NV
 Ralph E. Lasiter Hemet, CA
 David C. Matthews Alexandria, LA
 William R. McCarthy Pasadena, CA
 Lee Packard Sun City, CA
 Russell Ruoff Cincinnati, OH
 William T. Shelton Little Rock, AR
 Thomas H. Smith Lawton, OK
 William H. Wagner Portage, WI

If you know the present location/address, or, if the subject has passed away, for any of those listed, please let this office know so these members will not be left out of coming events and mailings.

To those that had the presence of mind to notify us prior to, or upon their Change of Addresses -- my heartfelt thanks.

STILL OUR GOAL: PRIVACY OF 451st ROSTER

CROSSHAIRS MAGAZINE - SEPTEMBER 1991

Reprinted with permission of Ned Humphreys, Director & Founder of "BOMBARDIERS, Inc."

CONVICTED FRAUDULENT SOLICITER HAD CONTACTED BOMBARDIERS.

From the June 1991 457th Bomb Group newsletter we have learned of an alleged mail fraud case involving Randall W. Sutherland, age 43, who solicited wartime mementos, artifacts and first person experience articles from WW-II veterans.

According to the article, a member of the USS Pennsylvania Association, Jess Denis, told the 457th BG Ass'n of publicized information that Randall had entered a guilty plea to charges of mail fraud in Springfield, Illinois's federal court.

The story recounted how Sutherland passed himself off as a "military historian, author, publisher and medical doctor who

was writing about 35 different military campaigns in World War II." No books were reportedly published and Sutherland and wife, Elaine, age 28, allegedly sold items collected to dealers and legitimate collectors. A sum of \$7,551 was reportedly involved.

Under conditions of his plea agreement, as reported, Sutherland is to pay 80% and wife Elaine 20% in restitution.

On the 18th of June 1988, a person printing his name as "Randall Sutherland, M.D.," wrote BOMBARDIERS, Inc., asking that he be sent "...the last printed membership roster of the Bombardiers.." so that he could "...contact them for interviews..." and would we "...please send me a supply of CROSSHAIRS and any other information on your organization...?" He was advised such privileged information was only accessible by Supporting Membership of our organization.

This apparently is the same "Dr. Sutherland" who joined BOMBARDIERS, Inc., on 31 August 1988 as an Associate SM and purchased a copy of the only complete roster we have published and disseminated (some 11,000 names).

Sutherland apparently used this roster to distribute a form solicitation for information and artifacts to be used in "a book on the History of Bombardiers" he said he was writing. A copy of this solicitation was received by BOMBARDIERS, Inc., on 22 December 1988.

On 27 January 1989 a letter was sent to Sutherland telling him that we had learned of his solicitation which was in conflict with our on-going efforts to collect this same date which was to be used in our official history of bombardiering. He was asked to join our effort instead of separately pursuing the subject. He never responded and his 1989 membership was never renewed.

(editor Humphreys' comment: Since most legitimate writers usually check in with us when they are writing something relating to the subject of bombardiers, we will gladly share any and all information with any inquirer. This may mean the difference between being caught up in some scam project or not. Try us.)

(editor Bob K.'s comment: Colonel Humphreys has shown how an unscrupulous individual can take advantage of a situation that is ripe for picking; the honest and willing veteran. There isn't any way that we can totally protect you from these fraudulent solicitors, other than to keep your address out of their hands. Much to the chagrin of some that have asked for our roster (which happens about 3 to 4 times a year), our policy is that only bone-fide members are entitled to our "abbreviated" Squadron roster. Abbreviated to the degree that all street address are omitted. This does not lessen what is offered; as rank, duty, city of residency, and phone number (if known) are listed. You may later request, by mail, up to 10 current and viable addresses at a time, from that roster. With this policy in place we hope to avert any unwanted solicitation you would get if we freely, and without restriction, volunteered complete rosters.

STILL MORE POT-POUR-RI OF SORTS

SURE, I REMEMBER; OR DO I?

Sometimes it doesn't take much to stimulate, and to bring to mind, something that occurred back in the war years. Then again, there are remembrances that are so far back in the subconscious that it takes a heap of thinking to bring them forward. Working the mind on things, and happenings, from our war years is like visiting an antique shop. Something triggers the thought process and you are back in your youth. The sight of a piece of harness with hame and collar, and you are once again looking over the south end of a draft team heading north. Perhaps you raise your head when a vintage car cruises the street in your neighborhood. These sights and sound, unlike what we experience in today's lifestyle, stand out like a violin in an accordion band. In both cases you can feel the exhilaration of the moment.

But for trivial little military remembrances, what is more trivial than:

ARMY BUTTER; That lowly canned product that was sent overseas without so much as a prior taste test, or quality control. Try as we would to fry eggs in our tents, that damn butter (?) scooted, and sputtered around the frying pan without a bit of melt-down. And, similar to Army peanut butter, it lodged to the roof of your mouth and wouldn't melt or let go, even when coaxed with boiling hot coffee.

BLITZ CLOTH; At least once a month you tried to brighten up the brass buckles, buttons and emblems with this impregnated cleaning cloth. By time you were satisfied with your buckles and buttons, your hands were as black as tar.

G.I. SOAP; Universal, generic, all purpose, and readily available. What that bar of soap couldn't do hadn't been found, yet. It was used for shaving, shampooing, clothes washing, boot and latrine cleaning, and lastly, to wash your body with. Strong in smell and vicious in cleaning ability.

SHOE DUBBIN; A waterproofing grease that worked (supposedly) on your "inside out" combat boots. A product, that to me, hadn't been factory tested, but sent into the field regardless. I never got it to waterproof my boots, but it proved better than fortified egg meal to condition the fur on our tent dog. He ate it readily and grew sleeker by the feeding.

PX TUBE SHAVING CREAM; A non-military product that assumed it was in the Army. It should have had no problem softening my youthful fuzz, but it proved almost more than I could handle. Once on the face it became more of a problem to get the gunk off, and cleaned out of the double edged Gillette (G.I. Issue shaver) than it was worth. I could have gone without shaving and Colonel Eaton would have been none the wiser, but vanity made me go through the motions - and the frustrations.

COLLAR "HOLD-DOWNS;" Anyone remember the little metal wire frames that were inserted under the collar, above the

tie on your "Class A" uniforms? These little wire frames, about 3 inches across the top and 2 inches down each leg (with needle points at the tips) were placed above the knot of the tie and secured with the points at the bottom tip of the collar. Wonderful little devices, but if not properly placed could rear up and smack you in the jaw at a very inopportune moment; say in the middle of a dance with a lovely USO hostess.

THE ".45;" Technically designated by the Army; "The automatic pistol, caliber .45, M1911, is a recoil-operated, magazine-fed, self-loading, hand weapon. The magazine holds 7 rounds. The pistol weighs about 2 1/2 pounds." Where else, but in the Army, would a guy be issued a 2 1/2 pound mobile cannon that held 7 rounds of false courage, noise, and inaccuracy. The weapon was issued to crewmen of the Group to take on missions in the event they were forced down. But the decision to carry them was questionable since no one knew if they were a deterrent to being captured, or, being shot in the process of capture. Under the right circumstances they were trading material with the "friendlies" that may try and help you. They were in fact, a means of "spending time," apart from the usual letter writing. A pocket full of bullets and a walk down to the creek resulted in a couple hours of shooting at the local lizards. No harm to the lizards, but a lot of creek bank was blown away due to our shooting.

MY GENERAL ORDERS ARE:

- 1.) To take charge of this post and all Government property in view.
- 2.) To walk my post in a military manner, keeping always on the alert and observing everything that takes place within sight or hearing.
- 3.) To report all violations of orders I am instructed to enforce.
- 4.) To report all calls from posts more distant from the guard-house than my own.
- 5.) To quit my post only when properly relieved.
- 6.) To receive, obey, and pass on to the sentinel who relieves me all orders from the commanding officer, officer of the day, and officers and noncommissioned officers of the guard only.
- 7.) To talk to no one except in line of duty.
- 8.) To give the alarm in case of fire or disorder.
- 9.) To call the corporal of the guard in any case not covered by instructions.
- 10.) To salute all officers and all colors and standards not cased.
- 11.) To be especially watchful at night and, during the time for challenging, to challenge all persons on or near my post, and to allow no one to pass without proper authority.

Who can forget these, and the importance they once meant to us as we "walked our posts." I'll bet there's not a guy out there that doesn't remember, some, if not all, these GENERAL ORDERS. **RIGHT!!**



CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

OUT/IN MAIL BIN

In the latter part of July, early August 1991, this office sent out a first class mailing to most of its members. The purpose was to give an early alert to the membership on what had transpired as to planning our 1992 reunion. We offered the three main things that would be in question: "Where, When, and Hotel Cost." The intention was that this information would give each member some "lead time" to make preparations to take part.

In some of the mailings we asked some rather ambiguous questions; this after noting a "lack" of past correspondence. In the main it asked why we hadn't received an exchange of dialogue that could enhance our operation. Some remembrances that could be referred to in future Ad-Libs and could bolster some story with first-hand information. Or, in place of historical data, some monetary support to be kept on the mailing list.

The response was overwhelmingly supportive, and very enlightening as to historical information. Those that added their documentation, may someday see it included in upcoming Ad-Libs.

And from some families I received a belated "notice of death," of our comrade - sufficient reason for them not to have made contact. (These names have been noted in our Deceased Members column.)

Although a preponderance of the returned mail was supportive and upbeat, some members added an addendum that caused me some moments of concern. Though, I know that they feel strongly in their reasoning, I hope they will grant me this chance to counter with our concept; "From this side of the fence."

REASON: "I was not long with the Group, thus I didn't know to many people."

COUNTER: This seems the most common reason for not taking a more active part in our effort. But when we look at the makeup of our membership we find that a lot of former POW's, and late Replacement Crews, are very interested in our operation. Their stay, unlike the Ground Crews who were tenured for a longer time, wasn't too long. There must have been some other aircrews; some ground personnel (Operations, Orderly Room, Kitchen, Day Room, or Supply Staff) that a person would have made contact with, or, at least made some impression upon you. And too, we shouldn't try to remember all the people that crossed our paths, that's impossible. But certain incidences that are reported in the Ad-Lib could generate some thought, especially if you were personally involved. Comments such as from Pete Mulry, (short stayed -POW) "I'm learning more about the 451st that I had ever hoped to know. We were quite an outfit."

REASON: "The Ad-Lib is focused more towards Aircrews and/or Officers."

COUNTER: A viable assessment, but, I'm not all that sure the first part is correct. Where possible we have offered stories

based on ground crew experiences. Take the last Ad-Lib; four stories were generated from experiences relative to, and about, ground personnel: Photo Officer, page 5; Eichhorn's Journal, page 9; Major Leaguer, page 28; Thresher Submarine, page 29. Five stories were directly related to combat experiences, and the rest were just war related. I'll grant you that most aircrew stories are larger (exception the Eichhorn Journal) since these incidents can be researched and "fleshed out" by this office. As to noting "Officers" by name, that I have to confess is true. Since I feel very few could associate, nor attach little importance to the name of an enlisted man outside your own Squadron, whereas the name of a pilot, or Ground Officer comes immediately to mind. We have to go with the common denominator, which is, in the case of ground personnel, the Officer in Charge, or, in the case of aircrews, the Pilot.

REASON: "I hated to have been part of the war"

COUNTER: Agreed; in hindsight none of us took any special relish in bombing the populace, as it seems we inadvertently did. (Similar to the happenings in the Iraqi war) We all went over with good intentions and tried to do our assigned duty. We had a duty to perform and we did it successfully. But to answer the point: we, in our Ad-Lib, are more inclined (and trying) to "HONOR THE WARRIOR, NOT THE WAR."

REASON: "With him in the organization, I'd rather not be too active."

COUNTER: Happily, this is one of the least expressed comment I've gotten. My daddy always told me, "There's a bell cow in every herd. Meaning that someone is always leading, and someone is always bringing up the rear --- someone to be admired, someone to be hated. But after more than 45 years, I'd think there fires of hostility would be watered down by now.

REASON: "Sure I read the Ad-Lib, but I will make my donation to a charitable cause."

COUNTER: I haven't figured if this pundit offered his view with "tongue in cheek," or what. I can't fault this guy for his feelings. So I'm now awaiting a receipt, in the name of the 451st, from the "charitable cause" he ascribes to.

REASON: "I love what you're doing, but I'm really strapped. Too much illness in the family to put together any literary contribution, and money is short. Keep the effort alive!"

COUNTER: With honesty such as this we won't bother you further. When you have the time, and less pressure, we know you'll come forth.

REASON: "I don't like to be dunned this way. Drop me from your mailing list.

COUNTER: SO DONE! - sorry whatever we did rubbed you the wrong way. But better this than your not wanting to be involved.

POSTSCRIPT: Although the afore mentioned REASONS comprised a small number of responses, it did give us an insight as to how some of the inactive members feel. What were given as excuses, may to the sender be justified and viable, though it surely isn't to the majority of our members. Again, we don't fault these reasons, but hope they will consider that our effort is to not only relocate former buddies, but to educate the uneducated; to interest the uninterested. Through that education, and interest, we hope to stimulate the feeling of pride, not only in what we did, but with the buddy that marched alongside. The more we open up the history of the 451st, the more self-esteem we will have in its past accomplishments.

Our years are numbered, I have to guess that our average ages are in the high 60's to mid 70's. We're looking back on some of the most important, influential, and dangerous years that anyone could experience. World War II, and its survivors, will soon be past history. But we do have, through this organization, the chance to leave our descendents a legacy. It won't be much in the total scheme of things, but it will include the pride in our buddy, our comrade, and in the Group in which we all served; the 451st Bomb Group (H). In recording that, we leave our LEGACY.

I don't know what kind of "Group Pride" our publication has generated, but I'm getting all kinds of comments about the "Ploesti Picture - 31 May 1944." Seems that many of our people are seeing it in all kinds of places. And the more it is seen, the more adamant the viewer is becoming that our 451st Bomb Group isn't credited with the picture. It seems that the only linkage made is that it is a "15th Air Force" National Archives print.

One prominent magazine currently displaying it, is the December 1991 issue of the *National Geographic*. It is pictured in the supplemental fold out map section (top, center).

Now, since the 50th Anniversary of Pearl Harbor (7 December 1991), everything relevant to World War II will be celebrated as a 50th Anniversary. This will go on for the next four years. And for two and a half of those years, it's hard to leave the 451st out. We played a formidable, active, and costly role in putting down the German aggression. Our exploits have been heralded in both written and photographic form. But what truly catches the eye are the photo's. We were blessed with a Photo Section that seemed to strive for excellence. The results, as offered through this publication and our "Fight'n 451st BG History Book," speak well of that excellence.

I'm not out to knock other worthy Groups, as I'm sure they have photos that they prize as much as we do ours. Whether they have photo's that are as widely publicized as the "Ploesti Picture," I don't know? Surely "Black Nan" of the 464th BG nears that dubious distinction. But of all the dramatic photos, most are attributed to specific Groups - but not our "Ploesti Picture." We, for the time being, languish in obscurity.

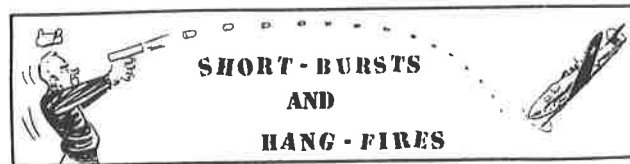
I feel it's not good enough for us to see our picture, and say that that was our Group. The fact that it is not properly titled leaves most of us with the feeling that we have to prove our point. That somehow we have "make things right."

This is a task I soon propose to undertake. With prods from various members, and a swift kick in the behind by Dick Turnbull (727th, last pilot of "CON JOB" on 22 August 1944), I hope to rectify what has gone undone for far too long: Recognition of our Group as principle players in the making of that photo. Just what means I propose to follow, I'm not sure at this precise moment, but as the old adage goes, "Stay tuned for further developments."

Another publication, for those that like to stock your library with wartime remembrances; may I lead you to the December 1991 issue of "WINGS;" @ \$3.25. Jerry Keilman (727th) gave notice that he purchased a copy and was surprised with its contents. This issue is primarily dedicated to the venerable B-24. It documents its history from conception to its demise.

There are numerous pages of photos, some pictures of our 451st BG aircraft (one on page 22, two on page 23).

Since this magazine may be off the shelves by time you read this, may I offer you the mailing address where it may be obtained: Sentry Books, Inc., 10718 White Oak Avenue, Granada Hills, CA 91344.



Charles D. Woolhouse, Complimentary Member ... In reference to your "Laurens Woolhouse's Records" recently received. It indicates that the bombardier on that mission (11 June 1944) was 2nd Lt Harold H. Egbert.

As I mentioned on the phone, I have been a personal friend of "Hal" for over thirty years. Never once did he mention his being "shot down" in Bulgaria or his assignment to the 451st BG. Never once - in all the years we were associated. It was with great surprise I noted his name as one of the crew that was in the aircraft which was the one that my late brother was shot down in.

I have tried calling and writing to Hal Egbert at the address and phone number I had for him but the phone was no longer in use and the addressed mail was returned, "moved no forwarding address."

Through some OSI personal (Office of Special Investigations) I learned Hal has passed away.

(Editor .. Indeed a strange quirk in human nature not to have Harold H. Egbert associate your name "Woolhouse" to his past experience, and to inform you of that coincidence. Surely, the type of civilian work you were involved in wouldn't preclude that bit of information being passed around.)

It seems that your late brother, Laurens, was fated to have a short tenure with the 724th Bomb Squadron. He missed out on the mission of 15 April 1944, when Lyall E. Johnson, his original pilot, and Lt. Clifford E. Kester [riding as experienced pilot in the copilot seat] bombed Bucharest, and, due to severe damage had to evade into Turkey. Then on that fateful day, 11 June 1944, when flying copilot with Charles R. Haun into Rumania, they were brought down on the way back and eight were POW'ed, including your brother, and two were KIA. Indeed, a strange turn of events.)

Doyle Treece, 726th ... Enclosed is my contribution to help keep the 451st alive. I am looking forward to the next reunion in California, as I missed most of the Omaha reunion by spending most of my time in the hospital.

(Editor .. I was sorry to hear that both you and Dick Chase spent your reunion time in the local "Dispensary." It is my hope, as well as the rest of the troops, that you are both in fine fettle and ready to re-engage in the formidable reunion agenda.)

Bob Strang, 725th ... Also enclosed is a copy of the orders releasing me from duty with the 451st. Perhaps you will find some familiar names there ... Bill Coyle, second on the 451st list, was flying copilot with us the day (my 13th mission) when we short-stopped on Vis returning from Oswiecim 12/26/44. It

was some time before I realized that the German name is Auschwitz. ... The article on Draja Mihailovich in the Summer '91 "Ad Lib" was appreciated. That distortion of history has disturbed me ever since, and it is good to know something may be done about it. The only quibble I have with the article is that it failed to mention the USTASHI -- the third Yugoslav political group and the one without question in cahoots with the Nazis. I have had the opportunity to visit Yugoslavia post war on business.

(Editor .. Your sure right about finding a familiar name or two on those old orders. Yellowed as they are, the name of my Navigator, John Dilks comes front and center. Then more to the bottom of the page, reserved for Career Gunners (611), I found mine. I have to assume you were aware of that, and you were just "rattling my chain." ... As to the name of Oswiecim in our mission list and the German name of Auschwitz in fact, was only currently brought to my attention, also. ... As to the USTASHI faction of the wartime political scheme in Yugoslavia, that one eluded me altogether. Perhaps some of our other members have some comments for enlightenment.)

Hugh McCorkle, 725th ... Each of your publications get better and better. No end to your tireless efforts to chronicle the best history of the 15th.

(Editor .. Your right about one thing, Hugh, the 451st had about the best history -ever- to come out of the 15th AAF. But it wasn't just the numbers, -4-5-1-, that made that history; it was the guys that lived and died within the parameters of those numbers. My efforts are meant to bring forth some of that history. Plus, add a little flourish of my own.)

Harry Fornalczyk, 725th ... I just found out about a death of a crew member. He has not been on our list, and I never had any contact with him since we separated from service. He was a gunner on our crew. Please list him as a former member of the 451st. I have the following on him: Cecil R. Johnson, Corporal, Gunner on Mark P. Robinson's crew. POW'ed 26th March 1945.

(Editor .. We have duly note this sad event. To those that remember ... his memory lives on.)

Leo J. Cegla, 724th ... I don't remember if I told you at the Birthday Party, or not, but on August 31 1988 I had another piece of flak taken out of my leg about two inches from the first one. That thing was in there for 43 years plus. Sure glad that's over.

(Editor .. Leo, your initial injury was well attended, and easily remembered. I believe all of your crewmates, myself included, wrung our hands in disbelief when they hauled you away. No one ever thought that a chunk of German flak could penetrate your tough old North Dakota hide. That damn wound was a problem right from the start. Let's see; you were the fifth and last to get the Purple Heart on Capt. Rollins' crew. Right?)

Allan S. "Woody" Woodman, 726th ... I'm not GREEDY. Like I told my kids, I don't have many needs, and damn few wants. They have a hard time figuring that out, but you know how the New Generation is. I have a few priorities that I intend to share my good fortune with. You can call this my annual Christmas Greeting; it helps make up for past years.

(Editor .. As one of our earliest members, Woody, you've always held up your end. I'm just glad to hear of your financial windfall. It's not everyday that a person can turn a swamp into a prized chunk of real estate, as you seem to have done (said

with tongue in cheek). And it's not everyday that we find such a generous benefactor that will drop a \$1,000 check towards our 451st effort. Your donation has been matched by only a very few that feel as you do about what we're trying to achieve.)

Guy N. Shipe, 724th ... Your articles are setting the right tone and I hope you carry on as is. This is the time to donate to your expense account. Sorry I didn't do it sooner, but this seems to be the age when forgetting is easier than remembering. ... Those "golden years" are fast becoming a memory and a new era is approaching.

(Editor .. Thanks for the support, and confidence, in what we're doing regarding the 451st legacy. Hopefully we can all continue to enjoy our senior years, and when we can, with full confidence, request our senior discounts when we visit "Wendy's.")

Homer D. "Tex" Pierce, 725th ... On the mid-air collision (17 Dec 1944) I was engineer and top turret gunner on Capt. Shelton's crew - Only thing I knew was our #1 engine chewed the tail off Lt. King's plane and beat us up pretty good. Capt Shelton was one of the best '24 pilots that I ever flew with, but we had trouble on that mission from the time we took-off. I did everything possible after the collision to get three of the four engines to pull their full power, but failed to do so while still in the air.

(Editor .. Thanks for that bit of remembrance. Each little bit of the puzzle helps fill out the whole picture.)

Charles Rollings, London, England .. Many thanks for your letter of 26 October and for enclosing the Lyle A. Baker manuscript. It's a wonderful story and I shall be happy to use parts of it in my book. ... Yes, I did receive the copy (issue 20) of AD-LIB including my appeal for information. Thank you very much. ... Several members of the 451st Bombardment Group will be featured in the book. ... Publication is due in the Fall, 1992. ... The book will be about 1,000 pages long, with about 200 photos in B & W and colour, plus many line drawings done in Stalag Luft III at the time.

(Editor .. Author Rollings, it was our pleasure to be of assistance towards your goal. It was kind of you to send me such a lengthy, descriptive letter; which I've abbreviated in some degree so our readers will be appraised of the book's progress. At the proper time we'll keep our eyes peeled for the book titled: "Stalag Luft III - The Full Story")

William F. Farley, 726th .. I was surprised to see an article on General Draja Mihailovich in AD-LIB, Summer 1991. I sometimes have wondered if I might be the last person left who remembers the man's name. ... I was one of those downed airman the Chetniks helped evade capture, and in my case, helped me to get back from a trip over Ploesti. ... The same issue also had the story of the supply missions to Lyon, France. I made two of those missions on September 11th, and 13th. It seems with each issue at some point I read through it I think, "Hey, I had a part in that."

(Editor .. What a welcome comment about how we treated the Mihailovich story. But your follow-up support letters to Senator J. Bennett Johnston, Louisiana; and to Congressman Jim McCrery, 4th District, Louisiana, Member of the Armed Services Committee was the topping on the cake. You went that extra mile to bring this to their attention. On behalf of all those working in this cause: Our special THANKS!)

Blaine A. Briggs, 725th .. None of us have any knowledge on

the whereabouts of Robert C. Donovan, our bombardier ... Although we haven't been together to recount our experiences, it is pretty amazing that out of the ten original crew members, all of whom were shot down at one time or other, and several were POW's, that still after 48 years that at least nine of us are still alive and kicking (even if ever so slightly!)

(Editor .. It seems like a stroke of luck that we have been able to pull together most of your crew within these past few months. With the location of Bill Schaidt (pilot) and Jim Scott (gunner) we have all but the elusive Donovan. The last info I have on him was that his "city of induction" was Arlington, MA. We could possibly have some members in the area that will take the challenge to search him out ... if possible.)

Thomas E. Fisher, 724th .. I'm getting all geared up to be at the California Reunion ... I hope you don't want to put on a parade, cause I can't walk more than 200 feet.

(Editor .. Fear not on the parade bit. I'm not too prone to walk a straight line anymore, either. But in your honor I'll THINK a parade with you in it ... How's about a Formal Guard Mount during Retreat? ... But all this kidding aside, Tom, you are to be commended for your consistent monthly donation to our effort. You have often referred to it as "a small contribution," but over the course of a year - it really adds up. I can almost turn the month on my calendar by when your letter arrives. ...THANKS...)

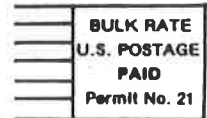
Reuben B. Clark, 724th ... I am enclosing a \$40 check as a memorial in honor of my best service buddy, Harry F. Beegle Harry decided to become an aerial photographer and was transferred to the 725th Sometime after we were discharged Harry sent me a large picture of the "Victory Flight over Bari - 1945," as shown on page 34 of your recent edition of our history. He told me he made the picture with a hand held camera while hanging out of the escape hatch with a fellow holding to each leg. Keep up the good work!

(Editor .. Your fond memories of Harry Beegle are indeed heartwarming. Harry and his lovely wife, Mary, were some of the first to become known to me at our 1st Chicago Reunion, back in 1980. Your expression of sorrow parallels ours in what we have lost.)

Charles W. McCutchen, 724th ...

-No letter - just a very generous check-

(Editor .. How can I respond? These moments of generosity by our various members, without verbal comments, are truly and deeply appreciated. Even without offering any verbiage that I can hang my computer on, these generous folks leave me little chance to note their participation, other than by this somewhat anonymous procedure of THANKING ALL for their thoughtfulness and generosity. Even if I haven't gotten back to you with a personal "Thank You," because of my current work load, please accept this as my note of appreciation.



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