



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

Issue 24

Price \$3

Spring 1994

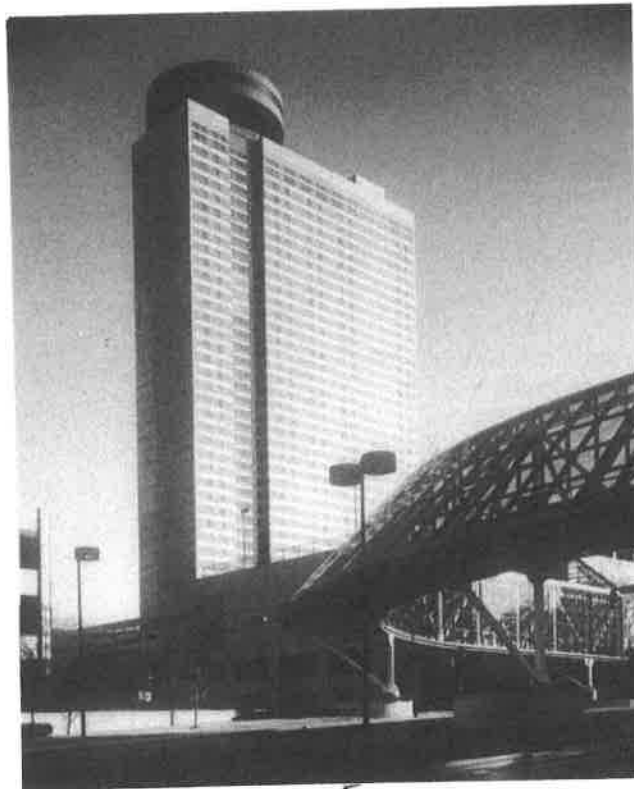
## KANSAS CITY AWAITS 451st BOMB GROUP

**DATES 15-18 September 94**

As given in the Issue 23 Ad-Lib (page 6), city, dates and the host hotel have been finalized for our "94 Hurrah!" What follows now is just a confirmation of that article.

Since a number of members like to make our reunion part of their annual vacation, we have "semi-planned" that you try and come in on the 14th, so's to get oriented to the city and what it has to offer. The Hyatt will be ready and waiting for your stay.

We have negotiated a room rate of \$69 for single/double occupancy. What they call the "rack rates" (off the street prices) for this hotel start off at \$155, so in a way we managed to keep the costs down some for this fine a facility.



**HYATT REGENCY CROWN CENTER**  
2345 McGee Street, Kansas City, MO 64108

For those of you that attended the California Reunion, you know the Hyatt Corporation maintains a great property and we won't go wrong using them.

An attraction the ladies will enjoy is the availability to some great shops in the immediate area. Without having to even brave the elements, a walkway (note photo) is provided between the Hyatt Hotel and Crown Center Shops. A nice little amenity for those that enjoy working with "plastic."

Details as to "where we'll go and what we'll do" have not been finalized as yet.

A myriad of historical and interesting places are within busing distance for us to enjoy. The Harry S. Truman Library, The Sunken Treasures of the Steamboat Arabia, Frontier Army Museum at Fort Leaven-

worth, KS, Kansas City Royals Baseball, Riverboat Gambling, Horse Racing, and numerous theaters are at our disposal. And I haven't even mentioned the famous Kansas City Barbecue places, nor the musical birthplace for many careers in the music field. Not to mention the music we all grew up with from Country to Jazz. Who can ever forget the immortal "12th Street Rag," a kind of an "in between" generations piece of music, originating from Kansas City.

Your registration packet, with hotel reservation cards and Group itinerary, will be mailed to you in time for you to make your final plans. But what I laid out will give you a general overview of what's anticipated. So, get your bicycle ready, your airline tickets purchased and all your ironing done ... Let's have at it!

### CONTENT

Greece Offers Medal To Worthy Airmen.....	2
General Eaton Remembered.....	3
"Fallen Comrades" .....	4
Our "Little Friends" 49 Fighter Squadron .....	5
Other "451st Start-Ups" .....	11
Book Reviews .....	14
Ploesti Revisited/Reviewed .....	14
Just "Plane" Puzzling .....	15
60th Service Squadron Photo Album .....	17
Chatter from the Flight Deck .....	20
Short Bursts & Hang Fires .....	21
(Occasional Insert of PUPTENT Poetry)	

**"AD-LIB"  
451st Bomb Group (H), Ltd.  
Publication**

Compiled and Published by Bob Karstensen

All rights reserved on contents by the 451st Bomb Group (H), Ltd. Reprinting, in whole or in part, without previous written permission is prohibited.

**Copyright 1994, 451st "AD-LIB"  
No membership dues are assessed  
(A not-for-profit organization)**

The publishing of the AD-LIB; the seeking of new members; and all efforts towards the preservation of our 451st heritage, is funded by donations and contributions. Checks may be made out to the **"451st Bomb Group,"** and mailed to . . . . .  
.1032 S. State Street, Marengo, IL 60152. . . .  
....Phone (815) 568-7766----FAX (815) 568-0451....

**Tax Exempt Contribution #36 307 0772**

**HELLENIC GREEK MEDAL AVAILABLE**

Exchanging of newsletters among various Bomb Groups can prove advantageous to all of participants. Sometimes a bit of information is published, through the efforts of others, that warrants inclusion in the Ad-Lib. With permission of Bill Barnes, President of the 376 Bomb Group, we are granted the privilege to pass along this information. This informative article was found in the 376th newsletter; "Liberandos Intelligencer," edited by Warren E. Grant.

It reads:

A very handsome medal and certificate can now be requested from the Air Attache Embassy of Greece in Washington, D.C. by qualified members of (using our Group numbers) 451st Bomb Group. The formal procedure of obtaining this medal and certificate is as follows.

To: Colonel George Foussekis (HAF) Air Attache Embassy of Greece 2228 Massachusetts Avenue NW Washington, D.C., 20008

Your letter of request should read:

Dear Sir,

Having been advised that the Greek government established a medal for Allied WW-II participants who were engaged in the offense/defense of the North African, Aegean and Italian zones during the years 1941 - 1945, I submit the following.

During that period I was an American airman in Italy, as noted on the copies of my discharge and service record (the sides that show which unit you flew with or were assigned to and the dates of service) and am desirous of receiving this honorary emblem from the Greek

government if it is determined that I am so qualified. Attached herewith are copies of certain U.S. military documents as proof of my participation at that time.

If the enclosed meets the Greek government's qualification, it would be considered a very great honor to receive the Greek medal and documents at this time.

Thanking you and your government for this kind deed of thoughtfulness and concern

Sincerely, (Name, Rank, Serial Number)

(Editor's Note: the words on the colorful tan, green and black certificate are printed in Greek, but the translated words say in effect; The Hellenic Democracy of Greece recognizes [name] with this award and a medal, for his involvement in the World War II battles of North Africa, the South Aegean Sea, and Italy between 1941 and 1945.)

P.S. Allow about 5 months for the processing and acknowledgment of your request and delivery of the award.



**CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION OFFERED BY GREEK GOVERNMENT**



**THE ISSUED MEDAL  
(Shown in approximate 1/2 Scale Size)**

## GENERAL EATON REMEMBERED

In response to this editors eulogy of our 1st Group Commanders passing, many letters and comments have been routed through this office expressing sadness and regret at our loss. I must admit I was not surprised at the outpouring of feelings our members felt at losing General Eaton. It seems that those that had various duty assignments with the "Colonel" have some wonderful memories.

From **Leroy Stefen, HDQ (3rd Group CO)**: "Your tribute to Bob Eaton is a rare work of art - beautifully done. He certainly did lead a full and varied life with many accomplishments. Commanding the 451st Bomb Group was the best job I had in the Air Force. Commanding the 451st Bomb Group was only one of his many achievements. Anyway, I thought you did a fine job of saying good-bye to him and speaking for the whole Group; Congratulations."

From **Howard Dattan, HDQ**: "This last issue was beautifully done. I was greatly saddened by Eaton's death - since I worked directly under him the entire time he was with the 451st. He was a real inspiration to me - certainly one of the finest persons I ever met.

We played poker in the Headquarters most every night - and it was from him that I learned the refrain, "The winners crack jokes; while the losers cry DEAL!!!"

**Ellis Eno, HDQ**: "Your comments RE: Bob Eaton were most realistic for me as I was his right-hand man and assistant (Deputy) for about six months before I went to General Lee at Wing as his chief of staff. General Eaton was a very fine military officer."

**Morris Manoogian, 724th**: "So sorry to hear about General Eaton's "Last Flight." He was a wonderful man and a great leader, a great American no less. I am sure that you, more than anyone else, with your 724th years during WW II, and the subsequent contacts you had with him in these many past reunions, will miss him terribly. Incidentally, the cover of the "Ad-Lib" was an elegant tribute to this good man, well deserved and well done."

**Kent Bowlan, 724th**: "RE the Bob Eaton legacy; As I grew a little older and maybe a little wiser, I came to appreciate his contribution to the 451st more than while serving in it. I'll miss seeing him at the next reunion as I did the last one."

**Paul Johnshoy, 724th**: "Thanks for your excellent tribute to Colonel Eaton in the Summer Ad-Lib. The whole issue made me proud to be a part of the outfit."

**Paul Harden, 725th**: "Sorry to learn of M/General Robert Eaton passing. He was a great person. You certainly did him justice in the latest Ad-Lib. I know you were much closer to him than most people and you "did good" in paying tribute to a great person."

**Dale Mayswinkle, 724th**: "Just received the Ad-Lib with your beautiful and very caring tribute to General

Eaton. It is one of the most touching pieces of writing I have ever seen. It is a well deserved tribute to a very fine man. I joined the 451st at Wendover, so I had a long association with him and flew with him as CP many times. I will never forget him."

**George Tudor, 725th**: Colonel Eaton was a real leader in every sense of the word. Big shoes to fill by those who led the 451st after him. I'm glad he made it to Omaha in 1990. He was sure going strong then. When I go, I would like to do it the way he did; out playing golf - having a great time with friends - then drop .... "

Along with these, and other glowing tributes, came Memorial Checks that ranged from \$25 to \$500. Each check was accompanied by words of respect for our "Colonel." To offer all those comments would take more time than I can spend, regardless on how deep my own feelings may run.

But as I promised, for each donation of \$25 or more I would list the benefactor's name; unless otherwise requested. They list as follows:

Carl B. Adams, Clyde R. Allison, Joseph F. Arsenault, John M. Bodenchuk, Kent G. Bowlan, John A. Burton, Ward J. Collins, Howard W. Cosher, James J. Coyle, Howard S. Dattan, John A. Dunsmoor, Sallie Eaton Elliott, Leno J. Fontana, William J. Gallagher, Jack M. Garrison, Raymond J. Gilbert, Willard C. Gill, John M. Hanford, Bennie C. Hayman, William N. Heath, Robert L. Henbest, Joseph L. Henry, Lewis W. Henslee, Sedgefield D. Hill, Charles E. Hoffman, John D. Hulser, William C. Hysell, Robert C. Kacena, Robert M. Karstensen, Frank J. Lather, James P. Locke, James R. Martin, Peter A. Massare, Dale W. Miller, Ralph B. Miller, Max B. Noggle, Doran M. Podoloff, Wesley W. Rink, Donald P. Roemer, Victor M. Rose, Louis S. Sagi, John Q. Schneider, Gordon M. Snyder, Glen A. Swearingen, Charles G. Trumper, Theodore W. Wengert, David W. Wike, Charles V. Williams, E.D. Witherspoon, Joseph A. Wood, Robert R. Yeaton.



OUR TWO GREATEST SOLDIERS

M/General Nathan F. Twining / Colonel Robert E.L. Eaton

## OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

Alderson, William P., 725th - 5 November 1993  
 Bennett, Bertram B., 60th - 10 December 1993  
 Bilowick, Nicholas M., 726th - 14 September 1993  
 Clapp, Harvey S., 726th - 22 November 1993  
 Faloon, George B., 726th - 13 October 1992  
 Fisher, Thomas E., 724th - 20 August 1993  
 Henry, Joseph L., 725th - 27 December 1993  
 Hewitt, Larry T., 725th - 1992  
 Hinton, Quarles P., 724th - 29 July 1993  
 Hunter, William M., 726th - April 1993  
 Johnson, Evert M., 724th - 20 July 1993  
 Kalik, Anthony, 724th - 19 January 1994  
 Lamb, Charles H., 726th - UNKNOWN  
 Morton, Carl P., 727th - 20 February 1994  
 O'Malley, James F., 727th - 27 February 1992  
 Poston, Bob E., 725th - 24 April 1993  
 Richendollar, Kenneth L., 727th - 15 March 1992  
 Stout, Laverne C., 726th - 5 June 1993  
 Westerburg, Harmon S., 725th - 15 April 1993  
 Wooten, W. David, 60th - 17 August 1993  
 Worrell, Joseph C., 727th - 24 May 1993  
 Wunderlich, Donald G., 727th - 4 October 1993

To these great guys I leave these words of parting as written by Bill Macey for his dad, Dewitt "Bob" Macey, whereupon Bob's death were included in the Memorial Service. I find comfort in them, especially since one of my crew mates, Andy Kalik (listed above) is now and forever with his Greatest of Pilots.

This ode is without title. I find it needs none. It bespeaks the feelings of son to father; comrade to comrade; friend to friend.

*As of one before me And before them, I lived, I remain, Remember when.*

*I am the frost On the window sill, I am the soil That needs the till.*

*I am the fire That keeps you warm, I am the blight, Please be warned.*

*Once a stranger, Now a friend. I am the door That let him in.*

*I am the flake Of fresh fallen snow. That's me Don't you know.*

*I am the forest, The woods, the game, The sunlight, the shade, We're all the same.*

*From seed to flower, to seed, Don't say good-bye. I remain, I did not die.*

Special monetary considerations to the Memory of:  
 Wilmer Brashear, 724th - by Patricia Brashear  
 Joseph L. Henry, 725th - by Doris Henry  
 William Dwyer, HDQ - by Nebraska Flying Boxcars  
 Quarles P. Hinton, 724th - by Paul Johnshoy  
 Evert M. Johnson, 724th - by Margaret Johnson  
 Leonard Meyer/John Russo, 725th - by Ralph McBeth  
 Donald Milligan, 724th - by Phyllis Milligan  
 Stan Leiter, 725th - by Jack Perry  
 Stan Leiter, 725th - by Charles Trumper  
 Laurens A. Woolhouse, 724th - by Charles Woolhouse

### WHEN DUTY CALLED \*

*We've laid aside our peaceful tasks,  
 We've packed our kits and gone to war.  
 We loved those things we left behind,  
 But loved our country even more.*

*And though we lie in some strange land,  
 Forgotten perhaps, by all but God,  
 We rest in peace because we know  
 Transgressors' heels shall never grind  
 Our country's flag into the dust.*

*We know because we made it so,  
 The lad whose hands have milked the cow,  
 Whose hands have guided straight the plow;  
 He did not shirk his country's call,  
 But gladly gave his life, his all.*

*We loved the murmur of the brook  
 That flows between the mountain slopes;  
 The golden moon that softly smiled  
 As if he shared our secret hopes.*

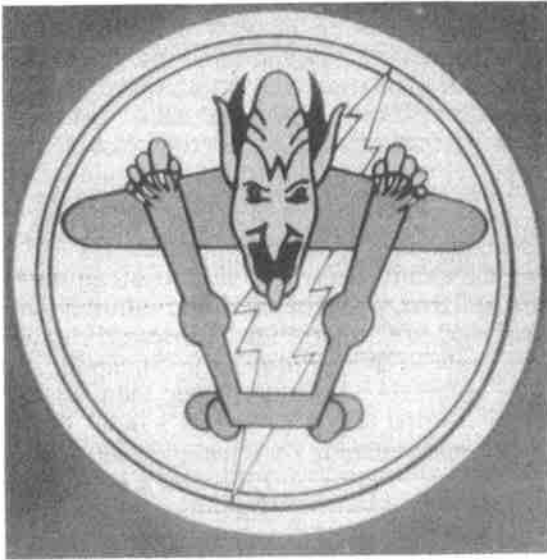
*We loved the whisper of the rain  
 Upon the roof tops overhead;  
 The gleam of sun upon the snow.*

*We sacrificed these things we loved  
 To keep our flag forever free.  
 We know, because we made it so.*

*The lad whose hands made tools of steel,  
 Whose hands have held the big truck's wheel;  
 He did not shirk his country's call,  
 But gladly gave his life, his all.*

\* Taken from PUPPENT POETS (Italy 1945) Written by an unknown aerial gunner, KIA.

## "LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON



Wartime Insigne of the 49th Fighter Squadron

As part of the duties of this office I've been privileged to correspond with other Groups/Squadrons in the capacity of liaison and fellow historian. Part of that fraternity includes some of the Fighter Groups that gave us protection to, over, and returning from the various targets we shared.

In a recent exchange of correspondence, the 49th Fighter Squadron [P-38's], Sheril D. Huff, Secretary, sent me a portion of their official combat history that dovetailed with what we did together during the course of the air war. I found some of the entries fascinating and thought that you would appreciate knowing what they experienced in conjunction with our efforts.

The text that I received covered the 49th Fighter Squadrons' history from November of 1943, flying out of Tunisia, North Africa; to early June when they were stationed at Triolo, Italy. They were part of the 14th Fighter Group; the other Squadrons being the 37th, 48th, and 50th.

It was compiled from Documentary Sources and War Diaries by Squadron Intelligence Officer, Royal C. Gilkey.

(Editor ... prior to reading the day by day accounts of the 49th FS, it should be noted that some of the missions may not coincide with the targets from what your individual diary/journal shows. Although the Fighter a/c may not indicate that they were protecting the 47th or 49th Wing, per se, they were in the same vicinity, and if called upon, they would have come to our aid.)

The following covers some of our memorable combined missions;

On 23 February 1944, Squadron P-38s flew escort for B-24s during a return-flight from bombing an airplane factory at Steyr, Austria. While on this withdrawal escort-mission, our fighter pilots sighted eight enemy aircraft near Skt. Goerg (?), Austria. They stayed over

the formation without initiating any attack on it. This same area was revisited the next day, for on February 24th, the Lightnings flew escort for B-17s on a mission to bomb an aircraft plant at Steyr, Austria, southeast of Linz. (editor, although we did not fly the mission of the 24th, neither did the 49th FG fly escort for us on the infamous Regensburg, Germany mission of 25th February.)\,.....

On March 15th, operational flying commenced anew. Squadron P-38s flew escort for B-24 heavies from the 304th Wing going to a "choke point" called Cassino along the route to Italy's capital, Rome. Enemy troops had dug in there, occupying a hallowed abbey on the top of a mountain overlooking the town below. Monte Cassino Abbey (Abbaziamontecassino) dominated the scene and so became the target for attack by Allied bombers. 49th Squadron fighters reached Cassino first and flew back to escort the initial wave of bombers to the troublesome target. In fact, they accompanied every wave until all bomber planes had left the area. The second and third wave seemed to have dropped their bombs between the towns of Presezano (Presezano) and Venafrò, which were on the Allied side of the bomb line. At least, this was reported by one of the Lightnings' flight leaders after thoroughly checking the position on his map of the area. Such mistakes are inevitable in war, and every precaution should be taken to minimize them. No enemy plane appeared during the raid, but there were a few bursts of flak. All the P-38s returned to base safely .....

No mission was mounted on March 16th, but the job of escorting B-17s and B-24s to the Austrian town of Fishamend occupied Squadron P-38s the next day (March 17th). Bombs were dropped there, but the sky was too overcast to report any results. One pilot had to bail out near Kadino Selo in Yugoslavia where Partisan



P-38 Lockheed Lightning - Just Tagging Along

activity was likely, increasing his chances for eventual return. Other pilots got back all right, without being interfered with by either flak or enemy aircraft .....

The next day (**March 28th**), operational flying resumed. A dozen Squadron "Lightnings" left on a mission to escort "American Liberators" (B-24s) to Maestre's marshalling yards near Venice along the northern Adriatic coast. Excellent strikes were observed on target, with bombs falling in an effective pattern. Not much in the way of flak was run into during the mission, and no enemy planes appeared. All got back, with airplanes intact.

Marshalling yards at Bolzano, Italy were the target on **March 29th**. That entailed flying over Alpine mountains. It was the job of ten Squadron P-38s to escort 47th Wing B-24s bringing up the rear of the main formation of bombers. The bombing of the initial waves in the attack had left the target area somewhat obscure, but large fires were to be observed below. Evidently, the heavies had done a good job in plastering the target.

The last operational mission during **March 1944** took place on the **30th** of the month. Then a dozen of the Squadron's "Lightnings" flew escort for the 304th Wing "Liberators" going to the capital of Bulgaria, Sofia (located in mountainous terrain somewhat east of that country's border with Yugoslavia). Some flak indicated by white puffs in the sky could be seen as the bombers were leaving their target. That was a prelude to attack by enemy planes. The P-38s fended off the fighter attack, damaging four FW 190s (conservatively estimated) in the process. During the melee, a couple of the Focke-Wulf's attempted a head-on pass towards a like number of "Lightnings," but to no avail. Our fighters stayed with the bombers until they were well out over the Adriatic Sea. Fortunately, the enemy fighters did not pursue their quarry. The target flak was left far behind; so was some encountered over Tirana, the capital of Albania. Fortunately, Tirana's flak while heavy in caliber was inaccurate and only of moderate intensity.

The first operational mission in **April 44** occurred on the **2nd** day of the month, following a day of "heavy" weather. Seven of the Squadron's P-38s were briefed to escort heavy bombers (B-24s & B-17s from the 5th, 47th, & 304th Wings) flying to Steyr in Austria. The fighters had the job of providing "general cover" for the heavies. This was needed because of confrontation by as many as 25-30 enemy planes, including Me 109, FW 190s, and a lone Me 110. Aerial combat swirled in the sky at 23,000 feet some 40-50 miles north of Aus-

trian city of Klagenfurt (located almost due south of Steyr). The Luftwaffe lost two Me 109s and a couple of others damaged by the guns of the "Fork-tailed Devils" (Gabelschwanzteufel), a descriptive German term for P-38s. The Squadron's "Lightnings" remained with the bombers until their fuel ran low due to a high rate of consumption during combat. Then all of them flew home, happy that they had suffered no loss. Orders came down decreeing that Aviation Cadets would be returned to duty with the Squadron. That meant disappointment for some. Their aspirations to become fliers were frustrated -- at least, for the time being.

On **April 3rd**, pilots of the 49th Fighter Squadron were assigned to fly escort for "Liberator" bombers (B-24s) withdrawing from a mission to Budapest, Hungary. The P-38 escort found plenty to keep them busy. Not far from the Budapest target, a "hornet's nest" of enemy planes was encountered. They included Me 109s, FW 190s, and a HE (Heinkel) III. Their attacks were head-on and aggressive. A trio of enemy planes sustained damage from P-38 gunnery. They had launched their attack while the bombers were "walking" their bombs through the target area in pre-determined bomb-runs. They failed to disrupt the bombing. Well-placed hits in the target area were observed.



Airman's View of P-38s Flying Protective Cover

On **April 4th**, Squadron P-38s undertook a long mission as far east as Romania's capital, Bucharest. Providing "general escort" for heavy bombers from the 5th, 47th, & 304th Wings going over targets in Bucharest was more or less uneventful. The "Lightnings" effected rendezvous with the heavies at Pec, just north of Albania in Yugoslavia and wove to and fro over the bomber formation almost as far as Caracal in the direction of the Romanian capital. Then they turned back, having seen no enemy fighters nor drawn flak. The return flight also proved to be uneventful, all pilots landing safely. Once back at base, the fighter pilots met with Gen. Struthers, the new 306th Wing Commander. Presented by Col. Taylor, he spoke a few words to the P-38 pilots, stressing the importance of cultivating a meaningful relationship with the bombers being escorted.

Romania was again a destination for the Squadron's pilots the next day. They had the job of escorting bombers from the 5th, 47th and 304th Bomb Wings briefed to attack Ploesti's marshalling yards. All our pilots returned safely from that usually risky mission. **April 5th** must have been a lucky day.

Two days later, 47th Wing "Liberators" (B-24s) were escorted to Maestre near Venice (Venezia) by

almost a dozen of the Squadron's "Lightnings." The bombers' target was the marshalling yards there. While over the target area, our fighters tangled with 20-25 enemy aircraft, which were aggressive whenever they outnumbered the P-38s. In the main, a running dogfight resulted. Gratifying results came out of this aerial melee. Squadron P-38s took a heavy toll of the enemy, destroying as many as six Me 109s, and damaging two more.

This was accomplished at the cost of one P-38 and its pilot, 2nd Lt. Wesley B. Crow, Jr., Monahan, TX. The last word from him indicated he was heading home-ward. When he failed to arrive, it was decided to list him as M.I.A.

Not until April 12th did operational flying resume. Then, 22 P-38s flew escort for both 5th Wing B-17s and 47th Wing B-24s flying over the Alps to attack Weiner Neustadt, a junction city south of Vienna in Austria. Two dozen to 30 enemy planes were spotted flying southeast of the city. Making a 90-degree turn toward them, the Squadron dispersed the enemy formation, paving the way for individual dogfights. The destruction of one enemy Me 109 by Captain Sandifer highlighted the fray. In the wake of this interruption, the P-38s continued escorting the bombers to a departure-point over Yugoslavia. They then flew back to base without encountering any more enemy aircraft.

On April 15th Squadron P-38s took off on a long mission to Bucharest. Their job was to provide escort for 47th Wing bombers out to attack marshalling yards in the Romanian capital. Once across the Danube, the formation (which was flying at an altitude of 23-26,000 feet) ran into 5/10 cloud cover. This overcast increased to 9/10 by the time of arrival at the target. Then, to complicate things, a half-dozen or so Me 109s put in an appearance. Contact with them shielded the bombers from their attack, which was broken up before the enemy could reach the quarry. The thick overcast prevented observing whether the bombs hit the target or an alternate objective. Squadron pilots continued to shepherd their "Big Brothers" out of the target area and did not leave them for a return home until they were about 20 miles south of Nis in Yugoslavia. All our P-38s returned with the exception of one that had separated from the rest. He radioed that he had latched onto another formation. When he did not show up later, his status changed to MIA. (Now KIA is entered after the name of Col. Oliver E. Ford, Jr., in the Squadron records.)

Combat flying resumed on April 20th. Then, 16 "Lightnings" flew escort for the 304th Wing B-24s assigned to bomb the marshalling yards at Monfalcone in northern Italy. Rendezvous was effected off the coast of Yugoslavia's Istrian peninsular near Pula. Just prior to the Liberators' bomb run at their target north of Trieste, between 15 and 20 enemy planes got in the way. Most were Me 109s, the rest being FW 190s. At first, they appeared not to have seen the P-38s, which lined up for an attack from the rear. At that point, Enemy belly tanks were dropped but not soon enough to save "tail-end Charlie," an Me 109 that was blown from the sky. The enemy took quite a beating in the aerial

engagement, losing two Me 109s (plus one damaged) & an FW 190. Credit 1 Me 109 destroyed to Captain Jackson, 1 to Lieutenant Jones, & the FW 190 "kill" to Lieutenant Simons.

On April 21st it fell to 16 Squadron pilots to provide top cover for 304th Wing B-24 bombers sent to hit targets in Romania's capital, Bucharest. Enemy Aircraft were visible throughout the mission. A half dozen of them were observed trying to shoot down a solitary B-24. Overcast skies prevented observing bombing results. Not until the bombers reached Yugoslavia's capital, Belgrade, did the "Lightnings" break formation to engage in aerial combat.

Two days later (4/23/44), 19 "Lightnings" flew close escort for high-wing Liberators from the 47th Bomb Group on a mission to Schwechat just southeast of Austria's capital, Vienna. Rendezvous was effected with the bombers over the western end of Lake Balaton in Hungary at 20,000 feet. The bombers, flying in good formation, got there on time, only to discover that the fighters had arrived 10 minutes early. The weather was CAVU (standing for "Ceiling And Visibility Unlimited") over the target, the attack being unmolested by any enemy fighters. Return to base was uneventful, the homecoming P-38s sweeping over Triolo Sanding Ground in an impressive formation. Its leader was 1st Lt. Wilson H. Oldhouser (from York Pennsylvania), who in his manner celebrated the completion of his 50th mission. That was a landmark in his career as a fighter pilot.

The next day (4/24/44), 18 Squadron "Lightning" flew escort for bombers out to attack the marshalling yards at Bucharest in Southeast Romania. Rendezvous was at the time planned during briefing. No enemy fighters appeared. Bomb bursts covered the target. Pilots also saw Ploesti under attack. They were able to observe hits on the vast complex of oil refineries and related installations. During the entire mission, no enemy aircraft were spotted; but anti-aircraft fire was intense. Because the flak was both accurate and heavy, the P-38s were all able to get back to base safely.

The next day (4/25/44), the "Lightnings" were aloft again, flying on an escort mission, where marshalling yards at Padua were the target. Heavy overcast skies over northern Italy west of Venice and extending past Padua toward Verona blocked a successful mission, converting it into an abortive one. There was nothing for the P-38 to do but return to base. The pilots reported sighting a single unidentified plane flying below the formation but did not go after it.

Escorting the 304th Wing B-24 bombers to France's historic naval base of Toulon located east of Marseille on the Mediterranean coast was the next assignment for the Squadron's P-38s. That long overwater flight was undertaken April 29th. It was a successful mission; marine installations and sub pens taking a pounding from a large tonnage of bombs. During the course of the mission, there was some contact with Me 109s, but no combat claims were made regarding them.

On May 5th, an escort mission to Ploesti was laun-

ched. The bombers reached the target and dropped bombs. Results were reported to be "very good" in the face of a lot of flak. The next day's mission went to Campina, Romania. Bombing described as "excellent" resulted. Squadron pilots saw 25 enemy planes but made no claims.

May 7th turned out to be a banner day for Squadron pilots in terms of victories achieved in aerial combat on an escort mission to protect bombers flying to attack industrial targets and the marshalling yards in Bucharest, Romania. While over the target, the P-38 found a dozen enemy aircraft trying to break up the bombers' formation. The Squadron's "Lightnings" intercepted them before any damage was done. They destroyed four, while damaging a couple. Pilots saw bands of yellow circling the enemy fuselages behind the cockpits, along with "crosses" too small to discern except when in close. Radio communications was interfered with by chatter believed to be in German. Success was achieved in keeping enemy pilots from their intended victims; the bombers. Accurate flak varying from moderate to heavy was encountered. It was CAVU in the target area. In the aerial fighting, Squadron pilots reported many victories, including a couple of FW 190s & like number of Fiat G-50s destroyed. Never before had the squadron destroyed any G-50s. That was a first! Damaged were an Me 109 & an FW 190. Victory surely smiled on the Squadron's pilots .....

Another memorable day for the Squadron was to occur three days later. On May 10th Squadron P-38s flew an escort mission into Austria, providing cover for the bombers briefed to attack factories at Wiener Neustadt, south of Vienna. On the approaches to the target the "Lightnings" spotted a single formation of some 30 Me 109s. No contact was made with them. In leaving the target area, our pilots found bombers under enemy attack and in need of help. That was to be provided by the P-38s, which succeeded in driving off the adversary. It took aerial fighting to do so. Three enemy planes were shot down and twice as many damaged. A couple of Me 109s met destruction, along with a single MA 202. The six damaged enemy planes included 5 Me 109s and an FW 190. Squadron pilots suffered no losses .....

May 14th turned out to be full of excitement. On a 14th Fighter Group mission, the 49th Squadron's P-38s were assigned to fly top cover for "Lightnings" flown by the 48th and 37th Squadrons as they launched a strafing attack against airfields in northern Italy around Villaorba. Lt. Robert K. Seidman (Pittsburgh, PA), who was on his 50th mission, led the "49'ers." He sighted JU 88s in a line and proceeded to destroy five of them, but was hit in the process, causing him to crashland with plane afire in the vicinity of the target. His status as an Ace was assured, but he had to be reported as MIA



Pilots of the 49th Fighter Squadron - Early 1942

(Missing In Action). Other pilots got into the act. Lt. Philip M. Goldstein (Norristown, PA) finished off four JU 88s as well as two gun emplacements. During the attack, one JU 87 met probable destruction from Lt. Seidman's guns; and a JU 53 was fully destroyed by bullets from somebody's plane of planes. Lt. Louis Benne (Somerset, PA) shot up eight trucks, while Lt. Lawrence A. O'Toole (Akron, OH) blew apart a steam-shovel. Additional enemy aircraft were damaged, but there was no evidence as to which pilot or pilots did the damaging. Thus did the Squadron's P-38s demonstrate their effectiveness as strafers ..... [Editor; On this mission the 451st bombers were participating in the bombing of the marshalling yards at Padua, Italy. To many this mission was almost a landmark in flak intensity, as per German capability at that time in the war. Many tales have been told relating to this difficult mission.] .....

May 18th was a gala day for Capt. Norman W. Jackson (Carter, MT) and Lt. Herbert C. Schoener (Los Angeles, CA), both of whom were at last heading back to the States. They'd traveled a rough road to earn the prize of a return home after completing 50 missions. No one could begrudge them that. The very same day, other pilots were posted on a long mission to Ploesti, north of the Romanian capital of Bucharest. No enemy planes were encountered, but flak was; & Lt. Wingert was lost, but no one knew why.

On May 19th the Squadron's P-38s flew escort for B-24s going to the key city of Genoa along the Ligurian coast in north Italy. Over the target, they provided top cover for the "heavies" hitting Genoa's docking facilities with bombs. Destruction was wreaked on the harbor. No enemy aircraft were encountered during the entire mission. Flak, however, was --both over the target and the Island of Elba. The "Lightnings" stayed with the bombers all the way back to Naples, where they left them for the return to base. Sortie credit was given to participating pilots, except for early returns .....

May 22nd found the Squadron's P-38s on mission again. This time they escorted 55th Bomb Wing "Liberators" assigned to support ground troops by attacking enemy lines of communication in the Valmontone area not far from Allied beachheads at Anzio and Nettuno. In fact, on leaving the target, the fighters drew flak from our own toeholds along the beach, forcing them to swerve to the south only to encounter more flak over Littorio. The B-24s were five minutes late for rendezvous over Parmarola Island and consequently just as late in reaching the target. After providing protection, the P-38s left the "heavies" near Naples and headed home. Sortie credits went to participating pilots, except for a pair of early returns. Box-type flak had been



encountered on the mission, but there were no enemy aircraft in the sky.

Again, on the 23rd of May, the Squadron's P-38s resumed escorting bombers, in a morning mission to Valmontone area. Enemy aircraft were 4 by their absence, and the "Lightnings" all got back safely. They had completed their job, having met the bombers over Ponziana Island, covered them over the target area, and returned with them to the Isle of Capri, before leaving for home where all 16 arrived at the approach of the noon hour. Mission #2 was a strafing one, with Ferrara airdrome the objective. Ferrara lay to the north, being in the Po Valley northeast of Bologna. This second mission on May 23rd involved plenty of action - a characteristic of strafing assignments. The "Lightnings" flew along Italy's Adriatic coast to Lake Comacchio, then swung inland to the northwest to reach Ferrara, whose airdrome was the target to be strafed. 49th Squadron pilots gave the southeast corner of the dispersal area a good working over, destroying four Me 109s, damaging three others, and probably destroying an Me 110. Rolling stock was also hit on the way out, resulting in destruction for one locomotive and damage to another. Freight cars were shot-up, as well as gun positions and a searchlight. Enemy air resistance was encountered. 2nd Lt Jack Lenos, Jr. (Enid, OK) got an opportunity to use skills recently honed at gunnery school in Cairo, Egypt when he spotted an Me 109 flying at 500 feet over the field in what appeared to be a traffic pattern. Climbing from deck-level, Lenox made a head-on pass at the enemy plane, opening fire at a range of 400 yards. His first bullets struck the adversary, causing the targeted aircraft to catch on fire and climb steeply. Lenox closed to within 50 yards, all the time pumping bullets into the stricken craft (whose pilot may have been able to bail out successfully having gained sufficient altitude. Believing the plane doomed, its attacker resumed strafing, descending to deck-level to go after an enemy gun-position .....

Wiener Neustadt in Austria was a long-distance mission for Squadron pilots to fly on May 24th. They rose early to so do. Their job was to provide escort for two Bomb Wings, the 47th & 49th, briefed to bomb Wiener Neustadt's airdrome. (Editor: this was the earliest mention of our participation as the 49th Bomb Wing) The idea was to protect the bombers from enemy fighters during penetration, time over the target, and withdrawal. An aerial melee occurred in the skies over the target because a determined enemy appeared in force. The Luftwaffe put up between 20 and 30 fighters to frustrate the bombing mission. Among them were Me 109s, Me 110s, and Me 210s. 49th Squadron pilots did not hesitate to attack them before they could fracture the bombing formation. War in the air ensued for about 30 minutes. 10 enemy aircraft went down, victims of P-38 gunnery. In diving attacks, the "Lightnings" swooped down on their Luftwaffe adversaries, usually from astern. The enemy pilots may have been overeager to get at the bombers, neglecting to guard sufficiently against attacks from the rear. So they suffered heavy losses in a fight that ranged from 15-25,000 feet in altitude. The enemy may have knocked 1 bomber down, but they paid for it.

ADDENDUM: "On May 24th, on an escort mission to Wiener Neustadt A/D, Austria, we picked up the bombers approximately 100 miles from the target and proceeded to cover them on the way to the target. Just after the bombers reached the I.P., we chased 4 Me's from the bombers. During this encounter, "red" [flight] leader, 1st Lt. Wilson H. Oldhouser (York, PA) destroyed 1 Me 109.

We reformed and started towards the bombers and ran across 6 (?) Me 110's and attacked from the rear. I became separated from my squadron. Seeing a single P-38 below me who was chasing an Me 110, I went down to join him. I was at 11 to 12 thousand feet when I sighted an Me 110 about 3,000 feet below and in front of me. I put my nose down, cut my throttles back and started in. As I pushed my nose down to prevent a collision, I saw the Me 110's right wheel was hanging down and the left wheel had just started down. At the same instant, part of his right engine cowling fell loose and just missed me. I kicked full right rudder and skidded my P-38 to the tight of the e/a (enemy aircraft). I then pulled back into range with about 20-degree deflection shot. I was within 100 yards and about ready to fire when the Me 110's right engine burst into flame with heavy black smoke pouring out. I did not fire again and pulled up in a slipping chandelle to the right. The Me 110 started down in a steep corkscrew to the right out of control. I saw one man bail out. The e/a was pouring out a large intense stream of smoke. I did not follow him down as I was still very much by myself and wanted to rejoin the squadron. I tagged into two more P-38's that were alone, and we headed for home." /s/ "Thomas S. Prudy, 1st Lt., Air Corps" .....

The next day, May 26th, Squadron P-38s flew on a long mission, escorting American "Liberator" bombers to Lyon on the Rhone River, which empties into the Mediterranean Sea more than 150 miles to the south near the big French seaport of Marseille. The pilots' route took them over the Ponziana Islands, the island of Corsica, France's southern coast, and thence inland to Lyon. The marshalling yards there, were the target. The 55th Wing B-24s were to unload their bombs on it. The P-38s escorting them saw that they did an excellent job, constituting a shield of protection from any marauding enemy aircraft. The Luftwaffe must have thought the better of it and decided to offer no aerial resistance. Radio interference, however, was marked, preventing fighter-bomber communication. After the bombing was over, the P-38s went back to Revelletta Point before proceeding to a staging area at Serraglio airdrome, from which they flew home. In a sense, it was a lucky mission because neither enemy resistance in the air, nor flak from the ground was present. So there were no victories to report. The significant thing about the raid lay in the distance of 1,380 miles. Over Lyon, the P-38s were actually nearer London than their home base at Triolo Landing Ground near the spur of Italy's boot. Only one mishap marred the Squadron's mission, and that was the loss of a P-38 on take-off from Serraglio airdrome. Its pilot, 2nd Lt. Edgar G. Hemmerlein (Huntingburg, IN), was badly burned in the crash. The pilots got their picture taken upon their return to base. That would make

for good public relations, making mention of a new PR man for the Squadron quite appropriate. He was Corporal Lowell W. Near, who had had considerable newspaper experience.

On May 27th, there was another long mission to France, targeting the marshalling yards at Nimes, not far from the Mediterranean coast. A half dozen single-engine enemy aircraft were sighted to the south of the target but no contact was made with them. The squadron leading the Group chased them away. A lot of flak was encountered over an airdrome at nearby Avignon on the Rhone River. One "Flying Fortress" (B-17) was seen to explode not far from Avignon. There was a good deal of enemy interference with radio communications .....

On the next to the last day in May 1944 (5/30/44), 12 of the Squadrons "Lightnings" flew a long escort mission, covering approximately 1,100 miles. They were to protect heavy bombers, including "Flying Fortresses" and "American Liberators" going to bomb marshalling yards and an airdrome at Wels (located southwest of Linz) Austria. While no enemy aircraft were encountered over the target, flak was thrown up at them. In fact, flak drew notice over Graz, Klagenfurt, and Steyr, Austria. The target was hit by bombs from the heavies, leaving oil fires and smoke aplenty. When homeward bound, the Squadron's pilots did sight a couple of unidentified aircraft, but nothing came of this. Weather posed no problem. All the "Lightnings" returned to base safely.

The month's last day, May 31st, involved another long trip, this time to Ploesti in Romania, the target of B-24 and B-17 Bomb Wings. They required fighter escort on withdrawal. The Squadron's P-38s provided it. Although calls for help were heard from B-24s near the Danube River, the fighters could find no enemy aircraft. Bombers were escorted back over Yugoslavia to the Adriatic coast, then the "Lightnings" left them to return home. Two P-38s had returned early, crossing the coast of Yugoslavia in the vicinity of Dubrovnik. Throughout the mission, the weather was clear. Peaks of the mountain range north of Ploesti were visible but fringed with scattered cumulus clouds. The bombing must have been effective, to judge from thick black smoke seen rising above targeted Ploesti. For the fighters, it was a mission without losses. An overheard report that a bomber had blown up while flying over Yugoslavia indicated that the bombers were not so fortunate.

The next combat mission was flown on June 2nd. Then, B-24s belonging to the 47th Bomb wing were escorted to Simeria in Romania. Simeria's marshalling yard, along the Mures river was the target. Bomb bursts along the railroad south of the city were observed .....

Another Italy mission took place on June 5th. Then



Ground Personnel - Early 1942

Squadron P-38s flew escort for B-24s of the 49th Wing in bombing attacks on Bologna, Ferrara, and Modena, three cities forming a triangle in the wide Po River valley. Escorting pilots described the bombing as excellent, despite considerable anti-aircraft fire. No enemy aircraft appeared to jeopardize success in bombing the marshalling yards at Bologna and targets in the other two cities. Many fires

were set by the attacks. Squadron fliers commented on the lack of traffic on roads in the targeted areas, evidently, people chose to stay home rather than risk being caught out on the highways during an aerial strike. One of the flight leaders, 2nd Lt. Louis Benne (Somerset, PA), reached a significant milestone in his flying career by completing his 50th combat mission.

On historic June 6th, great event were to take place in Europe. That was the day of General Dwight David Eisenhower's successful cross-channel invasion of Continental Europe. .... Even as these events were taking place, Squadron pilots were manning their P-38s for a long mission to Ploesti, Romania. Their job was to protect US bombers hitting that oil center, and during withdrawal from it. A take-off at 0640 hours enabled the P-38s to cover the target for half an hour after 0900. Aerial opposition was encountered. From 4-6 silver Me 109s, with grey-colored bellies, mounted an attack on the bomber formation. The Squadron's "Lightnings" went after them and succeeded in chasing them until they took refuge in the clouds. This enabled the enemy aircraft to escape. Still, the B-17s suffered losses. A couple went down after being hit by flak in the Ploesti area; and one was shot down by a trio of enemy aircraft. A choke-point called the "Iron Bridge" over the Danube River at a place called Turnu-Severin in Romania took direct hits from attacking bombers. This was expensive to the enemy because that location was used to control river traffic. The long 1,250 mile trip kept the Squadron's pilots in the air for almost six hours. All got back to base safely, long after one early return.

(\* ) A long series of periods [.....], after some paragraphs, indicates that the following (49th FS) text, missions, or events that are not relative to our history.

With the benevolence, permission, and cooperation of Sheril Huff and Dr. Royal C. Gilkey I hope to continue this story as it is prepared by Dr. Gilkey from official sources in the Governmental Archives. Look for it in the next Ad-Lib.

## EVOLUTION OF OUR 451st POSTWAR ENTITY

It may have crossed your collective minds as to how our current "451st Bomb Group (H), Limited" association has become such a developing organization. It has been a puzzlement to me, too, as well as Peter Massare our VP. As the years have trickled by we have been made aware that we weren't the very first to try and organize the Bomb Group. But in our case I guess we were lucky with better timing than with the others. We attempted to organize, when we realized (by chance) that our members were reaching the age of retirement. And with the children away, at least out of the house, and we (collectively) could/were spending more time in reflecting back on our past. For some, other reasons may have entered into the desire to reunite with comrades from our wartime days. But for whatever reasons we now find ourselves in the common bond of friendship and unity.

In the light of this, and past attempts to keep the troops together, we thought it right that something be said, or written, about those guys that made some previous effort, and in a way paved the road for this effort.

There were, to the best of my knowledge, three attempts to forge an entity that was hoped would continue until the last man drew breath. All three withered on the vine because (and this is just speculation on our parts) the members were too busy getting an education and wooing their sweethearts, OR, if married, making a living and raising their families.

My only contact with one of these early attempts was with, and by way of, Royal S. Denton, former Corporal Public Relations news article writer of the 724th Bomb Squadron. Royal was a dedicated proponent of getting the word back to the hometown papers about the achievements of the men of the 724th. He use to go head to head with me across the rough hewn table drawing a story out of me to send home. Royal was a massive person, probably standing well over 6' 4" tall and tipping the scales at well over 200. He had hands as big as hams, but were delicate to the touch of the keys on his typewriter. Whereas our weapons in the air may have been chattering machine guns; his was the clicking of type on a sheet of paper. He did a good job then; and later, in his attempt to rejoin the Squadron in his early attempt at unity.

Prior to starting this article I rummaged through my files to pull out one of the letters that Royal had mailed to me and the other guys that he had addresses

for. You have to recall this was in December of 1945, and at that time that we were lucky to be employed and stamps went for the ungodly cost of 3 cents per letter. (Taking another look back at those days when we were in the service, 1st class postage was free -Airmail went for 5 cents). To keep the weight below the ascribed 1 ounce, Denton had to mimeograph the letters on onion skin paper and use lightweight envelopes. I tell you all this because I had a deuce of a time reading the faded blue mimeograph writing on that thin paper. But for the sake of offering you this piece of history, I did my best to cipher his words for your consideration.

### 724th ATTEMPT

Hello Men: 1945

Here comes the December edition at you. Not a heluva lot to relate outside of a quite newsy letter from Palmer W. Gums, so I'll probably end up dreaming a lot of malarkey up to fill space. It's up to you'se guys to write if this thing is to continue. Eventually I expect to turn this into a monthly printed sheet made up in the local print shop at which I am at present employed. How about some Doc Hageman anecdotes and philosophies? Anyway let me hear from you characters and anything you've heard from others. Old outfits are never forgotten, but still old men of outfits are hardly ever remembered. Maybe we can make our an exception.

As for myself, I'm pulling down 20 bobs per week when I take the time to go down and sign up for not working and then I put in six hours a day at the local newspaper and printing office, "learning the trade," at six bits an hour. In January I take up curriculum at the U of Oregon. That is the story from this end.

Here's some more dope on Sandy Beck's one and only letter: He bought a music shop, "Sandy's Music House," 1849 Coventry Road, Cleveland Heights in Cleveland, Ohio. He has private music teachers and recording studios, and what ritzy letterheads and even a private card!

Charlie Campbell writes: He doing nothing at present, or wasn't in November, but he too was drawing 20 dollars weekly for unemployment. Fine way for us characters to begin life anew, I sez. Chuck's still drinking the hell out of Brooklyn and is still thick with one Kay Jones, an old heartthrob. Said he saw Stan Kenton not long ago (Kenton is a West Coast bandleader for you unmusical characters) while he



Cpl Royal S. Denton - 724th Public Relations Man

was at the Cafe Rouge at Hotel Pennsylvania. I still think V. Monroe is the best in the business at present. I like Barnet, too, Chuck? His address is C.W. Campbell, 598 Sixth Street, Brooklyn, N.Y.

Rec'd a Xmas card from Douglas (Curley) Nelson today. Thanks Doug. Here is a bit of what he last wrote. Expect to enter U of Wisconsin 18th of January and intend to graduate in June and then staying around and work towards a Masters Degree. Ye ol' professor himself. At present he's making Kotex and Kleenex at the paper mill. Here's a message for you Doug. Neenah, Wisconsin paper mills are very unpopular with printing shops and news sheets around here. The paper, the printers say, have no body. Don't know much about it myself, but when you take over, put in some good body; what the hell ever that stuff is. Nelson has naturally been duck hunting and bowling, but mentions no women. His address is just plain Neenah, Wisconsin.

Palmer W. wrote and announced he became married; bought a quite large Wisconsin farm and really working and beginning to like it. Congrats, Palmer W.. His address, same as Nelson's, isn't hard at all to remember - Ringle, Wisconsin. Not even a box number. If any of you fellows wants work, Gums says he has it, with 25 milk cows - 40 head of cattle in all, and complete with machinery and tools. Gums also enclosed Doc Hageman's address in case any of you are in want of it; Emmett C. Hageman, Tahoe Vista, Lake Tahoe, California. How's about a word or two from you, Doc? Also, send any addresses you think I may not have.

Oh yeah, forgot to mention, Gums enclosed several three cent stamps to aid in the mailing expense of this missive to you 724ers.

Guess from here on out it'll have to be just plain patter as that's the limit of news from others for now. Guess you fellows have all read Mister Breger by the cartoonist Breger and Bill Mauldin. My mom came home with a book named, "It's a Long Way to Heaven" which is worth getting. It's by Abner Dean; optimistic, traditionalists, and what have you. You will not like it; besides it costs \$3.50 and is thin. But this Dean, who is from NYC, and a polished Dartmouth Grad, really is out of this here world as far as originality goes. He was recently given a big layout and build up in LIFE magazine. He dramatizes the secret thought of people, and the result is either belly laughs or fearful tragedy, depending on the eye of the beholder. One picture, entitled "Brain Storm" shows a naked figure standing on a vast drought-ridden field. Out of the forehead of this poor character comes a single drop of water from a water faucet extending from it's face. "The capacities of man against the background of his problem." Another book which is quite popular in Oregon at present is, "The Egg and I." Some woman wrote it and I don't care for it. The book, or story, takes place in Washington and is founded, or layed around, the household journals having to do with herself, the author I guess, and husband and children.

Joined the VFW not long ago. Heard from Don Daley who lives in Davenport, Iowa. He's back at his

former job (not switchboard) of selling women's shoes. He joined the American Legion which I can't see for political reasons, and besides the VFW has a bar here. I'm Officer of the Day in 2468 Post. The biggest issues brought up around here, what with all the buildings and logging industries booming in this particular locality, is the failure to obtain the G.I. 2,000 dollar loan. The veterans are really getting kissed off about same. Any loan agency, loaning money under the provisions of this bill must have security-plus, from what I hear around here. The property, or business, for which the vet intends to make the loan toward, must sell for a normal value - so they say. Now just where the hell can you find anything that can be purchased at normal value at this time. The guys around here who have wives are really raising hell. They're writing to Senators and Congressmen everyday about the large loans the U.S. is making to Russia and England and France. I'm for thinking their bitches are justified.

Everyone of us at least once, at least once I guess, moaned that we'd never complain again if we ever got home again. I meant it at the time, but chums, I've heard more gripes around the local newspaper from former G.I.'s than anyone in the whole damned army. They have four ex G.I.'s, and the whole city room staff is beginning to acquire every G.I. epithet, or something of same, ever said. One gal was heard to comment on her disposition as being plain pissed off with things and stuff, and I continually heard 'em yelping about their aching backs and dying asses. Ceerist; they know more of the vocabulary than I do, and my Mother has heard just about the whole damned thing from me during the past two months.

That's about it for now, men. Write and Merry Xmas et al.

*Editor ....* It should be noted that when we first organized the NEW 451st, Royal S. Denton was one of the first men I tried to locate. After a series of "fits and starts," with no immediate success, I phoned the VFW in Roseburg, OR and found a person that recalls Royal finishing college and moving away. Sad to say he also recalls that Royal was killed in a car crash some years later. Just how long, and hard, Royal worked on keeping the ties with the Squadron together, I don't know. For I too, was one of those that found the need to work precluded any serious letter writing. After a couple letters to me, without my response, Denton dropped me, or perhaps discontinued writing/trying altogether.

### **726th ATTEMPT**

After we were well launched as the 451st Bomb Group (H) Ltd, I began hearing from guys from the 726th that I should contact Richard (Rick) Zepf and see how much help he could give us as to enhancing our roster from the view of 726th Squadron. When I finally contacted Rick, and showed him that our effort was not a "flash in the pan," he sent us the addresses of those that he was in contact with.

Seems that Rick and Carl Epperson (both Master Sergeant Line Chiefs) had tried to maintain a listing of guys and addresses from their own Squadron, hoping in time

to enlarge their roster and perhaps have reunions in the future. But their effort came to a hesitating halt when Carl Epperson died. Remember, this was a time when each of us was engaged in raising a family and in making a living. The luxury of finding, maintaining, and supporting a roster of other "also family oriented" guys was a challenge all by itself. Rick never gave up the thought, but was willing to see just how far we could carry the ball before we hit a pitfall and vaporized by lack of interest, or diminishing ranks. So far we have been doing fairly well. Rick is one of our biggest supporters with annual contributions, seeking new members, and nuggets of Air Force information whenever he finds it.

#### AD HOC ATTEMPT

Another of our "Did you know" happenings occurred in Washington, DC, when Major Jack Bernstein (727th Squadron Adjutant) got a bunch of 451st guys together in the fall of 1948. This was rather a venerable bunch as it consisted of all officers, all except one; Alfred Kalinka (724th) - former gunner on Jim Coyle's crew. Al was brought in under the tent flaps by his crew navigator, Robert Carringer.

Those in attendance included our three Group Commanders, Bob Eaton, Jim Knapp, and Leroy Stefen. It was also augmented by our 49th Wing Commander, William "Jerry" Lee.

The letter that accompanied the included picture came from Jack Sirney (Ops O, 725th). It reads in part; I have no idea we had so many old pictures. Must be 1,000's of them. However, I did find a picture, which I have enclosed, that you will find interesting. This, I believe, is the first 451st Bomb Group get together. I won't call it a reunion. This is the fall of 1948. The room is a dining room at the Bolling Field Officers Mess. All of the individuals in the picture were stationed in Washington D.C. area at that time. You see General Eaton, General Knapp and Colonel Stefen. General Eaton at this time had the Legislative Liason Division for the Air Force. He also had Eddie Wilson and Lee Younkin working for him. Eddie is the 6th from the left standing. Lee is 3rd from the right sitting. Of course, that's a young me who



Master Sergeants Epperson and Zepf - 726th

yet to hear of them.

In our case, the timing was almost perfect, our intentions are honorable, and our members are the greatest. With our membership base of 1,600 we can pretty much put any former member in touch with someone they would know; a buddy or crewmate - whatever. We have been instrumental in putting together crews that want to get together, whether within the structure of our nationwide 451st reunions, or perhaps, on the off year strictly on their own. It's a compliment to our effort to hear about these get togethers, but it would be even more happily received to hear directly from the participants, rather than by someone that accidentally read about it in the local papers.



Bars, Leafs, Eagles, Star (& Stripes) Gather in Washington

1948



## THE BOOK SHOP

Back when the 15th Air Force Association conducted its first reunion in Riverside, CA, the flags were presented by a couple gentlemen in full military (WW II) garb. And for what its worth, they still fitted nicely! One of the flag bearers was former S/Sgt Bob Armstrong, founder of the 455th BG. Little did I know, some 13 years later, that Bob would find time, after retirement, to write a book. That he has done. Though it is not yet in publication, but soon will be.

He has requested from this office, permission to use some of our works in that book. He has also sought from Gordon Snyder, 727th, permission to use a copy of his painting, "The Markersdorf Mission." Both Gordon Snyder and myself are willing and proud to aid Bob in offering some material.

Bob's book, "**ANGEL ON OUR WING**" will be a compilation of stories that show the influence that "Belief in the Devine" can have on how we all came through the war.

Bob is trying to predetermine what the interest may be, as he wants to get a handle on just how many books he will judge to need before going to press. He hopes to be marketing it sometime this summer. The book will be going for about \$30, but for signing up at this time, Bob will autograph and mail to you the earlier copy at \$22.50 (plus \$1.48 S & H -Iowa residents add 4% sales tax) Make your check out to Robert H. "Bob" Armstrong, 2600 Littell, Des Moines, IA 50321.

The second book, "**FLIGHT TO BLACK HAMMER**," by Ted Withington, also warrants your viewing. Ted, flying out of Panatella Italy with the 465th, uses the letters and journal entries from those days of combat, to flesh out an intriguing tale of warfare in the later part of our participation. Shot down twice, he takes you back to that time when you felt the cold chill of combat, the heat of battle and wondering if you'd ever make it.

His paperback book (150 plus pages) is handled by Briddle Publishing Co., PO Box 1305 #103, Brunswick, ME 04011. It sells for \$12.50 (+S & H \$2, Maine residence add 6% sales tax per book). I classify it as a more than worthy endeavor.

Another effort by Mike Hill, entitled "**BLACK SUNDAY: PLOESTI**," has also reached the bookshelves. This one is for the aficionados of the Low Level Ploesti mission of 1 August 1943. This ambitious 250 pager goes for \$45, with unknown shipping and handling costs. Source: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 77 Lower Valley Road, Atglen, PA 19310.



S/Sgt Bob Armstrong-455th

## PLOESTI PICTURE STILL HAUNTS HISTORY

I guess the mystery of this famous picture will continue to plague us with facts, rumors, and innuendoes of who did what, when, and at what point in time did it all happen. Up to this time I have presented, in writing, what has been offered to me over the course of this investigation. I've had to sort fact from fantasizes as many guys thought that they were either in the aircraft doing the photoing (Patsy Jack); or the one being photographed nearby (Con Job). But evidence has proven that Roland Threadgill was in the photoing (from) aircraft, and Hubert Anderson was in the closeby photoed (at) aircraft. Now the question arises; where is Captain Clayton Evans throughout this mission. Cortland Read's crew remembers him as being in their aircraft. New information shows him to be with Threadgill's aircraft. I will present this new information as offered by Lt. Robert Oleen, bombardier for Threadgill's crew. After this disclosure I'm going to stand back and let each crew respectively "duke it out."

Bob writes: The date of Jan 30, 1944 is the 50th anniversary of the first mission of the 451st. I started with the 727th Sq. in Wendover in July 43, and flew on the very first mission; finished my tour on June 11, 44.



Bob Oleen, 727th Bombardier

I thought I'd add my comments to the many you have had printed over the years about the May 31, 1944 picture taken of the target area at Ploesti.

Here are the facts about the mission on that day: Capt. Evans flew as copilot and Threadgill was pilot. I think Evans was scheduled to fly with Reed (sic), but his plane wouldn't start. Another plane was the lead plane til we got to Western Yugoslavia border and it turned back. Enclosed is a copy of the DFC award which explains the flight. T'gill, Adler and Evans were also given awards. Evans may have gotten the Silver Star. Scarlata (copilot regularly) flew on the flight deck. Also a Group Photographer, whose name I believe started with "A" was in the waist and took the pictures of the target. Enclosed is a picture of me (1993) holding an original print, made from the original negative of "The

Ploesti Picture." Here are other events of the day which made it such a memorable day for me. After landing that day, I got word somehow that the lead bombardier of the other attack unit, who was flying behind our formation, had reported that I had missed the target, and that he had hit the assigned target. Photo reconnaissance P-38s took picture after the raid, and Intelligence of 451st and 727th confirmed that our attack unit had made the hits as described in the DFC award. The plane in #4 position in the flight is #445 with Kavanaugh pilot; Reitz, bombardier; Robbins, copilot. The plane in #5 position is Coulter's crew.

Following finding out about hitting the target, the photographer came to our Squadron area and gave T'gill, Adler and me individual pictures (The one I'm holding) and chatted about the mission. The photographer took many pictures on the mission, so I'm sure other "originals" exist.

It was sad to hear of Colonel Eaton's passing. If he were to choose a place to go, I'm sure he'd have said "A golf course." My wife, Edi, has fond memories of Mrs. Eaton when they, and other Group member's wives, lived at the York Hotel when "we" were at Fairmont. The young wives looked to Mrs. Eaton as their "house mother," and she did much for the morale of the ladies.

Keep up the good work, so that no one will forget.

Bob Oleen, 727th Squadron

The awarding of the Distinguished Flying Cross reads in part:

ROBERT A. OLEEN, 0-735916, First Lieutenant, 727th Bomb Sq, 451st Bomb Gp. For extraordinary achievement in aerial flight as bombardier of a B-24

type aircraft. On 31 May 1944, Lt. Oleen participated in a bombing mission against vital enemy strategic installations in Rumania. Enroute to the target the flight leader was forced to turn back because of mechanical failures. Lt Oleen, despite heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire, together with persistent attacks from large numbers of enemy fighters, immediately assumed the lead, and by exercising superb airmanship and courage and devotion to duty in the face of heavy enemy fire as evidenced throughout over thirty-two (32) successful missions against the enemy, Lt Oleen has reflected great credit upon himself and the Armed forces of the United States of America. Residence at appointment: Cold Springs New York.

Signed: R.K. Taylor, Colonel GSC, Chief of Staff,

As editor, and part time historian, I have to commend Bob Oleen for his rendition of that infamous day, 31 May 1944, but many of the facts he relates do not jibe with what is presented in historical documents that we have in file. Unless a lot of last minute changes were made on the flight line, prior to take-off, Kavanaugh and Coulter were not on that mission. (Page 7, Issue 18, Ad-Lib) Some parts of their crews may have been, but no mention of the pilot themselves. And it is verified that Cortland Read did not abort before take-off, but flew the mission as previously related.

I would have to assume that the man in question, Colonel Clayton Evans (Squadron Commander) will have to pull someone's chestnuts out of the proverbial fire. Maybe mine! But since we haven't heard from him, even after some of the earlier writings about the mission, it may be that he's going with our earlier rendition of the event. If he can clarify this conundrum, we would like to hear from him. His response will be noted in the next newsletter.

## PILOT PONDER'S PLIGHT PERTAINING TO PAIR OF PLANES

William C. "Chuck" Paddock, venerable young (back then) pilot from the 725th Bomb Squadron wants to "pick" the memories of of the 725th; Tower Operators; 60th Service Squadron; and just about anybody that can come up with answers to his questions. Chuck is attempting to catalog all his wartime experiences for his children, grand children, and who (or, whomsoever) may carry on his lineage. Chuck is a bit of a stickler for accuracy, as has been shown from previous articles in the Ad-Lib. Thus he lays out his question in a fashion that should make it clear to just what he's looking for.

Chuck begins his letter to me with a description on how his crew, at the Norfolk Reunion, sat down and just talked about their experiences in combat. There were nine members present and the conversations flowed rather swiftly. But not to be outdone, Chuck tape recorded every word. After transcribing the tapes to paper, a couple questions arose that none of the crew could answer; even after returning home to ponder. Chuck lays it out to me in this fashion: .....

We had a few open-ended issues which we tried to

resolve. One was solved. We formulated a plan to have the DFC awarded to two deserving crew members - Paul Beam and Alvia Watts. You covered the award well in Issue #21 of the Ad-Lib. But there are two events that we cannot resolve and we are wondering if you could include an insert in a future issue of Ad-Lib? Helpful responses from members will be appreciated. The comments for insert are:

### CREW OF "MY GAL" SEEKS INFORMATION REGARDING TWO INCIDENTS

#### Issue #1

On August 12, 1944 when taking off on the mission to Genoa Gun Positions, Italy, MY GAL crashed a few miles off the end of the runway as a result of the right life raft releasing, inflating and wrapping around the elevator and rudder making it impossible to fly. Luckily, all crew members bailed out safely. At that time the crew's tail gunner, Paul Beam, was hospitalized in Foggia as a result of injuries sustained over Budapest. Therefore, the crew required a replacement. The crew is trying to determine the name of that replacement? The replacement in-

identally, popped his chute removing it from his flight bag. A spare was on board for him to use. Also, the crew recalls the 60th Service Squadron, which was located to the northwest of the runway, assisted in rounding up most of the crew (except bombardier Karl E. "88" Keyes, who provided a great story about his bail-out).

If any members of the 60th were involved in the exercise, the crew would appreciate hearing from them. Further, during the reunion in Omaha, Wilbur Fowler, a member of the 725th Engineering unit, provided the most interesting details regarding the crash. Fowler reported the Service Squadron had difficulty with the hatch securing the left life raft. The latch problem was resolved, MY GAL was released and slow-timed by myself and the crew engineer "Red" Witherow on 11 August. When the cause of the crash became known (inadvertent ejection of the life raft); to the men of the Service Squadron and within the ranks of the 725th, there was great consternation. But the concern lessened when it was learned the crew was safe. Can anyone provide additional information that will expand upon the information so far known?



**Paddock's Crew Awaiting Green, or Red Flare, From Tower**  
L to R: Paddock, Perry, (seated; Keyes & Leiter), Witherow [pointing] Beam, Watts, Waggoner

## Issue #2

A second incident the crew is trying to resolve involves the crash landing of a ship on our runway. The crew was instructed to slow-time a Squadron plane. A portion of the crew came along. (the pilot learned later some of the crew came along just to cool some beer.) In any event, a gas cap leaked and a landing was made to have the cap changed. On the second take off the right tire blew sending tire parts into the engine, severing an oil line and into the bomb bay severing a hyd-

raulic and an oxygen line. Number 3 engine could not be feathered and the wheels and flaps could not be raised, creating all sorts of drag. A 180 degree turn and a landing were made. As a result the plane was messed up badly. Colonel Eaton visited the crash, was glad to hear no one was injured and that there was no fire. But he wanted the plane removed in order not to hinder aircraft returning from a mission. The crew cannot recall the date of the crash and the plane involved. Seems it should have been scrapped. In spite of the elaborate details of aircraft assigned to the 451st Bomb Group, starting on page 188 of the Group's history book, nothing can be found regarding the incident and the aircraft. Can anyone provide some form of information involving the incident?

## HELLO KID

"Hello kid, glad to see you,  
Did you make the fight for Rome?  
Did you stand on Alban hillsides  
And spot St. Peter's Dome?

"Were you tanned by scorching sunshine,  
Were you drenched by chilling rain,  
Were you hungry, sore and blistered,  
As you fought for every gain?

"Did you get your share of vino  
With each little town you took?  
Bet you swiped some chickens, too  
Say, who in hell was cook?

"Did the Pizons yell and cheer you  
As your column came in view?  
Did you praise the little Piper Cub  
That high above you flew?

"Did you ask the Man in Heaven  
To blacken out the sun,  
So that darkness would protect you  
From the searching eyes of Hun?

"When you broke out of the mountains  
And you rode down Roman streets,  
Did you get a little homesick  
By the way a Roman greets?

"Did you brush up on Italian  
With the famous 'Veni qua,'  
And learn to pass the time of day  
With 'Pizon, come sta'?

"Did your thoughts go back to Jersey  
Or wherever you might dwell?  
Did this seem just like a heaven  
After coming out of hell?

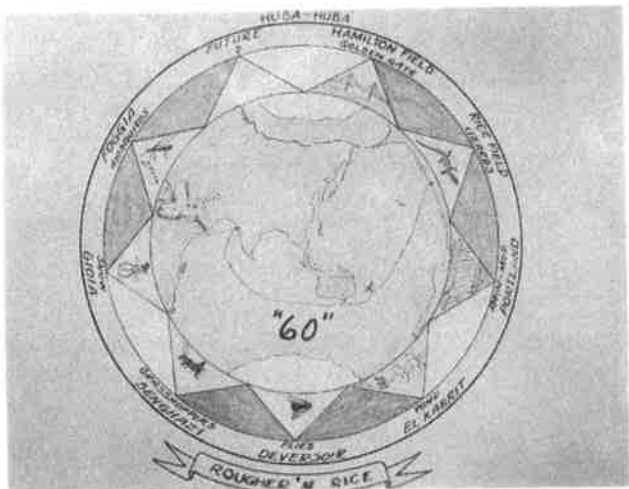
"Well, sure was nice to meet you, chum--  
Mighty glad I did--  
You gotta go, well best of luck--  
And take it easy, kid--."

*PUPTENT POET* (Italy - Circa 1945)

By: T/Sgt T.J. Dorman (Unit Unknown)



# 60th Service Squadron Photo Album



Squadron Insigne (Points Indicate Field's The 60th Served)



Nose Art Used on Side of 60th UC-78 "Pappy's Papoose"



"Wolf Wagon" In For A Little Touch Up



'Pappy's Papoose' Squadron Utility Aircraft



Taking "Nite Mare" Apart for Salvage (725th A/C)



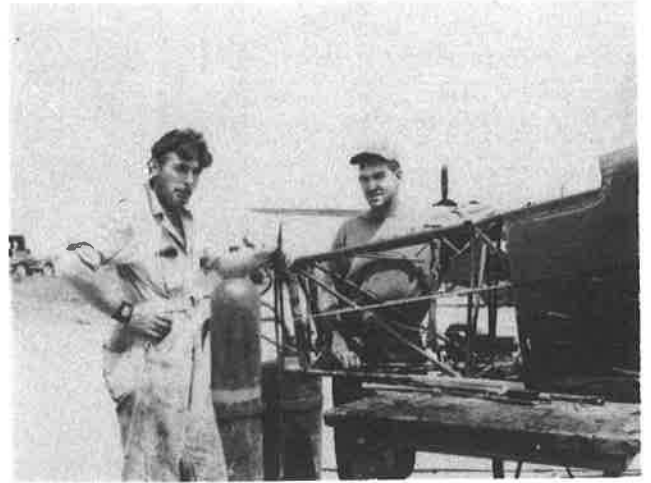
UC-78 Going Back Together (L-R; Banchio, Schneller, Johnson)

**"Fight'n 451st Bomb Group (H)" Book  
Limited Number Still Available -- \$55 (Inc S & H)**

## More ..... 60th Service Sqdn Photos



Prop Shop ... D Reddaway & J Dowell



Welders Workshop ... J Gaskill & H Faske



C-2 Wrecker: Hauling, Heaving, & Hoisting



Mobile Repair Crew ... Standing By



"Little Butch" in the Butcher's Shop

B Bennett, N Wood, R Martinez, M Curry, R Smith, G Martan, M Persing



South African B-26 Crash Landing at Castellucia (Summer "44")

## Still More ..... 60th Service Sqdn Photos



**Valuable Lakefront Property at Gioia del Colle**  
(Complete with Desert Tents & Nearby Restaurants)



**Molto Bella Signorina's**  
(Note the solid base and finely sculpted exterior ... of the building)  
Standing by is Bob Bricker, Cook of the 60th SS

### ALPHABET SCOOP

Milk, we know, is pasteurized,  
But this old Army is alphabetized.  
To be a Pfc, or a glamorous NCO,  
You have to be authorized by a damn TO,  
The CG in HQ and the BC in the CP  
Throw ARs at a guy like me.  
All is fubar, all is snafu, so--  
The EM in the AAA at the APO  
Get muched from the tough CO,  
The SOS, the AGO, WOJG and CWO.  
Whether it's AAF, QM, FA or FD,  
The RA, AUS, NG, OCS or ERC,  
The Army's not the place to be  
If you never passed the ABC.  
When you're on guard or on CQ,  
Thinking is the only thing you do;  
You remember the USO and the ARC,  
And cuss the guys in the ASTP.  
AWs are enforced by the OD,  
VD is classified now as LD;  
Even here across the seas,  
We have trouble with the MPs.  
Whether WAC, WAVE or GI,  
No matter how hard you try--  
This axiom is apparent yet,  
The Army's run on the alphabet.

**PUPTEMENT POET** -- By: Cpl Norm Rachlin

### THE LETTER SOMEBODY DIDN'T WRITE

It ain't the heat nor the blistered feet,  
Nor the meals of Spam in place of meat,  
Nor the butter like lard, nor our turn at guard,  
None of these is one-half as hard  
As the jolt we get, after all the sweat,  
And a cheery voice says, "No mail yet."

And it ain't the breeze, like a dragon's sneeze,  
That peels the hide and weakens the knees,  
Nor the dirt in your gun, nor the boiling sun--  
These are forgotten when day is done,  
But our voices fail and our faces pale  
If we draw a blank when it's time for mail.

We can stand the flies and the sand in our eyes,  
The orders, the rumors, the truths and the lies,  
The mosquitoes' swarm and the water warm,  
And the wards that reek of chloroform.  
What takes our fight and makes throats tight  
Are the letters someone didn't write.

(Italy 1945)

**PUPTEMENT POET** -- By: Cpl M. K. Lynds



## CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

### OFFICE REVIEW

Recently this office has been diligently trying to record ALL the people that were in the 451st; from it's conception in '43' until it disbanded in the fall of '45.' I do have access to many Rosters, Shipping Orders, Missing Air Crew Reports, Award Documents, etc., etc., giving me names and serial numbers of these men. So far I have over 3,300 names in the computer. These men have been listed with their Given Names, as were given at time of induction; Army Serial Numbers (ASN); Duty Assignments (when verified); Rank; and if a member of an air crew, their Original Pilot's name; plus, if shot down with a different pilot - that pilot's name as well. In the case of the first instance, I don't necessarily want the the pilot they flew with the most; but the one that they arrived overseas with. My short-coming in this effort is in placing names and ASN's of our current membership - and if on a crew - the pilot's name. I could easily add another 750 to 1,000 (of our 1,600 found) names to the list, if I were privy to this information. Hopefully you guys will bail me out by looking to see if you have some shipping orders, flight manifests, or complete crew listings that you could make copies of and send to this office.

During the course of our working this organization I have upgraded the membership "questionnaire" several times. Each upgrade I figure is the last one. But with over 2,000 printed and sent out (some not returned because of non-interest) I surprise myself whenever I run low. But each new printing offers me the opportunity to upgrade and alter the questions. Hopefully I'm asking questions that aren't too difficult to answer; but each man must have tattooed on his memory the serial number he bore for all those memorable years.

Since I can't send out these new questionnaire to each of you "OLD" (only in terms of membership longevity), perhaps I could induce you to send me your ASN, and the pilot's name. The one that "you took" overseas; when next you write. And if you should have some "orders" that contain names and ASN's of our people; make a copy to forward to me.

### RECRUITMENT EFFORT

A lot of people, and I mean a lot of people, have been receiving post cards from this office to see if they were once a member of the 451st. Some time ago we found the existence of a CDROM (computer talk) that contains over 80 million white page listing for names, addresses, and phone numbers. With this instrument I have been able to locate a goodly number of our former members. Not all "finds" are viable, since the program

itself is about 60% effective. You may say, "What's so great about 60% effectiveness, why not 100%. My response is; "60% is better than the 0% we were working with before."

Together with knowing the Enlisted Man's ASN, (this doesn't hold for Officers) and with this program, I can zero in on his "Corps Area" and contact (by post card) all those within that area, with the same name. Again, it's not without faults, but if we don't gain a member; we at least eliminate those that don't belong to us. This manner of contact has also been helpful in determining if the subject has died, as a member of the family will often follow-up with that information. I am finding it a very efficient tool in locating our lost quarry, but one that takes time in working.

### PHOTOS

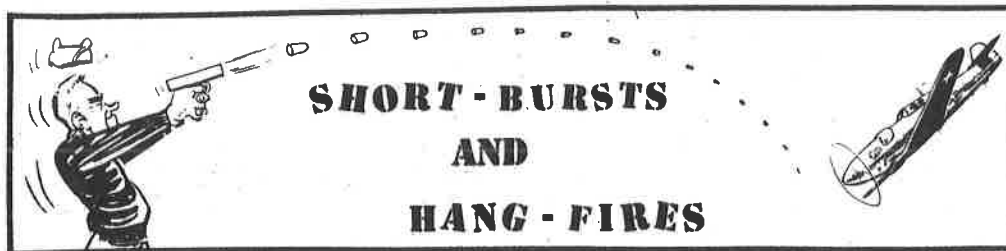
I have been remiss over the years for not placing the name of the contributor beneath the photo that is used in the newsletters. Some of that is due to growth; some to my own negligence. When we first started out I had no idea the number of guys that would send this office all the pictures that they had accumulated from their war years. Now, many of them are thinking that what's been in their attic will have better exposure if they were in the care of this headquarters. Hopefully they will - when the right story comes along.

Years ago, when we first got into computer filing, I had hoped to work out a program that would make access to some particular photograph an easy task. But the years have sped by and my time put to other things; foregoing any attempt to sort and arrange what has been contributed. Every time I seek out a photograph that is befitting to a story, I am confronted by boxes and envelopes of donated photos from various people. To rectify my dilemma, and to cast all caution to the wind, I started a "generic" type cataloging of the pictures I had. Regardless of who sent in the photo I set three large boxes in front of me and placed "People Pictures" in one, "A/C on the Ground" in another, and "A/C in Flight" in the third box. This simplifies my search, but leaves out just who may have sent them. To these folks I apologize.

My latest "shipment" of photos came from Alphaeus Bennett from the Medical Section, up at Headquarters. He discovered, or uncovered, them recently and passed them along to this office. Over the years I have received photos from Garland Jarvis, Bev Pearson, Tom Walkey, Jim Drumm, Stan Pulcer, John Burton, Bill Heath, Dale Mayswinkle, Stanley Malinowski, Don Downing, Allan Woodman, Bob Barnd, Bill Dwyer and so many others that I know I left out some important names of those that contributed to our photo section that - again - I must apologize.

For those of you that do have offerings, please put your name (and who is in the photo) on the back of each, so I can orient myself as to; "Who, What, Where, and When." All photos are important in making up the Ad-Lib.

**REMEMBER: YOUR \$\$\$ DONATIONS HELPS OUR CAUSE**



**Henry F. Durham, 726th ...** For years I have been going to write you and make a correction of a story that was in "The Fight'n 451st Bomb Group (H)" book. On page 135; "Midair: A View From The Nose Turret," written by Ed Anderman, he states that Lt. Hank Durham bailed out leaving him in the nose turret. I was not on that mission. John Lahey and I were flying as a lead Navigator-Bombardier team and were not scheduled that day. On page 135, Cy (William T.) Shelton, the skipper that day, reports the midair collision and noted that "The Bombardier and Navigator were not members of my regular crew." I joined Cy's crew at Myrtle Beach and flew my first few missions with his regular crew. But was not with them the day they had the problem.



Lt William Parker & Capt Cy Shelton

*(Editor ... I'm sure that by now you have cleared the air with the author of the story. T'is strange how some these remembrances are "locked-in" and it takes someone else to straighten it all out. For years I had assumed that my Bombardier, Lt Harvey Miller, was part of the mission when we crash landed onto Zara, Yugoslavia 12 March 1944. It took my Navigator, Lt John Dilks to set me straight. It wasn't Lt Miller after all!*

**Don T. Gleason, 724th ...** I received your package of AD-LIBS, thank you.

This is my first contact with anyone who ever spent any time sucking on an oxygen mask at twenty thousand feet, while half the world was trying to kill you. And it's been a long fifty years.

Things seem to fog up a little as the years go by, but the experiences that I had in the 451 Group will live

with me forever.

We were given a "Mickey Ship" (air to ground radar) and we were needed bad over there. Well, needless to say we were delayed. We had a gas leak and spent eleven days in Belem, Brazil changing the tank. We got very little help from the ground crews there and we did most of the work ourselves. All the time TWXs telling us to get the hell out of there.

Eleanor Roosevelt, the first lady, flew in while we were there. I can remember saying, "Even the first lady will beat us over there."

The rest of the trip over went great. However, when we got to San Pancrazio they took our plane, and we never saw it again. I don't know who got the plane, but I think it went to one of the other Squadrons.

I don't recall how we got another plane, but we did. I made my first mission on March 30th 1944. We went to Sofia, Bulgaria after the M/Ys; we leveled half the city, and only a few bombs hit any of the yards. I can recall saying to myself after seeing the photos, "Don't ever bail out near there."

I flew on April 2, 3; and on April 5th went to Ploesti, the first high altitude attack.

I have read some of the accounts of people that were there, my recollections differ somewhat. I was in the tail, and I believe that we were the second wave. I could see chutes in the area after the bomb run. Someone said in the story I read in Ad-Lib that they were in flak for about three minutes after turning on the IP. We were in flak for a hell of a lot longer, while we were looking for our target, the Romeo American Oil Refinery. We made dog legs over the target area while we held our bombs in order not to hit any property of the British Oil Companies. I have not been in a Shell station in these fifty years.

I recall parts of all my missions, a few stand out. July 16th, Weiner Neustadt, the flak was not the 88 stuff but was 105 mm and was loud as hell and some of it was in color. We really got shot up that day. I was in the tail and our reservoir got hit and the hydraulic oil ran out onto my chute that was under the tank, and when I looked at that chute covered with the red oil I said, "I hope I don't have to bail out with THAT." After that episode I found a different place for my chute.

Between the 3rd and 21st of July I flew ten missions.

Our Commander told me he would see to it that I would be on my way home within two days after I completed my missions, and he was true to his word. Within a few days I was on my way to Naples. They offered me

a ride home on a B-25 that they were sending back to the States. I declined, and came home on a ship. The San Paolo got into N.Y. September 2, 1944.

Enclosed find a copy of my missions, along with a check.

*(Editor ... By now you've received my letter of response with a special thanks for your kind acknowledgment of our effort; thanks for the thumbnail sketch of your experiences; and thanks for your most generous contribution to keep us aloft, or in nautical terms .. afloat. Recruiting guys like you is really a joy. Some of our membership is getting a "little long of tooth," and have shot their wad as to war stories. Hopefully, when they read this they will remember some of what you tell as being part of what they experienced.)*

**Nicholas M. Ruha, 724th ...** A short time ago I wrote you about receiving a phone call from the pilot of the crew that I flew with in the 724th Squadron of the 451st. We had separated at what was then Drew AAFB at Tampa Florida in September of 1945. There had been no word between us in those 47 plus years. In my letter to you I gave credit to Booth's (first name) son-in-law for locating the 451st association; and in turn putting us both together. After several calls and letters between us, I flew to Portland, Maine on January 21, where Booth and Phyllis Leavitt met me. During the five days at their home in Auburn, ME we spent considerable time reliving the tour with the 451st. Additional time was used to recap our experiences since that time, including (at least on my part) some slight exaggerations on my career and accomplishments.



**Booth Leavitt (Pilot) & Nick Ruha (Bombardier) 724th**

Booth is now anxious to hear about the next reunion and hopefully we can both make the trip.

Neither of us have heard from any of the other members of the crew. We would certainly appreciate any advice and assistance in locating them. I have the orders sending us back to the U.S., listing the hometown of each member but no other clue. The visit brought back not only memories, but a desire to locate, if pos-

sible, the other eight crew members. .... Booth is now retired - he was a dentist after leaving the service.

I would - as he would - appreciate any information you could pass along as to reunions and lost crewmates. Again, thanks for bring us together.

*(Editor ... My thanks to you for your efforts to work in a visit with Pilot Leavitt, and for your other complimentary words. As to locating others of your crew, I would appreciate any "ORDERS" that show the Serial Numbers (ASN), and if possible the hometown. (The ASN would give me a clue as to place of enlistment for the non-coms and privates). In the most recent printing of our "questionnaire," I have included that request from each new candidate for membership: their Serial Number and if they have any old shipping orders that they could make copies of that would enhance our computer listing of anyone that served in the Group.)*

**Paul Olson, 60th ...** Not one to write letters but I want you to know my appreciation for a beautiful 1992 Reunion invite you extended to the 60th. We had a wonderful time and God willing - looking forward to Kansas City in 94.

*(Editor ... I sure was glad I swung the Reunion Net out far enough out to catch some of you 60th Service Squadron guys. Ernie Cummins said that most of you guys were a hairy bunch of knuckle busters, but I didn't find you at all like that. Is Ernie always prone to fabricating the facts? I just hope he's not kidding when he tells me that all of you guys will be at our K.C. Bash in '94." He makes it sound like you young fellows want to gang up on us older dudes.)*

**Allen R. Cast, 727th ...** It was about 50 years ago I joined the Group; and a day or two after, the train crashed on the perimeter of the base at Wendover. As some will remember, most of the beer on the wrecked freight cars had to be, or was liberated, and things were moving rather slow on the base for a while.

*(Editor ... How is that you're telling me that MOST of the beer was requisitioned off the freight cars by the 451st BG on that infamous day! What's the matter with you guys, why didn't you get it all? Maybe someone else that was there will come forth and give an explanation.)*

**Victor Rose, 60th ...** Bob: I'm a stinker, I've belonged to your Group for 2 years and never gave a cent. Here's my check for \$100 to put in the treasury and towards Eaton's Memorial Fund. I was with the 60th Service Squadron as a parachute rigger. Use my name in the next newsletter if you wish. It may wake others up.

*(Editor ... It sure woke me up, Vic! I/we thank you for your generous donation. You guys from the 60th aren't half bad; you worked with us when we needed your help "over there." And now you are working towards keeping us airborne, even now.)*

**Karl Eichhorn, 726th ...** Re'd Issue 23 of "Ad-Lib" and as usual, enjoyed it very much. The article on Internees was really interesting, as was that on the 60th Serv. Sqdn.

*(Editor ... After the great journal you offered us for publication, the effort on the "Internees" was miniscule. I'd love to get more stories on that aspect of the war, but none are currently available. I did have a bit of information about the Spanish Internees. Something that filtered through this office in the form of "Did you know .. ?" stuff. Seems that the most notable person to have accepted their (Spain's) hospitality was Chuck Yeager. Just how, and at what time (and how viable the information was), I don't know. Like I say, just a fluttering bit of unsubstantiated info.)*

**Charles Yenknor, 725th** ... I want to thank you for the 451st "Information Package" sent to me last fall as a "new member" of the 451st. Lou Sagi has done a masterful job in rounding up our crew members and we are now working on locating Robert E. Smith, our pilot, through friends he mentioned in his last letter to me in 1946. Would it be appropriate to advertise in the next issue of "Ad-Lib?"

Among my Air corps souvenirs I have found twenty of my navigator mission log sheets from September 1944 to March 1945. Is this something of interest for the Group archives? Also, I think I have some bomb strike photos and formation shots taken when we had a photographer aboard. I'll get copies for you when we get back to Connecticut from Florida in April. My wife, Trudy and I prefer the warm weather Florida offers in December through April ... Looking forward to September in Kansas City ... Enclosed is a check to help defray expenses.

*(Editor ... I know that Lou is hard at it in trying to locate your pilot, Robert Smith. I saw Lou's "clip" in the Air Force Association Magazine a while back. I hope him luck. My effort is trying for the name "Smith" with a first name of Robert E. is near to impossible. Sometimes it isn't a case of us finding them; it becomes a case of them finding us - if they want to!)*

**A.D. Peterson, 726th** ... Again I am writing on behalf of my father, Ralph S. Peterson, to let you know that he received the package of information you sent him with the back issues of the Ad-Lib; the history of the Group; the membership card and various stickers. That was how I knew the package had arrived, when I drove into their driveway and saw your bumper sticker already on his car. We spent a great deal of time going over the materials, which brought back many memories for him; and which allowed me to see how, in my imagination, his base looked, matched with reality ... My father sends his thanks.

*(Editor ... Like a successful surgeon, when he sees his patient out of surgery and taking nourishment, I get a comforting feeling to know that what is done is happily received and eagerly read.*

**Clyde W. Phifer, 726th** ... You mentioned that you have located some members of Ed Shimanski's crew (now Sherman). I would like to have their addresses and phone numbers. Sure hope we can locate the rest of the crew. It would be good to hear from them and to find out what has happened to each of them during the past 50 years.

*(Editor ... This recent membership sweep that I have been engaged in brought 3 of you malingers "front and center." One is in the person of Ralph Peterson; see previous letter. Now we have 5 in the 451st camp, and 5 more to go.)*

**Mrs William Dwyer, HDQ** ... Thank you for your letter advising me of the monies donated as a memorial honoring Bill.

I share your feeling of regret that Bill did not get to attend any of the reunions of the 451st. It certainly did not reflect a lack of interest. It was just that he felt that circumstances did not allow him to attend.

Will you please convey my appreciation to all involved in the memorial. Whatever is done with the money will be of interest to me and the family and, I am sure, will meet with our approval ..... Sincerely; Ella Dwyer.

*(Editor ... The Memorial Check will be used to continue what has been started and stimulated by the presence of Bill; if not in person, then in the hearts of those of us that knew him.)*

**William "Chuck" Paddock, 725th** ... As I walked into the house on Saturday, Doris asked me if I "Would I like to talk to Don Witherow?" I did not understand what Doris was saying until she told me about your phone call. Bob, I and the rest of the crew appreciate your interest and concern not only for the crew of MY GAL but for your interest and concern for all former members of the 451st. Thank you so much!



The Missing Crewman: T/Sgt Donald Witherow (AEG)

Naturally, I wanted to call Don but first I had to calm down. You can imagine my excitement especially after I spent so much time in communicating with different military and government agencies - all had dire consequences. Now I can account for all ten crew members.

Too bad "Mac" Leiter and Al Watts are not with us any longer.

I called and filled in Don with some of the activities, especially with the Norfolk Reunion in 1988, when all nine members assembled for the first time since leaving Italy in 1944. To more or less bring Don up to date, I plan to send him copies of different stories from the Group's Ad-Lib. And of course, I am hopeful that Don would want to sign up with the Association.



Crew of "MY GAL" (Minus 1) Assembled At Norfolk, VA - 1988

Standing L - R: Karl Keyes (B)  
Alvia Watts (Gunner) Dec.  
Jack Waggoner (N)  
Paul Beam (Gunner)  
William "Chuck" Paddock (P)

Seated L - R:  
Stanton Leiter (CP) Dec.  
Harry Reinhart (ROG)  
Jack Perry (Gunner)  
Henry Giasson (Gunner)

Your request for a picture of the crew while overseas sent me checking. I have many pictures while with the 451st; but, in most cases they involve a single or double subject. There was one exception. I do have one picture while the crew was waiting to start-up engines. The photo is enclosed.

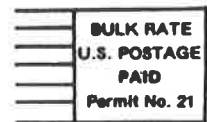
*(Editor ... Yea, Chuck, I almost fell off my high chair when I entered Don Witherow's name into the computer and it came alive with "bells and whistles." I wish I could have had this program earlier, and that kind of luck with all the names I enter. John Hulser, 727th, is wanting desperately to find his only other missing man, Edward J. Picciano, that originally hailed from the New England area. But my search has uncovered nothing.)*

**THE WAR MAKES MEN, AND OTHER ASSORTED PRODUCTS**

When war is through, they notify us,  
The Army means to un-GI us.  
For, after all this rough campaigning,  
We'll need civilian basic training.

I never thought they'd undermined me  
So bad that now they have to find me!  
I have to be repatriated  
Before I'm re-United Stated!

**PUP TENT POETS (1945) -- By: PFC H.B. Mackey:**



**FORWARDING AND RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED - ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED**

1185