



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

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K.C. REUNION RECAP

Once upon a time, long ago, there was a Bomber Group. This famous Bomber Group of WW-II, was called the 451st Bomb Group (H). They were magnificent in battle and magnanimous in peace. They felt a comradeship that transcends all other feelings as they were veterans of a major war, and those feelings can not be duplicated by any other experience. It all began in 1943, ended in 1945, and from 1980 was renewed on a biennial basis of reunions held across these vast United States.

It all re-happened again on Wednesday, 14 September 1994 when a gathering was call in Kansas City, Missouri. At that time almost 500 members and guests met at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center, in Kansas City, MO. From the 14th through the 18th a number of events took place that were pleasing and entertaining to the majority.

Wednesday, 14 September 1994: A surprising number of



Buffalo Soldier Monument at Ft. Leavenworth, KS

“early arrivals” checked in and began looking for comrades. This was listed as a NON-ACTIVITY DAY, giving crews and tentmates a chance to plan their own activities; dining, sight-seeing, or just sitting around and “rapping.” The hotel was truly surprised and pleased at the number of early arrivals. Some 125 rooms occupied on that single night, with another 100 rooms being taken before the end of the festivities.

Thursday, 15 September 1944: Registration and Memorabilia Sales took place most of the day. A small display table was offered that drew many members researching names and events that were laid out in computerized spreadsheet books. A large schematic of the Saturday Banquet table arrangement was displayed so members could PRE-SELECT where they, and their buddies would sit. As at previous reunions, Art and Carol

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AN APOLOGY

I'd like to take this time to express my apologies for the lateness of this issue of the Ad-Lib, and the lack of correspondence to some of our members.

Prior to our Kansas City Reunion I was diagnosed as having a bug called “cancer.” Contrary to my doctors wishes, I opted to wait until the Reunion was over before I underwent surgery. Surgery was performed (radical prostatectomy) in October and I am now fully recovered (hopefully). To those that were aware of my condition prior to surgery and sent Get Well cards ... I thank them from the bottom of my heart, and to reassure them that once re-entrenched, I shall continue to carry the shield of the 451st, as before.

"AD-LIB"

**451st BOMB GROUP (H), LTD.
PUBLICATION**

Compiled and Published by Bob Karstensen

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"451st Bomb Group"

and mailed to: 1032 S. State St. Marengo, IL

Morin manned the Sales Table where T-shirts, caps and other memorabilia were sold.

In the evening everyone prepared for our in-house USO Show. Many members brought along, and wore, garments of a PAST military nature; from Poncho's and helmets, to Class "A" Suntans and O.D.'s. The highlight of the evening was, of course, the entertainment. A male singer, bearing more the voice than the dimensions, of Frank Sinatra was featured. He along with a lovely Miss that we called "The 'IT' Girl," gave us a grand assortment of old standards, beautifully done.



Sally Rand and Kenneth Edwards, "Cutting a Very Fine Rug"

As a interim to the vocal portion of the program, we had Sally Rand (with fans) do her dance. Garbed with somewhat more than the original Sally Rand use to perform in, our Sally Rand gave us a stunning performance

of "poetry in motion" as her fan's dipped and rose to the swells and tempo of the music. I had never heard a room full of 451st people so turn so quiet.

At the conclusion of the visual portion of the program interviews and fraternization was allowed with the performing artists. Dancing was permitted and all was serene. Coffee and donuts were on tap (Ala Red Cross style) for those with an appetite.



Sedge Hill & Jack Sirney "Dressed to the 9's in Suntans"

Friday, 16 September 1944: Morning departure for the Fort Leavenworth, Kansas was easily accepted in lieu of visiting a distant Air Force Base. Briefing by the Command of the Fort was pronounced as "GREAT!" Even the Base Commander and his wife participated. Buffalo Soldiers were present to add authenticity to the occasion. Luncheon was taken on base and a tour of the Base Museum was enjoyed. A driving tour of the base and it's landmarks were explored (including the prison and some of it's more famous Officers' Quarters.)

Upon arriving back at the Hyatt - and after a bit of rest - we were treated to a "Wine & Cheese Appreciation Hour," all prior to our Evening Entertainment Program and scheduled Dance.



Bess & Harry Truman (In Character - In House)

The program for this evening was a visit from none

other than our former President, Harry S. Truman and his wife, Bess. (If you believe they were the genuine article, then I have some nice swamp land in Louisiana to sell you.) Harry gave a dissertation on politics and his home state, Missouri; all the time Bess intervening with her comments. Bess was presented with a dozen long stemmed Roses to commemorate her devotion to her country, marriage and family. Harry took questions from the audience and between question'ers and answer'ers there was a good rapport going that was hard to duplicate.



"Kings of Jazz" with Bill Jackson on Clarinet

As promised, dancing was something special. We had the honor of offering our members some original Kansas City Jazz in the form of "Fiermon and the Kings of Jazz," a group of black musicians that remember the good old days of jazz. None of them were under 80 years of age. Bill Jackson, our in-group clarinetist, sat in as one of the younger "kids."

Saturday, 17 September 1994: Two tours were arranged for those that had prepaid. One was to "Harry Truman's Historic Independence," and the other to see "K.C.: Yesterday & Today," with a visit to the Museum of the Steamboat Arabia. I understand that both trips were well worth the time and cost.

Cocktails were punctually served in the lobby at 5:30 that evening. At 7 o'clock dinner was served. Sedgefield Hill acted as Master of Ceremonies and skillfully directed the evening with pomp and decorum. Flag presentation was presented by members from within our ranks, as had been done the night before. A fine dinner of Missouri/Kansas Steak was enjoyed.

Our Guest Speaker was Jim Fisher, Reporter for the Kansas City Star, and sometimes essayist for the McNeil/Lehrer Report. Try and catch him on TV, he has a down-home sense of telling a story. He was deeply appreciated by his listeners.

William Barnes (President of the 376th Bomb Group) our Special Guest matched up the 451st with some accomplishments paralleling the 376th. He presented a plaque to the 451st President, Bob K. for aiding and abetting the 376th in some of its reunion site location work. He also stressed the situation as was occurring regarding the ENOLA GAY, and its problems at the Smithsonian Museum. To add significant to this effort, petitions were placed in the anti-room for signatures.



Jim Fisher - Guest Speaker - TV Essayist



Barnes (376th) & Karstensen (451st) with Plaque Presentation



Mary Kalinka Oversees ENOLA GAY Petition Signers

More dancing followed the formal part of our presentation. I realize that the 451st was first in combat; but it surprised me to see so many still being #1 in the art of terpsichorean (shaking a leg)! Perhaps it was the music of "The Kings of Jazz" along with our two musicians, Bill Jackson and John O'Connor that "pulled them into the spotlight."

Sunday, 18 September 1994: Interdenominational Worship Services brought out an unusually good tur-

nout. Reverends' John Pafford and Paul Johnshoy conducted the Service. Music was supplied by Mrs. William (Shirleyjean) Jackson (piano), Bill Jackson (clarinet), John O'Connor (coronet), and Jim Casperson (bass horn).

The reunion was concluded. Some members stretched their stay over into Monday so's to visit friends in the area, or do some extra sight-seeing, apart from what had been scheduled.

This reunion was, and had been considered by its registrants as one of our best, with both high quality and low price. The rooms at the Hyatt were excellent and far below the rack rate (off the street price). And the potential for inexpensive meals, in the area nearby to

the hotel, offered a person something apart from the usual hotel bill of fare. The shopping area, with its easy access by overhead walk, was a boon to the shopping minded. But in heading up this event, with all its "Special Entertainment, Decorations, Foods, etc., etc.," required a sizeable chunk of what each person paid as their registration fee. As an organization we came out of it in the BLACK, but not too comfortably in the black. I appreciate the accolades bestowed, but worried about the overall cost of putting on such a lavish production. With all the escalating costs within the hotel and entertainment business, I don't know if we will ever see such affordable amenities in the foreseeable future. But stick with us folks, perhaps the best is yet to be!!!

"DWYER NEGATIVE CONUNDRUM" APPEARS SOLVED: NOT RESOLVED

To those not aware of what I call the "Dwyer Conundrum," allow me to fill you in. Major William M. Dwyer (Group Photo Officer) passed away on the 14th of June 1993, leaving a legacy of original 451st combat negatives in his estate. These were the original combat negatives brought back from overseas; personally by Major Dwyer, with the consent of the Group Commander. This office attempted to gain said negatives from the estate, upon his death, but was thwarted by family opposition.

We reasoned that since these photos were done by 451st cameramen, and of 451st aircraft ... and 451st people, they should be maintained, and if utilized, be handled by this office. Our main concern was that they would fall into commercial hands and any profits, or recognition derived from them would be realized by interests other than the 451st.

Such is now the case.

Two letters came into this office on the same day in early January, from dedicated members telling me of the commercial spin that the negatives are now being used for. Seems that a company out of Florida has possession of the negatives and is now printing them as wall calendars. And with the amount of material at hand ... they can print for years. One of our members asked if they had contacted this office prior to going into production. To which the answer is NO. Perhaps they didn't want to undergo the criticism I could bring to such an enterprise.

It seems that my concern, as expressed in Ad-Lib (Issue 23), has come to pass. The negatives have fallen into commercial hands. And even though I received a lot of moral support; plus promises of financial backing,

should a value be set on the negatives, I guess it all went for naught. The Dwyer family never responded positively to any of my mailings. Apparently the family considered the negatives as part of the Dwyer Estate, and not worthy of being entrusted to the people that suffered and died in the process of them being taken and processed. It's too bad that commercialism had to override our 451st objective; patriotism and compassion to those that served.

Not knowing how to proceed with this situation I am at a loss as to what can, and should be done. I really feel we have a moral right to those negatives, but I don't know if we have any legal rights. I have not sought legal counsel as I hoped that a sense of righteousness would prevail within the Dwyer family. And, too, the cost of outside legal counsel would, or could, escalate beyond the limits of the 451st treasury.

If any of our legal experts can offer me a solution to this, whereupon we can regain the negatives, without causing ill

will within the Dwyer family, please let me know.

It is not known if the new owners of the negatives are availing themselves of the Certificate of Authentication that accompanied each photo, or not. But after Bill Dwyer began the project, he delegated me to research and write a brief history of each picture, in preparation to his offering them for sale to interested members of our Group. Now all chance of sharing those pictures are gone; plus some of the negatives I entrusted Bill, from my personal collection, that he added to his inventory.



Bill Dwyer Stands Before His Gallery of 451st Pictures and Certificates of Authentication.

"LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON (Continued)

I must preface any of the following journal by first introducing it's author, Dr. Royal C. Gilkey. Through Sheril D. Huff, 49th FS Secretary, the following words were forwarded to me from Dr. Gilkey, who, after reading the 1st installment, indicated his approval of our effort and intent. It reads as follows:

How wonderful it was to see some of what I had written on the 49th Fighter Squadron in published form! A feeling of exhilaration swept over me when my eyes fell on "LITTLE FRIENDS: THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON" appearing as the lead-article in "AD-LIB: 451st Bomb Group (H)," published during the spring of 1994. None of my academic publications during my decades long professional career had quite the impact of pages 5-10 comprising the cited double column, picture-flavored piece on some of the "memorable combined missions" picked out from my 49th Fighter Squadron Chronicles by compiler Bob Karstensen. He surely has done a splendid job in editing the dated entries chosen, and in interspersing appropriate illustrations throughout the text. The way he led into and out of his article on our "Hangmen" was very appropriate because he mentioned your name initially and credited me, also. Thus, he explained how he had received the text from you, "found some of the entries fascinating" for his purposes, and determined on publishing them ad seriatim to show combined bomber-fighter efforts against a common foe, the Luftwaffe. Mr. Karstensen's conclusion was graciously worded and oriented on the future in this fashion: "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." We couldn't have asked for anything nicer than that. Writing further for Mr. Karstensen will be a pleasure to judge from the way he has expressed himself.

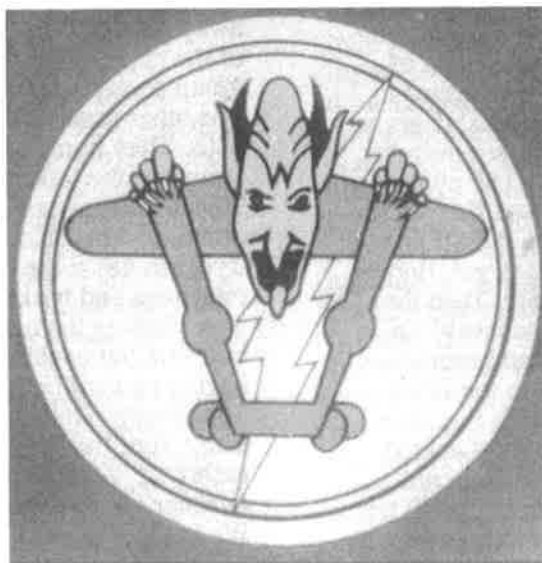
(Editorial Comment: **WOW!**)

(Continuing with the 49th FS Journal)

A mission was mounted on the last day of the month (30

June 1944). It was to provide escort for Heavies (B-17s and B-24s) flying north to bomb Blechhammer in Germany. Taking off at 0737 hours, 15 Squadron P-38s started out, but only 11 returned at noon. This was because of four early returns. There were no losses on the mission. A 0935 rendezvous was effected at 22-23,000 feet. At 1010 hours, the planes left the rendezvous point in excellent formation. Seven to 10 ME-109s put in an appearance, but there was no actual contact. These enemy aircraft wore silver paint with dark edges so as to simulate P-51s, the point being to confuse our fighters. Cloud formation was scattered cumulus at low altitude, but a front rising to 30,000 feet stretched along a southwest-to-northeast line a bit north of Gyor in Hungary. There was a lot of radio interference when flying across the coast of Yugoslavia. Jack Schill (1LT John J. Schill Jr., Philadelphia, PA) led both Squadrons and Group on this escort mission taking departure from the bombers about 5,000 feet over a spur forming part of Italy's coastline 10 to 15 minutes before noon. If there weren't any victories to be claimed, at least no losses were suffered by the Squadron during his approximately 840-mile mission. No bombing results could be reported because the fighters never actually flew over the target (Editor; At this point in time the 451st had now become a part of the 49th Wing, which included the 451st, 461st, and the 484th. Our Intelligence Reports show that we were scheduled to bomb the South Synthetic Oil Plant at Blechhammer, but due to the adverse weather conditions (as described in the preceding paragraph) we were turned back without dropping our bombs.)

On July 3, 1944, the Squadron's P-38s flew escort for two Groups of the 5th Wing out to bomb Czeged Railway bridge in Yugoslavia. Sixteen Pilots took off for the mission, and three returned early because of mechanical or other difficulty. Unfortunately, one pilot (2LT Billy T. Turner, of Fort Worth, TX) did not return at all from his first mission. After taking off at 0915 hours, the other 11 pilots reached the target at 1140 hours as bomber escorts. They had effected rendezvous with the heavies at 15,000 feet over Sabac in Yugoslavia. By target time (1140 hours), the fighters had climbed to 26,000 feet. The 49th was the second squadron in the 14th Fighter Group and continued on in company with the others (the 37th and 48th Squadrons) to protect the main bomber force proceeding to another target at Arad in Romania. No enemy air resistance was



Wartime Insigne of the 49th Fighter Squadron

encountered during the 900 mile mission. The fighters did not run into any flak along the way. Bombing could be observed because of clear weather over the target area and was reported as good. (Editor: *The 451st suffered no losses while bombing the Mogasaia Oil Storage Depot in Bucharest, but did have flak damage to several. Oddly enough, while researching the outcome of our combined (451st BG/49th FS) I ran across a "Special Briefing Note" that caught my eye. Since I had never heard about it (gunners weren't privy to such specific information) I'll pass it on:*

"The following information has come to this office through Headquarters, Fifteenth Air Force. It is forwarded for briefing purposes in the event future targets develop in this area. The Free French representative in Turkey reports the FRENCH INSTITUTE OF BUCHAREST and the French colony in Romania are both located at CACIULATI which is about 12 miles north of BUCHAREST. Prisoners of war, partisan property and about 100 French men, women and children are in this village. This information is submitted because the nearby location of SNAGOV, six (6) miles north of CACIULATI is likely to be a target because it contains quite a number of Roumanian and German services. Among these are the pro-German legation and Gestapo."

2LT Royal C. Gilkey (Ithaca, NY) took time out from his Intelligence duties to pen this passage in the Squadron War Diary: "Today, 4 July 1944, Russian army authorities reported capture of Minsk, Capital of White Russia, leaving the way open to Brest-Litovsk, then ultimately to Warsaw in Poland. Red forces are continuing down two railways leading westward from Minsk." It was time when things seemed to be going well.

Another long mission in another direction had to be flown the next day. July 5, 1944 involved an escort mission heading northwest to Toulon, a naval base along France's Mediterranean coast. The assignment was to escort 47th Bomb Wing groups hitting submarine docks at Toulon, protecting them over the target and on withdrawal from it. Fifteen of the Squadron's "Lightnings" took off on this mission at 1012 hours. They ran into a headwind that forced them south of Rome, Italy on the way to the target; but managed to effect a rendezvous with the bombers at 1300 hours and an altitude of 25,000 feet. All 15 P-38s were over the target for 40 minutes (1255-1335 hours) The pilots saw the bombers flying south of the course and flew on to the target area. They then turned back to the I.P. to pick up the bombers and bring them over the target. Bombs were dropped 15 minutes behind schedule. Then the bombers rallied to the right after "bombs away" in order to rectify their formation, which had become rather scattered. The 49-ers" flew third in the Group, staying within supporting range of the 48th Squadron, the 37th becoming separated in its support of another wing of heavies. Departure was not made from the bombers until approximately 1355 hours at 25,000 feet off Corsica's coast. Bomb strikes were reported all along the submarine docking installations, flanked by burning oil on each side (evident even before the 47th

Wing's release of bombs. Surprisingly enough, there was no resistance in the air. A barrage of flak arose over the target, however; but the fighters did not run into it. Flak guns seemed to be concentrated north of the docks. No flak was seen to come from islands south of Toulon. Clear weather enabled the bombers to hit the target. The sea below was covered by haze. There was a scattering of Cumulus clouds over Corsica; but over Italy's mountains, the amount of cumulus increased to 70-80% on the return trip. The fighters took their departure from the bombers near the Corsican coast. There was a lot of interference with radio communication, perhaps due to enemy radar. Squadron pilots were on oxygen for several hours. One P-38 experienced mechanical difficulty and had to put in at Calvi on Corsica for engine repairs. All 15 pilots received sortie credit. 'Twas all in a day's work. (Editor; *our Intelligence Summary reads: "The primary target for the 49th Wing is the destruction of the BEZIER, France marshaling yards. The first alternate is SETE M/Y, France. The second alternate is TOULON HARBOR installations. ... 12 heavy guns at BEZIER, 4 in SETE area, 76 heavy guns in the TOULON area. Probably 35 single engine aircraft will be airborne against our formations."* Although 12 enemy fighters were seen, they were not aggressive and attacked only in groups of 3. It should be remembered that BEZIER lay approximately 140 miles beyond, or East of TOULON HARBOR putting us somewhat beyond escort range, but well within radio range should their help be needed on our return trip.)

The escort mission for the day on July 6, 1944 was confined to Italy; Trieste being on the receiving end of bombs from the 304th Wing under P-38 escort (Editor: *the 451st flew the mission to bomb the Aviano Oil Storage Tanks, north of Venice, but within protective range of the 49th FS.*)

On July 7, 1944, a bombing mission going to Germany was mounted. Heavies from the 304th and 55th Wings flew it. The enemy put up an appearance. A trio of ME 109s came towards the P-38s from the east. "Hangmen" pilots turned to confront them but the enemy seemed disinclined to engage and "split S'd" away. Some 50 enemy aircraft were encountered south of the target area. They were flying in two groups. One group consisted of about 15 ME 109s, all painted black. The other group was made up of 30-40 ME 110 and 210s. They bore in from the west in a 90-degree attack, aiming at the left flank of the "Lightnings." The ME 109s led the assault, trying to decoy our P-38s from the bombers. The 110s and 210s stayed out of range before trying to get at the heavies. Our fighters followed instructions and broke off their pursuit of the ME 109s, after chasing them away. They then returned to the bombers but couldn't stay as cover for them because of having cast off belly-tanks during the chase. At least the Squadron's pilots had refused to let themselves be lured away from the bombers they had been assigned to escort. (Editor; *In this case, while bombing Blechhammer we were not so lucky with OUR fighter cover. We lost one aircraft, the JESSE JAMES. It's pilot, Lt F.S. Russell, though hit heavily by enemy fighters, managed to bail his crew out with 6 being captured and 4 evading, including pilot and copilot.*)



The "JESSE JAMES:" Lost on Blechhammer Mission- 7 July 1944

A fighter-sweep over Vienna area was undertaken the next day (July 8, 1944). All 16 pilots taking part returned safely to base. They had taken off at approximately 0810 hours and remained aloft for more than four hours, arriving back home at 1255 hours. A change of wind direction caused them to alter course on the return trip. Bombers were also covered over the target. Their well aimed bomb burst started oil fires. There was no enemy air resistance, but flak took its toll. One bomber blew up, and another was knocked out of the sky. Between Vienna and Lake Neusiedler, a sizable airfield was bombed, but with no noticeable effect on approximately 25 dispersed enemy aircraft. Radio communication in the target area was blocked out by enemy jamming. Free-lance strafing in the target area by the P-38s complicated the problem of defense. (Editor: Vienna, always a "tough nut" for the 15th Air Force, fulfilled expectations for the 451st. 336 flak emplacements greeted us. Forewarned to expect enemy fighters was a fact come true. As recorded in our "Group Briefing Notes, - ESCORT: Fighters will provide individual Wg penetration, target and withdrawal cover beginning in the vicinity of Maribor. Fighters will also conduct a free-lance offensive sweep of the target area arriving in target area as lead Wg reaches IP and sweep in ahead of bombers. Twin engine fighters will be the objective of fighter sweep." Thus the previous description from Dr. Gilkey as to the method of enemy action; luring our escort to engage with their single engine (s/e) fighters, while twin engine (t/e) fighters made their move on the bombers proved correct. on that subject our documentation reads; "The GAF is definitely using the tactic of attempting to draw our escort away with s/e fighters and then attacking the bomber formations with t/e's." We lost no bombers while bombing the Korneuburg Oil Refineries at Vienna, and did get credit for downing one enemy fighter.)

Morale received a boost from a war-update provided by the unit's S-2 office. Lt Royal C. Gilkey wrote this for Squadron personnel to read: "Punching out steady gains since the capture of Minsk, Red Armies are drawing the threads of a victorious climax together with today's forcible expulsion of the Hun from Kowel, hinge-point of Nazi southern and northern armies. This opened alternate roads to Lubin and Brest-Litovsk.

Also, the investing of Baranowicz by Russian armor and infantry meant that a vitally important railway junction, had passed from the desperate Germans to the Triumphant Russians. Thus were the Russians provided with a key to the railroad network east of Warsaw. They appeared to be going great guns. In fact, rumor has enlarged on Eastern Front successes to the extent that is reported someone heard Stalin declare over the radio that the war would be over sometime between 0300 and 0800 hours. 'Uncle Joe' has not yet verified the report."

The Squadron woke up to more good news about the Eastern Front on July 9, 1944. From the S-2 Office, Lt Gilkey issued the encouraging bit of information. "The German enemy had just announced a so-called, 'strategic' evacuation of Lida, midway between Baranowicz and Wilno. This was quite in keeping with other favorable information that the Russians had uncorked another offensive between newly won Kowel and Lwow. It was reported that three more German Generals had been captured east of Minsk. Moreover, 28,000 of the Huns entrapped there had been killed and 15,000 taken prisoner, with the annihilation continuing. With these occurrences on the brutal Eastern Front, Squadron Intelligence felt justified in urging unit personnel to keep eyes on the Red Army, which was giving the enemy the hell it deserved in retribution for Nazi depredations." Stand-down for the day enabled pilots to enjoy a welcome rest.

Another "day of rest" occurred the next day, July 10, 1944. Air crews worked during the morning hours but took time off for relaxation in the afternoon and evening. Usual duties were resumed on July 11, 1944 during another stand-down.

On July 14, 1944, action erupted in the skies. A morning mission was launched to escort bombers from the 47th Wing over the capital of Hungary, Budapest. Our fighters got off the ground a little after 0730 (actually 0734). Short of the target, 16 of the Squadron's P-38s ran into a fight. They were leading the Group when the enemy was encountered. As many as 20-30 ME 210s and ME 110s, shielded by 25-30 ME 109s, engaged our planes. Lt Luttrell (Donald A. Luttrell, Dallas, TX) managed to damage one of the attacking ME 109s. Coming down from above, the ME 109s drew fire but did not prevent the P-38s from breaking up the formation of ME 110s and ME 210s. The enemy maneuver did succeed in obligating the "Lightnings" to break away from combat. Lt Schill (John G. Schill, Philadelphia, PA) the Squadron's leader, was evidently run into by Lt Durbin (Clyde E. Durbin, Canton, OH). At any rate, a "Lightening" was seen to collide with Schill's machine, tearing off its right wing. Both pilots in the collision failed to return. A scorched brown chute (believed to be Durbin's) was seen to open beneath the wreckage of the 2 P-38s. With all this transpiring, the results of the bombing went unobserved, except for one report that a pall of smoke lay over Budapest, whose marshalling yards were the original target. It was noted that among the enemy aircraft were tan-colored ME 109s, which were very aggressive and came in "nose down" upon our formation. Their bullets left holes in several P-38s. The aerial combat seemed like a

confusing free-for-all. Flak was encountered along the route. A B-24 reported a flaming #4 engine, which was observed smoking above Tapolcza, Yugoslavia. One P-38 pilot reported what he thought was an ME 210 diving vertically toward a crash about 3,000 feet beneath him. The enemy got banged on the nose, too.



Major Charles Haltom (on left), 726th Sqdn C.O., With Sgt Tom Charles, Upon Release from POW Camp

..... (Editor: it was on this mission that we bombed the Petfurdo Oil Refinery in Hungary with the loss of one of our bombers. Captain Long (726th BS), along with Squadron Commander, Major Haltom, were the victims of this "downing." All escaped with their lives; seven evaded while five became POWs.

TARGET: OSWIECIM POLAND - SUBJECT: EVASION

Not one to pass up a good story line, especially when it concerns one that has a special importance to the history of the 451st, and a first hand accounting of the facts; and one that I also flew.

Burt Orden (726th - ROMG on Quint Ruetz's crew), on one of his flights to our reunion encountered Vince Hanley, ROMG from Ed Nall's crew, and, surprisingly, they got to reminiscing. Vince mentioned that he and his crew were shot down on 26 December 1944 on a mission to Oswiecim Poland, which was also the day that Burt's Navigator, William R. "Bob" Givens, also went down - with a crew different than his own. The irony was that it was with the Nall's crew that Bob Givens was flying that day.

It was with special significance that five of that crew managed to build a smaller reunion from our larger one. Those from the Nall crew were four of the gunners; Vince Hanley, Jim Locke, Larry Broadwater and Kenje Ogata. And representing the Ruetz crew was the replacement navigator, Bob Givens.

But this tale doesn't stop with just those facts. Later Burt managed to get Bob Givens to send him his journal of his days as an evadee. These I would like to present to you as a way of "fleshing out" the dilemma Oswiecim posed to the 451st.

BOB GIVENS' DIARY

Dec. 17, 1944 -- Joined the 726th Bomb Sq. today. It is located at an airfield close to Foggia, Italy. We slept in tents. Our tent is in bad shape.

Sunday Dec. 24, 1944 -- Have been working on our tent this past week. It shows some improvement. Went to church today. Enjoyed the Christmas Carols.

Dec. 25, 1944 -- It doesn't seem like Christmas. We worked on the tent all day. My name is on the board to fly a combat mission tomorrow. I talked to Sq. Navigator and told him I did not have any maps. He said I wouldn't need any maps. We would be flying number three in formation and would follow the lead plane.

Dec. 26, 1944 -- Took off at 0755 in plane number 47 with pilot Nall. Bombed Standard Oil Refinery in Oswiecim, Poland. Dropped bombs at 1224. We were hit by flak at 1324. Our plane, number 3, and plane 5 in the formation of seven were hit. The Germans had moved antiaircraft guns on flatbed rail cars to new location. Our number 1 and 2 engines were knocked out by flak. Our bombardier Walt (Tuchscherer), bailed out first. I bailed out second, at 6,000 feet at 1352. I landed 15 miles east of Balaton Lake in Hungary. I landed in a frozen farm field and was knocked out by the hard ground. When I came to, I hid my parachute. Heard farm animals in the distance and walked towards the sounds. In 20 minutes I came to farm yard where Walt had landed in a tree. He broke his ankle when he landed in a tree. George (Ahrens), our cameraman, walked into the yard after I



REUNION WITHIN A REUNION
(Standing) Vince Hanley, Gunner; Bill Givens, Navigator;
Jim Locke, Gunner
(Kneeling) Larry Broadwater, Gunner; Kenje Ogata, Gunner

distance and walked towards the sounds. In 20 minutes I came to farm yard where Walt had landed in a tree. He broke his ankle when he landed in a tree. George (Ahrens), our cameraman, walked into the yard after I

arrived. Russians came to farm, took our .45 pistols and interrogated us. After we convinced them we were Americans, they took us to Mezokomarom where we spent the night in a Hungarian home.

Dec. 27, 1944 -- Did nothing until 1800. Russians took us on 2 ox carts to Tamasi. It took us until 2 a.m. to get there. It was a cold and rough ride. It was especially hard and painful for Walt. Slept until 0600 of the 28th in a private home.

Dec. 28, 1944 -- Had hot wine for breakfast. My first experience with alcoholic drinks. I drank it too fast and passed out. Russians made fun of American who couldn't drink with them. Stayed in Russian headquarters this night. I don't like the Russian food.

Dec. 29, 1944 -- Walked 20 km and rode the last 5 km to Simontornya. They set Walt's ankle. We had a nice place to stay, Hungarian private home, and good food. Walt didn't want me to leave him. He was in a large barracks with Russian soldiers, both men and women.

Dec. 31, 1944 -- Celebrated New Year's Eve with Russians at a big party. They toasted Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt. The Russian Captain did the Russian Cossack dance and they tossed everyone up on the air on a blanket. They welcomed the New Year by going outside and shooting their guns in the air.

Jan. 1, 1945 -- The rest of the crew came to Somontornya. They had been staying with a Catholic priest.

Jan. 3, 1945 -- Russians take Walt to Zachszard to hospital.

Jan. 6, 1945 -- We leave Simontornya by truck. Cross the blue Danube River on a barge and rode truck to Kunszentmiklos. The Danube River is not blue but dirty brown.

Jan. 7, 1945 -- Rode in boxcars to Kecskemet. Thought we were on train to Bucharest, Romania, but found out it was going to Budapest, Hungary. We got off boxcar fast. We spend night there.

Jan. 8, 1945 -- Have a good turkey dinner and spend another night in Kecskemet. Met an Englishman, his wife and son.

Jan. 9, 1945 -- Ride passenger train to Szeged. Averaged 7 miles per hour. Good food there. Sleep in hotel. Really good bed. Ate a good turkey dinner for 35 cents.

Jan. 10, 1945 -- Ate ham, eggs, and pancakes for 35 cents. Ride truck to Timisoara, Romania. It was a long cold ride. Sleep in private homes. Romania is better off than Hungary.

Jan. 11, 1945 -- We start another long slow train ride.

Jan. 12, 1945 -- We arrive in Craiova, Romania at 0400. Went to Romania police who put us in private homes to sleep. We get up at 1030 and go to town to eat steak dinner.

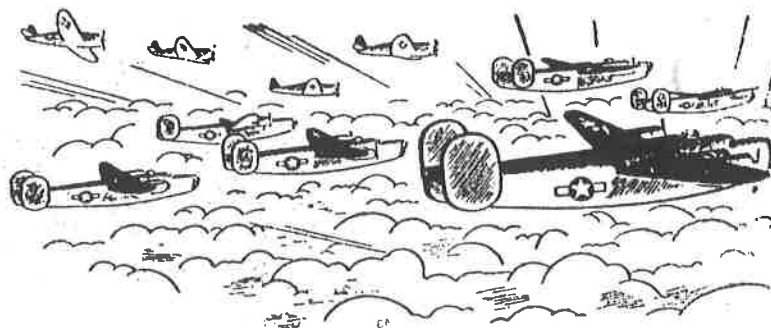
Jan. 14, 1945 -- Leave Craiova in UW 34, a single engine monoplane. It was a 4 passenger plane, but we packed 16 men into it. It was a miracle it got off the ground. The snow was knee deep on the runway. The Russian was a good pilot. We arrive in Bucharest at dark.

We met about 300 other U.S. airmen in Bucharest who had been shot down. We flew in a cargo plane to Bari, Italy. We were interrogated, deloused and issued new clothes before going back to 726th Sq. at Foggia.

Since our Group's founding, back in the late '70's,' we have located nine of the eleven that were on Ed Nall's flight to Oswiecim that day. No credit to our efforts, but more to the crew that sought each other out after many years of separation.

The make-up of the crew that day were: Edward Nall, Pilot (found); Elvin Sims, Copilot (yet to be found); William Givins, Navigator (found); Walter Tuchscherer, Bombardier (found); Thomas McHale, Gunner (found); Lawrence Broadwater, Gunner (found); Kenje Ogata, Gunner (found); Vince Hanley, Gunner (found); Richard Sanderson, Gunner (yet to be found); George Ahrens, Photographer (found).

It should also be noted that Oswiecim, as we knew it back then, was also known as Auschwitz, the infamous death camp of many Jews, and of political prisoners to the Nazi regime. As of this writing it has been 50 years since the camp was liberated by the Russian Army and the full disclosure of the atrocities shown to the world. It was a long and costly mission for the 451st, but even more so in cost of lives, but not due to our bombing, for the Jewish and political prisoners below.



ERNIE CUMMINS' 60th AIR SERVICE SQUADRON JOURNAL

A while back Ernie Cummins offered me the loan of his personal journal from his time in the "Service of His Country." He was kind enough not to dun me for an early return, as reading them was quite interesting, and the decision as to what would interest our readers - time consuming.

He starts his memoirs, affectionately called, "*WHEN THE HAIR WAS SHORT AND THE DOLLAR WAS LONG*," when he first recalls that there was a threat to the world and in particular to our nation, back in 1936. Through two volumes (240 pages of single spaced type) he tells us of his trials and tribulations, both in civilian and military life.

In the reading of his journal I was struck by the uniqueness of his writing style. Ernie has a streak of humor that sometimes comes to the fore when he concludes his comment with the word "HI," instead of HA, or HA, HA. His writing style, or format, was to interject letters written to his sweetheart, Mabel, and from them continues with a chronological review of what happened between letters. He adds many incidents and antidotes of a military nature that I thought would be of interest to our 451st readers; especially those members that had a hand in what Ernie is relating to. I propose to expose you to Ernie's work in serial form; similar to how I gave you Karl Eichhorn's and Lyle Baker's Journals. What is not known is just how many Ad-Lib issues it will take to conclude his tome, as I hope to intersperse as many pictures as I can find along with the text.

I plan to take up Ernie's story before it interlocks with their involvement with the 451st. If you will remember, the 60th had labored throughout North Africa and when they came to the boot of Italy the Squadron joined us, or at least were near at hand, even while we were all at Gioia del Colle.

With Ernie's kind indulgence I will delete, edit and in general try and reinforce his comments from the viewpoint of what is now known about subjects he tells of. As to including ALL of his "Letters to Mabel," I will have to refrain from using them in total. Many are of a personal nature and would not necessarily add to the historical nature of this document. Wherever I decide to use the "text" of a letter, I will use it only in the context of historical review, and where I feel it will have cause. I will use periods (...) in place of deleted text.

THE EUROPEAN YEARS, 1944 - 1945

FORWARD

The section of Italy where the 60th worked were not the showplaces of that country. Tourists, even today (1978) seldom get closer to Foggia plains than Pompeii or the Isle of Capri on the opposite coast. In addition,

the war economy had denied the population of many necessities. Utilities were in damaged condition, transportation was in the hands of occupation forces, and commerce was almost reduced to the barter system.

As a truck driver, I saw only the main roads, and therefore missed what might be the better residential and resort type neighborhoods. Wealthy Italians must have been Fascist in political terms, and had fled their homes to the north when "liberation" got near at hand, so Allied soldiers mingled only with common people.

Many Italians have relatives in America, or had been there themselves. Seldom did we have language problems, except in remote villages. Occupation money was called in for exchange on two occasions, primarily to put the black market operators to a disadvantage by having to explain the source of surplus currency.

Although ground battles were sometimes fairly close to the 60th area, we never suffered losses to the German actions. Drunken fights, traffic accidents, and venereal disease were the big dangers when a G.I. was "bumming around" off duty. A friendly people, with a simple culture, who even volunteered to work! After observing Arabs, that was a real shock to us.

EUROPE AT LAST:

Ashore at Taranto, the 60th worked at five bases while engineers constructed new airfields in the Foggia area. November 28, 1943 to April 4, 1944 was our "introduction" to Italian life in the boot-heel section of that country.

Letters (and excerpts) are dated - sections labeled "COMMENTS" were written 35 years later.

COMMENT

Three of the bases, where the 60th mechanics serviced planes, were established Italian airports. The last two were newly built by U.S. engineers at Manduria and San Pancrazio. Heavy bombers continued operations from North Africa for three months (Dec., Jan., Feb.) and when the transfer to Italian bases was made they were taken off of combat status for one week so the metal planks on the Africa runways could be taken up and flown in the B-24s across the Mediterranean and re-laid on the new fields.

Just as we had with the 8th A.F. planes in Libya, we serviced and repaired ships of the 376th and 98th Bomb Groups until their ground crews and Service Squadrons followed on surface transport two weeks later. The Technical Supply boys were also busy setting up warehouses and depots for spare parts, while gasoline was distributed in 55 gallon drums by railroad and truck from Taranto or Bari. By June of 1944 pipelines had been laid above ground to combat fields, and the drums of fuel were then kept in dumps nearby as a reserve.

(A great many Dec. & Jan. letters referred to Christmas gifts, sent or received, and much detail has been

deleted here. At the end of this "chapter" will be found a run down of how the Air Corps did it's thing - all veterans can skip those pages with relief, HA.)

December 1 / 43 - Somewhere in Italy

Dear Mabel: ... Sweetheart, after a long wait, at last here is the letter! Just look again at the heading and you'll understand why ...

Well honey, no mail since the 22nd, but it is piling up somewhere waiting to find our new location ... I hope you had a nice Thanksgiving Dinner. The Army had real roast turkey with some of the trimmings, which we enjoyed on board ship. In fact our chow was pretty good for the entire trip, standing in one line to get it, and another to wash our mess kits was the only drawback ... The best way to describe movement across the Mediterranean is simply "uneventful."

About our present camp, I hesitate to describe it yet, as no announcement has been made on how much we can write, but generally speaking, the country is nicely kept-up farmland with grapes, olives, tangerines, etc. .. Rolling hills with not much timber (practically every tree is either a fruit or some windbreak variety bordering a road) and plenty of green grass. The rains have muddied up some spots quite deeply, but the roads are all in fine shape; evidently there was no fighting in this section, at least there are few signs of war visible. The cities and towns look very old,, what few modern buildings they do contain seem startling by contrast. Streets are those narrow, crooked, cobblestone affairs, and most civilian traffic is by bicycle or horse cart ...

Most of our men are living in wooden barracks, but our department is off from the main camp and we have our old tents set up. Gets very chilly nights, so the heaters are used constantly. Guess what? Today I had the pleasure of bathing with hot water for the third time in one month! Oh My!

December 5 / 43 - Somewhere in Italy

Dear Mabel: Hello darling, this makes the second letter from me, when it would have the tenth back in the Middle East, were I had more time to write. We still have had no mail here, but expect some soon. In the meantime there is plenty of work for us to do, and I seldom find time to knock around camp visiting with other guys -- either I'm on the road, cleaning up, eating, shaving, or sleeping, hi. Yesterday we moved our tent to a location towards the center of camp, as before this we were on the very edge, and we found our equipment disappearing at an alarming rate. I suspect a couple of little boys who live nearby of swiping a pair of shoes, half a carton of cigarettes, two bars of soap, and a raincoat. Lucky for me this stuff all belonged to Gabe, Steve, or Reuben; Ernie still has his full kit, hi.

I had to take my writing materials along on the job this morning and the above was written while waiting for a crew of Italians to unload me. They are pretty good lads, and by using a couple of words and much "Hand talking" or signals, we understand each other fairly well. We have one friend, an M.P. in Italian Army who is a steady visitor, so today Laxalt had him bring a kid to take our dirty laundry to his mother to

wash; and believe me, we had plenty of dirty clothes! It figures to costs very little; twenty five to fifty cents per man - cheap enough, eh Peanut?

Signed the Payroll today too, as this month with all the activity, the finance department was never set up long enough in one place to get us our wages. Two more luxuries have made us comfortable during the last few days - rations were sold, and some electric lights installed. We have a bright globe hanging from the center pole of tent #56.

COMMENT

On the outskirts of the city of Taranto the truck route crossed a river spanned by a stone bridge with raised walls on each side. The bridge arched somewhat from shore to shore, but the real trouble was a horizontal bend in the middle where a left turn of about seventy degrees had to be made.

"Say Bennett, you had a year of college, how come the Romans didn't know that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points?"

"No telling Dick. Maybe a Sicilian innkeeper on one side and a Greek trading post on the other dictated the ends, and an island upstream gave a good anchor for the middle pier. A donkey and cart can make that bend with no sweat."

"Well there ain't no hinges built into this Fruehauf. By the time we horse the rear wheels sideways four feet, half the tires are gonna be left on the cobblestones. Goddamn! Can't the M.P.s find a better truck route?"

Also in Taranto was the main naval base for the Mediterranean fleet of the Italian forces. I was dispatched there to pick up a small crane mounted on a cleated tractor, called a Roustabout, which had been unloaded from a freighter at a Navy dock. The road from the city streets down to the waterfront level descended two blocks on a one-way route, with another road used as an exit; also one way. There being no loading ramp to drive the tractor up onto my trailer, I enlisted the aid of a shipboard cargo boom. The winch man dropped a sling over the side and picked up the tractor, let me back the trailer under, and set it down over the rear wheels.

When Paul and I wound up the switchback to the exit from the Yard, we found a real gate, one of those ornamental iron monsters with a marble arch over the top. And of course the crane boom failed to clear the arch, which we attacked with a sledge. After some minor chipping we discovered massive steel beams inside - so a retreat was called for. Had to back down the hill against traffic and make our way to the city on the entrance road, also fighting irate drivers who taught us some new Italian swear words.

When on our little trips up, down an across the "boot heel" of Italy, we would pass through the smaller towns, some merely villages, there were several things we observed about the social life and customs of the residents therein. The town buildings themselves were sturdy stone structures, and always there was some central square of park with leafy trees and paved walks. If we drove around a public square about dusk we could see people walking about, arm in arm, perhaps four

abreast, talking over the day's news, gossip and politics. Always these crowds were man and boys, no females in evidence anywhere. We deduced they were at home hanging over the balcony chattering with their neighbors, or sitting in doorways watching the tiny tots play in the gutters.

The most beautiful building in any city was always the Church. This supplied the people's need for theater, entertainment, mystical power, tradition, ritual, whatever --. It was the example of what wealth could accomplish, and sacrifices attain. Even in run down towns the Church was splendid and shining with statues of religious saints, and the bells always rang to summon the sinners to worship.

Inside the houses there would be charcoal for heat and cooking, even clothes ironing was done with that fuel. Some women heated several irons on a stove, using them in sequence until cool and replacing with a warmer one. More active girls used irons with little fire-pits built in. And to keep the coal at the proper heat they flung their arms in circles like a baseball pitcher's windup to create a draft. You had to have a high ceiling for this activity. Sometimes this work was done out of doors.

Hanging on the kitchen walls were the dried onions, garlic, and other herbs for seasoning. Little pear shaped tomatoes were also festooned on hooks. The pictures on living room walls were almost all of a religious nature, with an occasional family group photo, or a son in uniform - perhaps a bearded grandfather. Carpets and drapes were not affordable in most houses; the brightest color being supplied by the bedspreads and quilts, pillows and table runners.

When the men went off to work in the mornings they carried little rag bundles containing a half loaf of hard bread, a hunk of cheese, a small jug or bottle of red wine, and if lucky, some salami. Those who worked for the occupation forces on military bases sometimes carried more food home at night, than away in the morning. The men shaved with straight razors, wore caps with visors and had bad teeth. Houses were two or three stories and water was carried up the stairs in earthen jugs, but what was discarded usually got tossed out a window. This was a hazard to any pedestrian, and indeed is the reason for the well mannered man to walk on the curb side of his lady today. Bed pots and other refuse were emptied into the streets from all levels, left to flow away in what amounts, to open sewers. The pavement slanted down to the center instead of being crowned, like ours in America.

The Army Air Corp was divided into "Forces," each designated roughly the function and theater of operations. For example, the Eight was made up of heavy bombers stationed in England. The Ninth was the bunch that started in Egypt and Palestine, generally called "The Middle East," while the Twelfth was fighters and Medium bombers based in North Africa. When Europe itself was broached, the planes based in Italy were designated as the Fifteenth Air Force, and the Ninth moved to England to encompass ground support for the invasion across the Channel into France. All this involved the guys in administration, paper pushers and plan-

ners, intelligence, training, supply, etc., etc. The actual fly boys were frequently transferred from one to another Force, and ground personnel loaned out to service visiting Squadrons who were running missions without their own ground mechanics.

The southern part of Italy is mostly hills and mountains and the best area for airfields is around Foggia on the Adriatic Sea side of the "Boot." General Doolittle set up his 15th A.F. Headquarters in Africa and when he moved to Italy he chose the city of Bari, due to the many buildings available there that had little battle damage. Some fine warehouse complexes were to serve as main supply depots for American units who were located to the rear of the English ground forces fighting to the North. On a night in early December of 1943 the Germans raided the port of Bari and sank more shipping than any other single raid except Pearl Harbor. Ammunition ships exploded and although it was kept secret for a long time, the deaths of many servicemen and civilians were caused by Mustard Gas that spread over the waterfront from the burning ships.

The U.S. Engineers carved airfields out of olive orchards and grain fields and in some cases improved existing, although heavily damaged, Axis bases. When the Service Squadron arrived from Africa one of these Italian airports was our first duty station in the seacoast city of Brindisi. The planes that first used that base after it fell into Allied hands were some British fighters that had flown from the island of Malta. Compared to U.S. operations the English had little to work with. Mechanics had to manufacture their own tools and wrenches and spare parts were at a minimum. Repairs were skimpy and sometimes crudely made. Pilots taxied the planes with three or four men sitting on the wings, hitching rides from their work areas to where their living quarters were. They ran missions against rail and road targets across the Adriatic and could hit the target and be back home in less than an hour.

When our refueling trucks got to work there we also found some cargo planes, DC-3s, that were assigned to Canadian crews dropping supplies and men by parachute behind enemy lines. And before long we were gassing P-38 photo recon flights that overflew at high altitude far behind the battlefields to locate targets for the heavies to hit later.

One pilot brought his P-38 down at dusk and taxied right up to my gasoline tanker, cut his engines and climbed out on the wing.

"God-damned it - hurry up with that hose. I have to get my films up to Bari before dark. Forty gallons will do fine."

I hardly had unhooked my static line from his landing strut before his props were ticking over, and of course there was no paper work signed on that transaction, either.

(Excerpt from Dec. 21 / 43)

Dear Mabel. ... I went on pass yesterday and had a pretty good time, too. Traveled from camp to town by foot, truck, rowboat, jeep, and lorry (the British term) and returned by train. And what a train! Have you ever seen European trains in the movies with an aisle down

one side, and compartments on the other? It was packed so tight with civilians and soldiers that we stood up the entire way. The conductor never fought his way close enough to collect the fare. We had a good meal in a private home, one of those Black Market places. Started out with a big bowl of ravioli and spaghetti, flavored with hot sauce. The main course was a whole chicken. Bread, nuts, cheese, oranges, and celery made up the side dishes; and we each had a bottle of champagne to drink. The bill for four of us came to \$28.70.

I watched the cooking procedure with interest. The old gal had a charcoal fire that she fanned with a paddle affair to get it burning good, then the chickens were placed in a round shallow pan which had a cover like a pie tin. Half the red hot coals were fished out of the fire and placed on top of this cover, thereby cooking the contents from two directions. It was worth the price, Mabel, as food is darned scarce, aside from Army issue.

Jan. 10 44 - Somewhere in Italy

Dear Mabel: 8:30 P.M. and Ernie has done the following since supper. Shaved with Mabel's soap, wash-rag and towel, used skin cream Dede sent, had a cup of Nescafe from Mom, read one of Peg's Time Magazines, lit one of Bob's cigarettes with Muriel's lighter, changed into a new pair of shorts you sent me, and her is the air mail stationery! It goes like that every day, I'm always reminded of home by the things I'm using.

A couple of nights ago we had the misfortune to break a glass part of the tent's only lantern. (no electricity here) and today Crooks brought three new ones in town, none of which we can use due to their odd size and shape. So he will take them back and try again, in the meantime we use candles. hi.

COMMENT

One of the driving conditions in Italy that we found strange was the route that most highways followed. Remember this was 1943 to 1945, and super freeways were yet to come. In the U.S. when you drive in the empty expanses of the Southwest desert, there are places where the road can be seen dropping away into a valley, ascending the next slope, and off in the distance, perhaps twenty miles away it fades from view. The one thing you can be sure of; it is laid out to pass through the lowest place in the hills ahead to get you to your destination. In Europe, the roads led from city to town to town to city to town, etc., and the location of these settlements were mostly on top of a hill, placed there for defensive purposes some centuries before automobiles were invented. So the highways we used headed for the highest point, rather than the lowest. Also the narrow streets in the towns were laid out for nimble footed beasts of burden, and twenty ton military trucks did not fit in that category. Trailers twelve feet high don't bother to duck under second floor balconies.

A truck driving hazard in Europe, during WW-2, was the slippery surface of asphalt after exposure to many horse drawn carts and wagons. Dung isn't hard to drive through when dry, but the oils do spread when rain falls, and unless flood conditions really wash down the pavement, it makes a crowned highway about the same as an iced surface. Conversation between two convoy drivers follows:

"What the hell are those nuts doing up ahead? Look at the rigs swinging all over the road. There goes Con-nell in the ditch!," and Tanner just hit a pole on the left side. Better slow down!"

"Already tried to -- If I pull on the air the trailer whips sideways. There ain't no traction, feels like we are on skates. Just hang on, Bezona, and hope we pick the opposite ditch from Crooks ahead of us."

"This looks like a string of boxcars being derailed. Hot Damn!"

"Look in the mirror. Is Mawyer gonna clobber us from back there?"

"Can't see anything but the tail of our trailer trying to catch up with the front. You are not suppose to drive this thing sideways, Cummins" I'm gonna take your good conduct medal away."

"Just wait for the wrecker. Bet it will be two hours before we can get going again. Boy, that is some horse-shit."

Jan. 13 / 44 - Somewhere in Italy

Dear Mabel: Hello honey, Here I am again! Just had the pleasure of hearing some new phonograph records in a nearby tent, including Pistol Packin' Mama .. Not much of a tune, but cute lyrics, wonder how it got so popular? Bought rations today, and was given a free carton of smokes. Have enough to hand out some to my laundryman, hi .. Got one "V" Mail today from George, His first letter in several months. He was telling about his turkey dinner, which seems like a long time ago. Any day now I'm due to get three of four from you telling about your Christmas, and how I wished I could have been there for the dinner you cooked!

Having nothing else to write about, I'll describe some other sounds audible from where I sit. 1.) The put-put of an electric generator furnishing lights for the officers tents. 2.) Trucks passing on the nearby road. 3.) A lone plane flying overhead. 4.) A muffled explosion from down the tent row, indicating someone's home built stove has backfired. 5.) A curse outside, as a soldier trips over a tent rope while on his way to the latrine. 6.) From the kitchen tent the rattle of boilers and drippers as the night shift of cooks go about preparing breakfast. Any Army camp sounds the same, except on Pay Day, when "Raise you five bucks," comes from many tents, hi ...

No rain for several days, so the task of getting from here to there is easier now. My overshoes stayed under my bunk for the first time since setting up this camp. On New Year's Eve there was a heavy rainfall, and the typical remarks that night was like the one Sgt. Kratzer made when he woke up just before midnight. He reached over and nudged another occupant of his tent and greeted him as follows: "Happy New Year Jake, your barracks bags are floating away!"

That particular night a few of us slept in an English tent, and we had a chat with one of the guards posted in the area. I wanted to know how the British fed their troops on Xmas, and he gave us the menu in detail. He emphasized this point, the turkeys, pigs and extra delicacies were bought by the troops, not supplied by the government. The livestock was purchased a month or so in advance and fattened up for the feast!(Con't)

WARTIME HEROICS BY PILOTS OF 461st BOMB GROUP

Sharing of information through newsletters from various Groups uncovers many interesting facts. In the December 1994 issue of "LIBERAIDER" (page 16) I found a very interesting article, moreover a letter, from our Group Commander, Colonel Robert E.L. Eaton, as sent to the Wing Commander, Colonel William E. Lee, 49th Bomb Wing. With the kind permission of the 461st membership, and of Frank C. O'Bannon, President, I would like to reprint this letter as regards our Group and that of the 461st. (It should be remembered that the 451st, 461st and 484th were the components of the 49th Wing - smallest [but mightiest] Wing in the 15th Army Air Force.)

The letter, and follow-up response is as follows:

HEADQUARTERS - 451st BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) - A.P.O. #520, U.S. Army - 10 July 1944

Subject: Commendable Action of Crew Members of the 461st Bombardment Group (H).

To: Commanding General, 49th Bombardment Wing (H) A.P.O. #520, U.S. Army

1. On 26 June, First Lieutenant Wesley E. McClure, 0-806476, was flying the number four position in the low box of the second attack unit of the 451st Bombardment Group (H) on the way to attack a German synthetic oil refinery in the Vienna area. Enroute to the target the formation was violently attacked by enemy fighters and Lieutenant McClure's airplane was so badly damaged that he was not able to maintain his position in the formation.

2. The pilot continued over the target alone, continuously harassed by enemy fighters and with only two engines operative, attempted to return to his home base by direct route. Unable to contact his formation or fighter escort by radio, he jettisoned all removable equipment, applies as much power to his two operable engines as he dared, and together with his crew, fought a heroic running battle with thirteen enemy fighters.

3. In the Zagreb's area, he was overtaken by a formation of the 461st Bombardment Group (H) who observed the plight of the crippled airplane and its crew. Two B-24's of the 461st Bombardment Group piloted by First Lieutenant Edward Felix Veiluva, 0-682924 and Second Lieutenant Mac Lewis Lucas, 0-168355, both of the 764th Bomb Squadron, flying airplanes Number 129362 and Number 440632 respectively, left the comparative safety of their formation and came to the aid of the single cripple, offering the protection of their additional fire-power. The three airplanes flew a tight formation and kept up such a deadly and accurate fire that the enemy fighters left and attacked the remainder of the 461st Bombardment Group (H).

4. The crippled airplane, with its escort, proceeded on to the Italian coast, flying on instruments a portion of the time and landed at a British fighter base at Penna Point, due to fuel shortage. The two escorting planes stood by until the landing was effected and the pro-

ceeded to their home airdrome.

5. The gallantry of the two pilots of the 461st Bombardment Group (H) and the heroic battle of their crews was, beyond reasonable doubt, responsible for saving a bombardment airplane and the lives of the crew. By their unselfish action and willingness to assume personal risk, they have demonstrated the high esprit and devotion to duty of the personnel of the Army Air Forces.

6. The officers and men of the 451st Bombardment Group (H) join me in expressing our gratitude and our highest praise for these gallant airmen.

(signed) Robert E.L. Eaton, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding

Hq 49th Bomb Wing (H), APO 520, 12 July 44
To: CO, 461st Bomb Group (H), APO 520.

1. The undersigned notes the foregoing with pleasure and desires to add his appreciation to the personnel responsible for this most worthy commendation.

2. It is also desired that the personnel embraced in letter of commendation be highly recommended for the Silver Star and a copy of this letter be attached to the recommendations for Awards and Decorations.

(signed) William L. Lee, Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding.

It should be added that Wesley McClure was originally the copilot for Dale W. Miller (726th). Apparently at this stage of his proficiency he warranted a crew of his own. It is regrettable that we, as of this date, have not uncovered the whereabouts of Wes, for he may have enjoyed the tribute that was bestowed on his ability and that of the 461st crews that came to his aid. We would appreciate hearing from the crewmembers that may have been with Lt. McClure that June 26th, and moreover the whereabouts of McClure.

It was with pleasure that I can read of the heroism of these particular combat crews from the pages of the LIBERATOR. But it was with sadness that I also noted the passing of Mildred O'Bannon, wife of Frank O'Bannon. Together they fashioned the remnants of the 461st into a sizeable and formidable organization that they could be proud of. Frank was lucky to have had Millie as a partner, one that was truly interested in maintaining and enhancing their Group. On behalf of the 451st Bomb Group I offer my deepest condolences to Frank and his family.

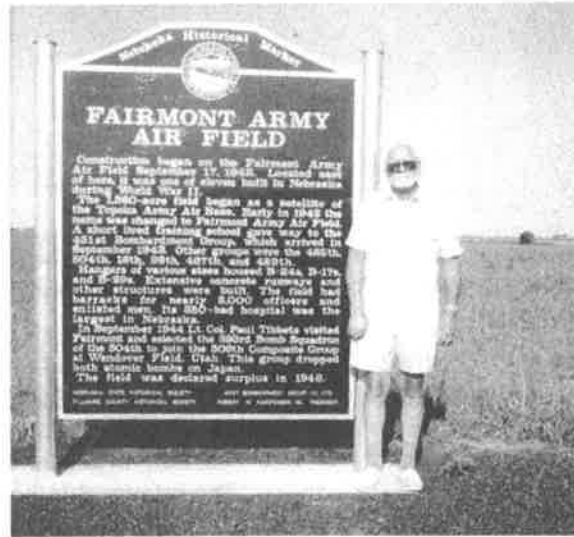


WHAT'S GOING ON IN FAIRMONT, NEBRASKA

In mid October 1994 I received an invitation to participate in the Annual Committee Meeting of the Fillmore County Historical Society. Not one to let an opportunity to mingle with the good people of Fairmont, Nebraska go by, I drove out to get a first hand account as to how various projects were progressing. I had time, prior to the meeting, to visit with the President of the Society, Don West; and the dedicated Curator of the Fairmont Museum, Ruth Black. Together they gave me, and Sedge & Willie Hill [727th], who were also in attendance, an objective updating of what is being considered for future projects of the Society.

First off; Plans are still being formulated to get another Historical Marker placed on State Route 6, just East of Fairmont, North of the Base. This, along with the one now on Route 81, would "box in" the Fairmont Army Air Field from both directions; and off the only two State roads that transverse the area. It would be a coup for the Fillmore County Historical Society to get such sanctioning from the State of Nebraska Highway Department, as no other site has ever been designated with two, let alone one, marker. Don reminded me that getting this through the State may take a little time as it is a rather sticky situation since one marker is already in place. Both Don and Ruth surprised me with the fact that the new marker, whenever it is to be cast, has already been paid for by donations from the 451st Bomb Group. This shouldn't have surprised me since I know that from the time of our 1990 reunion, and our trip through the city of Fairmont and to the old airbase, a number of our members have offered financial support to this very ambitious effort.

Secondly; When given a tour of the Museum, Ruth Black showed me her newest project: a room dedicated to all aspects of the old Fairmont Army Air Field. The first thing to strike your eye are the large 451st photographs (as once sponsored by the late Bill Dwyer) and donated by Allan Woodman, combat photographer. They dramatically take up a whole wall. My first im-



Don Ryland Visits "First" Marker While on Vacation

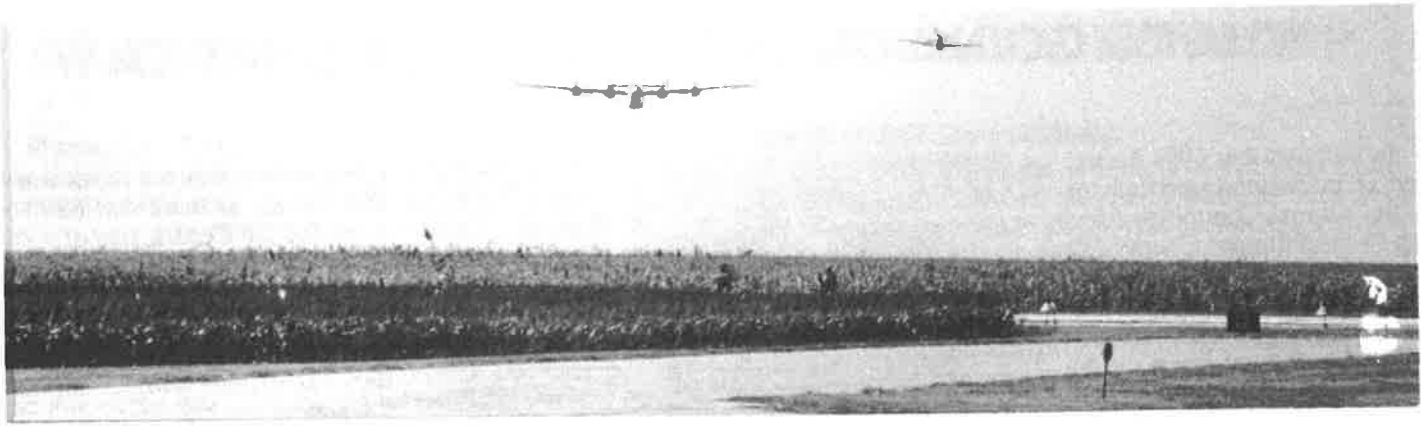
pression was that the room was TOO small, as there was no room for the Certificates of Authentication that explain the circumstances of each photograph. But from the aspect of the Museum, there is no way they can expand without altering the size of the building. My only suggestion was that some way of consolidating, and restructuring, the manner in which the photos were displayed. If some form of "Group Framing" for the picture could be explored, thereby more room could be given to the viewing of the Certificates. As is, the "eye effects" are impressive, but what isn't seen could add more to the total effect. "Woodie" is to be commended for his allegiance to the com-

munity that once showed us kindness and respect during our tenure there.

Third; It was announced that in June of 1996 the community of Fairmont (formerly named 'Hisperia') will be celebrating it's 125th anniversary; and the 50th year since the closing of the Fairmont Army Air Field. It is surprising the part the Air Field played in promoting that area into a serious wartime entity. Although nothing definite has been planned as to, "Who, What, Where, and When," I'm sure as things are finalized they will let me know. At the time of this writing the basic information passed on to me is that they hope to make it "happen" over the Father's Day weekend in June, 1996. Inasmuch as it falls on the year of our biennial reunion, I was not able to project our Group, totally, into what their committee may have planned. Perhaps it would behoove you to let me know if you would like to take part in this (on an individual basis), come June of '96. I could arrange with some of the motels in York and/or Geneva, Nebraska for lodgings, or at least give you a listing of those that are available. It would be strictly a vehicular type gathering as each group would have to seek their own transportation. Flying into Lincoln, one could rent a car and then enjoy what's planned. Maybe you could team up with someone you know and share the expenses. It could be a rewarding experience.



Fairmont Army Air Field [Barracks Area]: As We Knew It THEN (Circa 1943)



Fairmont Army Air Field: As We Know It NOW (Circa 1990 - 451st Reunion Excursion)

Word has been sent out to other Groups that trained on the Field to take part in this exercise, but to the best of my knowledge, none but the 485th Bomb Group have responded. If this all should come about, I'd love to see the 451st play a leading part in this celebration and come out in big numbers. Tell me your interest and I will follow-up with the good people of Fillmore County/City of Fairmont and we'll see what can be worked out.

But should your ability to attend be thwarted by health or inconvenience, the Historical Society would be open to donations in the name of the 451st Bomb Group. Perhaps in this way we can somehow amend the imposition we caused the community back in 1943. Donations (checks) can be made out to the "Fillmore County Historical Society," and sent to Ruth Black, Box #373; or Don West, Box #296, both of Fairmont, NE, 68354. Indicate that your donation is made with the endorsement of the 451st BG, Ltd.

WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON?

An earlier trip into the hinterlands of Nebraska (January 1994) brought me to Geneva, Nebraska where I had the opportunity to see the "afore mentioned" Fairmont Museum 451st pictures on public display. When word got across the street to the Editor of the Nebraska Signal that a representative of the 451st was in town, Claudia Sangster, cornered me and drew the following story out of me.

GENEVA - The photographic exhibit of the 451st Bombardment Group at Geneva State Bank drew a special visitor on Tuesday, January 18.

Robert Karstensen, president of the 451st made the trip from his home in Marengo, IL, to visit the exhibit and other members of the group residing in the area.

The 21-piece exhibit is on loan from the Fillmore County Museum and Karstensen played a role in getting the display to the museum.

The large framed picture with its authenticity was donated by Karstensen, with the 18 smaller photos donated by

Allan S. Woodman, combat photographer.

"I have a similar display of my own," Karstensen said, "But to see them on display sets yourself back and is still very dramatic."

The relationship between the 451st and the Fillmore County Museum began shortly after the Bombardment Group's reunion in September of 1990.

"We wanted to hold a reunion in Omaha and then met with different groups to see what types of activities we could generate," Karstensen said. "The Fillmore County Historical Society was among those who met with us. They have shown us a great deal of courtesy."

"The museum's efforts for our group have inspired me to let others know what's going on here through newsletters. My relationship with the museum and the area has been continual and I keep dropping in."

The 451st Bombardment Group arrived at the Fairmont Army Air Field on September 8, 1943, from Wendover Field, UT. They left for the European Theater on November 18 to operate with the 15th Air Force. While in Europe, the group received three Distinguished Unit Citations for performance on raids to Regensburg, Ploesti and Vienna.

Since the end of World War II, the group has remained in contact, with the efforts of Karstensen and others of the 451st.

"We have found 1,500 members of the group and are still looking for more," Karstensen said. "There were over 2,000 stationed at one time in Fairmont and throughout the history of the group between 6,000 and 8,000 were attached to the 451st. There are other groups out there as active as us. We have a close connection and work towards each others benefit to help locate members."

Karstensen is responsible for a periodical newsletter and every two years the group holds a reunion. The 1994 reunion is slated for Kansas City.

"We had a lot of pride in what we did," Karstensen said, "It was a good war and we are beginning to see a lot of the children of members getting active



Bob K. At Geneva, NE Bank

and taking an interest in what we did. A display like this helps. It helps promote us and what we did in World War II."

The 451st bombardment Group exhibit will remain at Geneva State Bank through January 31, before returning to the Fillmore County Museum for permanent display.

Thus ended two enjoyable trips to Fairmont. One proved enlightening; the other promotional. Each trip was fun. Above all it's people are the GREATEST!!



Fairmont Army Air Field: Coming in From The North Road (Circa 1989)

OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER:

Adams, Carl B., 727th - 26 December 1994
 Bolelman, Irwin L., 727th - 16 January 1995
 Cessna, Samuel R., 727th - 30 January 1995
 Christianson, Allen G., 727th - 27 February 1994
 Deitemyer, John H., 726th - 1 October 1994
 Duke, James T., 725 - 30 August 1993
 Guilfoyle, Raymond G., 725 - 2 July 1994
 Holcomb, Hugh W., 727th - 1994
 Lahey, John E., 726th - 30 January 1994
 Marchetto, Raymond A., 725th - 27 June 1994
 McDonald, George P., 725th - 23 February 1994
 McKnight, James, 727th - 13 December 1994
 Peterson, Ralph S., 726th - 11 July 1994
 Rutkowski, Walter, 724th - 28 April 1993
 Speir, John R., 724th - 4 November 1994
 Toumbacaris, George B., 724th - 1994
 Tribbet, Robert J., 725th - 1994
 Wallior, Raymond P., 60th - 24 July 1994
 Yavasile, Joseph J., 727th - 25 September 1944
 Young, Roy M., 725th - 1994
 Yourston, Vernon B., 725th - February 1994

Special Monetary Consideration to the Memory of
 Walter Rutkowski - 724th; by his wife, Lucille.

A donation to the 451st Bomb Group in memory of a deceased person in lieu of flowers and other memorials is an option for all members and their families.

Angels breath, and as peaceful as a soaring bird. May we all, someday, join our Heavenly Host and meet once again in that Tranquil Skies of the Hereafter.

A poem submitted by Robert W. Finkle (726th), written by an unknown fellow POW in Stalag Luft I, Germany, and hereby dedicated to his good friend and fellow gunner; "Dutch" Schwulst.

"AT THE LAST"

O' God who hears the smallest cry that ever rose from human soul, be near my mother when she reads my name upon the Honor Roll. And when she finds it written there, Dear Lord stand behind her chair.

Or if it be thy sacred will that I may go and stroke her hand, just let me say, "I'm living still, though in a better land." One word from me will cheer her so. O' if you will, Dear Lord, let me go.

I know her eyes with tears will blind. I think I hear her choking cry when on thy list my name she'll find. O' let me, let me, let me try to somehow make her understand that it's not really hard to die.

She's thinking of the thirst and pain, she's thinking of the saddest things, she doesn't know an Angel came and led me to the water springs, she doesn't know the quiet peace that fell upon me like the rain, when something sounded my release and something loosed the scorching pain, she doesn't know I gladly went and am with death - content.

I want to say I played the game, played the game right to the end. I did not shun from shot and flame, but at the last thy good old friend that they called DEATH did beckon me. Yes, I went quite willingly. Just let me tell her, let her know it wasn't hard to go.

These men, all brave and true, once answered their Nations Call; Now they answer the Call of their Creator. May their flight through eternity be as gentle as an

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
451ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
APO 520 US ARMY

19 January 1945

MEMORANDUM)
:
NUMBER 55-34)

OPERATIONS

STANDARD OPERATIONS PROCEDURES FOR COMBAT MISSIONS

1. In early morning briefings time is being wasted repeating old Group Standard Operational Procedures which should be familiar to all combat personnel. Hereafter, these S.O.P.'s will not be stressed by the briefing officer, nevertheless, they will be strictly adhered to.

2. Squadron Commanders are directed to hold a meeting with all combat personnel within twenty-four hours after the receipt of this memorandum. The following S.O.P.'s shall be explained and made clear in the minds of all officers and men.

- a. Tower Flares before mission: Green - Start engines; Yellow - Stand-by; Red - Stand-down.
- b. Bomb Bay doors will be closed during engine run-up and while taxiing.
- c. Planes taxiing will have an observer in the top hatch.
- d. The top escape hatch will be open on take-off and landing.
- e. The flare pistol will be loaded with a red flare before starting take-off roll in case Pilot is unable to take-off.
- f. Nose wheel will be lifted off the ground before passing the tower.
- g. There will be a thirty (30) second interval between planes on take-off and landing.
- h. Flares from Group Lead Aircraft: Green-Yellow - Descent; Yellow-Yellow - Level-off; Red-Red - Rendezvous; Red-Yellow - Climb.
- i. No fuel will be transferred above 12,000 feet. If possible, the fuel from the Tokyo tanks will be transferred to the main tanks before reaching the target.
- j. An oxygen check will be made every fifteen (15) minutes.
- k. Bomb Bay doors will be exercised at least twice enroute to the target.
- l. Test fire guns over safe areas only. All gunners, especially the tail gunners, keep guns from being aimed at other ships in the formation.
- m. Ships aborting from the mission will drop landing gear to signal other ships in the formation that they are aborting.
- n. RADIO DISCIPLINE: No idle chatter on radio; it is to be used for command functions and emergencies.
- o. Ball turrets will be lowered when cruising altitude is reached.
- p. Carpet machines will be turned on ten (10) minutes before the IP.

R E S T R I C T E D

(Memo 55-34. Hq. 451st Bomb Group (H), dtd 19 Jan 45, Cont'd)

- q. All Pilots will switch to Baker channel VHF five (5) minutes before reaching the IP and guard this channel until after the rally.
- r. Chaff dispensing will begin three (3) minutes before the IP and continue at the rate of three (3) bundles every twenty (20) seconds until clear of flak.
- s. All electrical equipment and radios, except VHF, will be turned off before the IP in PFF Aircraft only.
- t. Goggles will be worn while going thru flak.
- u. Green flares at the IP indicates the start of the bomb run.
- v. A single Red flare on the bomb run means abandoning the target.
- w. Bombing codeword at the IP for bomb run: Visual "SHACK" PFF "WHEEL"
- x. The lead ship will call the rest of the planes one (1) minute before bomb release point on Baker channel and fire a Yellow-Yellow flare.
- y. Bomb bay doors will remain open as long as planes are in flak.

3. As new crews are assigned to the Squadrons, this Memorandum will be brought to their attention during the Operations Officer's lecture on Air Discipline to Air Crew Training.

By order of Lieutenant Colonel STEFONOWICZ:

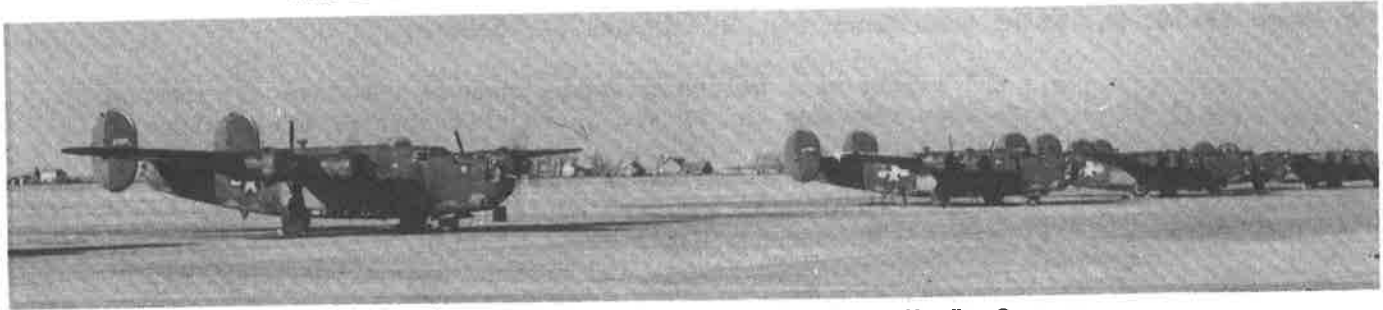
DONALD T. JONES
Lt. Col., Air Corps,
Executive.

OFFICIAL:

FRANCIS J. HOERMANN,
Major, Air Corps,
Operations Officer.

DISTRIBUTION: "A"

INTELLIGENCE OFFICER, AL ROEMER, OFFERS BRIEF HISTORY OF 726th (CIRCA 1944)



Last Look at Fairmont Army Air Field Flight Line Before Heading Overseas

A rare privileged is to be offered some historical text that fits right into what we're all about. In this case Al Roemer, former Assistant Intelligence Officer (later Intelligence Officer of the 726th), offered the following material. This input came about when he responded to the Lt Hunt crash that had perplexed this office for some time. His response was listed in the Short Burst and Hang Fires section of the Ad-Lib, Issue 23, Page 32. When asked by this office if he had more viable information, he responded with "an affirmative." His material covered the departure from Geneva/Fairmont AAF in November '43 to late April of '94. This literary effort was spawned by, then Squadron Adjutant, Lt William McGuire, who requested that some chronological history be made of the 726th for future reference. Cessation of the writing came about when Lt. McGuire was transferred to Headquarters and duties of the Squadron Intelligence Officer became more intensive. Group Headquarters also put out a History, under various writers, but Lt. Roemer's was more directed to the 726th. This article should be especially interesting to the original 726th cadre.

SQUADRON HISTORY

726th BOMB SQUADRON - 451st BOMB GROUP (H)

CHAPTER I

On the 21st and 22nd of November, 1943, the "A Echelon" departed from FAAF, Geneva, Nebraska, for Lincoln and its first leg on the journey overseas. On the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day, after a delicious meal, the ground echelon of the 726th received the long awaited order for overseas movement and departed from FAAF on the 26th day of November. Wives and otherwise of the officers and men were at the station, contrary to orders, to bid "Bon Voyage." In this connection the work of the S-2 section was particularly outstanding. Lt. Jeff Adams, the bombsight expert, joined the squadron on the morning of the same day. Platoon



Capt. William McGuire - Group Supply

formation was introduced and continued in effect until arrival at our overseas destination, namely, Gioia del Colle, Italy. The Squadron traveled by coach from Fairmont to Chicago, by Pullman from Chicago to Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, the POE, arriving at 2115 on the 28th of November, 1943 completely in the dark. Strict Censorship was placed into effect at the POE and is still in effect. Four new enlisted men joined at the POE and Sergeant Coats of Supply rejoined the Squadron.

Five days were spent at CPH "processing." POM requirements proved to be pigeon-hole "poop."

The Squadron boarded the SS John S. Pillsbury, HRPE, Va., at 1100 on the 3rd day of December. Bands were playing, among other items, "Dixie," on request, and "White Christmas," unrequested. Red Cross ladies contributed a drink described as coffee and good cheer, especially one grey-haired dame. One officer was kissed by the same. PFC Harvey Kuhns was ill for a short period on the boat. Six days out at sea there occurred "The Revolt against the First Three Graders," the result of an eleven o'clock curfew on the poker-crap and blackjack artists. Incidentally a great deal of money changed hands on board ship. The food situation enroute was lousy and mess sergeants were changed in mid-course ... for the better .. i.e., Nosco to Ripley; 725th to 726th. Turkey was served on the 22nd as Christmas dinner, our first. Two meals a day only were served officers and enlisted men alike on board ship while the merchant men crew was eating the Christmas ration. The plumbing situation also broke down and the latrines overflowed into the kitchen to no ones concern. The main pastime on board ship were chess, poker ... and sleeping. We did not see "The Rock," as Tangiers was the first land sighted on the voyage over. Everyone was generally p-o-ed by the time the Squadron debarked in the harbor of Oran, French North Africa, on December 23rd at 1400 .. in the rain.

Thus began "The Battle of Goat Hill ... It ended in a

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

roul. The Squadron de-trucked on the side of one of the beautiful hills of French North Africa. The "A'rabs" provided much amusement with their queer dress and open air sanitation. However most of the boys got the general idea that if you wanted your head to stay with you it was good to keep it tacked on. One Arab was seen in GI impregnated clothing. The password with Arab kids was "Gimme Joe" ... and the damned fool generally did just that. Then the rains came ... on goat hill. Water ditches were dug thru tents for Lebensraum; which needless to say was never achieved. Water was overhead and underfoot 100% of the time. Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day were generally FU'ed. One officer however was lucky enough to send an EFM cable. Cognac and "Vino" became the staff of life at this time.

On December 27th after having debarked in an abandoned gravel pit and after having seen the French warship "Lorraine" the Squadron boarded the SS Johan De Witt, a Dutchman run by the Limeys. There began a nightmare of MPs and JGFs (Jolly Good Fellows ... "You will have a good time.") The food and service was excellent, from the officers viewpoint, the first two graders, and the Javanese mess boys. everything else was hell. The world's quietist New Year's Eve was spent by all in Naples Harbor with a fouled anchor. The shore batteries made merry however. The Squadron debarked on the second of January, 1944 at 1400 from the SS Johan De Witt in the Harbor of Naples among all the other wrecks.

The Squadron hiked with full field equipment, paced by two MPs and a virile Major sans field equipment, for the longest 3/4 mile hike on record; from the docks to the RR station at Palazzo Badoglio, where after a hurry-up-and-wait job, the Squadron departed for Bagnoli and air-conditioned marble halls amid the usual amount of confusion. The Squadron left Bagnoli in the same state by truck convoy on the 3rd of January after experiencing their first air-raid in the clear.

After visiting Foggia and Manfredonia the Squadron arrived at Gioia del Colle on the 4th day of January, at 2130. After a great deal of rain .. work .. cold .. cognac .. more work .. more cognac .. order was established and everything became once more "Normal."



T/Sgt Reginald "Pop" White

Major Raymond Marshall, Lt Curt Skinner and Sergeant Coats left for North Africa in search of TAT equipment. The trip was made by air.

On January 22nd, 1944 the Air Echelon arrived with much news and amid prayers of thanks from the entire Squadron that the long journey had been made completely in the air without mishap or serious injury.

CHAPTER II

The Air Echelon consisting of 75 Officers and 132 Enlisted Men (and one lb. of coffee) arrived at Gioia del Colle. Captain Charles C. Haltom assumed command to the pleasure of the entire Squadron. Several promotions were given to the Enlisted Men, including that of R.C. White, better known as "Pop" White to Tech Sergeant. The 726th Squadron had by hard work and extreme enterprise on the part of the ground echelon under the able leadership of 1st Lts William H. McGuire and Albert F. Ogg became the most outstanding Squadron and area in the Group, whereupon "Group moved in establishing an Officers Mess .. etc, .. etc, .. and more etc .. and an 'Inner Sanctum'." Major Marshall had by this time returned from North Africa. A Special Deluxe American Type Supporter (Section VIII Model) was built by Squadron carpenters for non-squatters in Group. About this time the court Martial sentences of Privates Miller and Calabrese were remitted. Both men were "good soldiers" on the way over. On January 25th Lt Curt Skinner, Asst. Operations Officer, returned from JFA flight and in North Africa. The Squadron Medical Officer, Captain M.K. Kremers, warned Squadron personnel against native food and folly (women).

On the 30th of January the Squadron participated in the Group's first mission. Albania was pretty well knocked up. On February 2nd, Radar Stations at Durazzo, Albania, were destroyed by the Squadron. On February 8th shortly after take off in the early morning on an icy cold day Lt James Hunt crashed in Lt Sturman's plane. It appeared that due to climatic conditions the plane had iced-up causing the deaths of the following officers and enlisted men:

2nd Lt James N. Hunt, Pilot; 2nd Lt Vearl G. Maple, Navigator; Flight Officer Fountain S. Lovejoy, Bombardier; Sgt James F. Curtain; Sgt Donald S. Dobry; S/Sgt Tino V. Hernandez and Sgt Herbert L. Suereth, Jr.

The Summary Court Officers were Elliott Arnold and Lt Lloyd H. Lipkey. 2nd Lt Edward S. Niederkorn, the copilot and Sgt Meryl M. Frost were severely injured and hospitalized in Bari. Lt Harry M. Luhrs, one of the first at the crash, assisted in the rescue of Lt Niederkorn. Sgt Darrell Thaxton was slightly injured in the same crash was returned to duty.

On the same day Sgt Leo F. Doring, the nose gunner in the lead ship in the formation, flying Lt S.Z. Winski and Colonel Robert E.L. Eaton, the Commanding Officer of the Group, was killed in action by flak. During the same raid freight yards, oil tanks and manufacturing plants at Piombino were blasted to he--. On February 10, in a raid over the Rome beachhead, Lt Charles B. Morfit, copilot of Lt Sidney Z. Winski, was injured in action by flak. On February 12th Lt Frank E. Roman brought his plane back after a solo flight. His entire crew and S/Sgt Allen S. Woodman, a Photographer, bailed out, only after the plane had acted up. At the present writing the Squadron has had a wonderful flying record, much to the credit of the Good Soldiers, however in regard to other aspects of the tactical situation it might be said that the crystal ball has completely clouded up.

CHAPTER III

On the 22nd of February 310 Enlisted Men of the Squadron were awarded the "Good Conduct Medal."

On the 25th of February, the Squadron flew to Regensburg, Germany, and was greatly instrumental in the destruction of the Messerschmitt A/C Factory located there. Captain (then First Lt) Richard Coleman and his crew were reported missing, having been last seen heading down and out of the formation though still under control. It has since been reported that many of the crew were returning to allied held territory, some were taken prisoner, and some were killed. Lt Elliott Arnold, Squadron Intelligence Officer was with the formation as an Aerial Observer. Captain S.Z. Winski, No. 1 Group pilot, led the formation over the target in the lead ship with a beautiful exhibition of evasatory tactics. As a result Major (then Captain) Charles C. Haltom was promoted and awarded the DFC, Lt Arnold was sent to the 47th Wing on DS to write the story of the Regensburg Raid. After three months, he is still writing .. and still on DS.



Lt Elliott Arnold - Intelligence O.

tom, with Captains Hughs, Byers, and Winski rode in the lead ship. Results: Astounding!

On the 5th of April, Lt McGuire left to take charge of the movement to Castelluccia Air Field, South of Foggia, (app. nine miles).

On the 14th of April, Lt McGuire, Squadron Adjutant, was transferred to Group Headquarters, and Captain Beverly V. Pearson succeeded him.

On the 19th day of April 1944, "Colonel" Woodrow A. McCulley was promoted to the grade of Corporal.

On the 22nd day of April, 2nd Lts Gano, Chambers, Bell, Miller, Bias, Slater, Hagan, Bodenchuk, Volz and Sturman were promoted to 1st Lts.

Missions other than those mentioned:

Vienna 17 March Lavariano 18 March Klagenfurt 19 March Mestre (Ity) 28 March Sofia (Blgria) 29 March Steyr (Austria) 2 April Budapest 3 April Bucharest 4 April Ploesti 5 April Budapest 13 April Belgrade 16 April Belgrade 17 April Bad Voslau 23 April

(Editor: At this point Roemer's narrative ends. With the departure of Lt McGuire, or because of the fact that Group was also working on such a compilation of facts and figures, all further efforts in this vein ceased. But what we have here is a somewhat more personal view of happenings within the 726th Squadron, as compiled by an "on the site" reporter.)

On the 4th of March, several combat crews and key ground personnel left Gioia del Colle, Italy for San Pancrazio. The next few days were spent moving the organization to temporary quarters at San Pancrazio. Lt McGuire left early and was placed in charge of the advance party. Lt Ogg, as usual, remained in charge of the rear party. Others completed the mission by highly successful evasatory actions.

Rain hindered operations somewhat as well as tent pegs oozing out of the ground and tents falling in, the result of the high wind. Several tents rained out.

On March 11, the Squadron flew on a bombing mission over Toulon, France. Heavy flak was encountered. Lt Slater and his crew in the famed "Three Feathers" went into Bastia, Corsica, for a nine day vacation and rest. Naturally, Group never found out the status of the crew and for nine days all believed them lost.

On the 12th of March, 1944, the First Sergeant and one of the Italian speaking boys were seen escorting a couple of Signorinas out of the Squadron area. It was said that the girls were in camp for business purposes, and according to rumor one netted forty dollars in one night. They also stopped in on the medics and continued visiting us for quite some time thereafter -- at night -- firmly cementing relations with our noble allies. "Oscar" is said to have knocked one of Lt Ogg's boys off one of the firefly one fine night and was knifed as a result.

On the 13th of March, a staff meeting was held at which all the staff officers and flight leaders were informed "It was wonderful to be an Officer" and saluting would be enforced within the camp area. Result: Exactly nil.

On the 15th of March the Squadron flew an incomplete bombing mission over Cassino (Venafro). French Headquarters were completely destroyed, further cementing relations with our allies. Colonel Rush, our Wing CO, rode with Lt Long as a gunner. Major Hal-



"Officers Row" 726th Bomb Squadron



San Pancrazio Mess Hall

REUNIONS By Bill Burlingame

Reunions are a time for renewing old friendships and developing new ones. Military oriented reunions are more meaningful than others since they bring together people that have experienced unique and in some cases traumatic adventures.

On Thursday, September 15, Peggy and I arrived for the 9th Biennial Reunion of the 451st Bombardment Group (H) WW-II at the Hyatt Regency Crown Center, Kansas City, Missouri.

Thursday was all day registration in the lobby with everyone checking the master list to see how many of their old cohorts made the trip. Also 451st memorabilia items were offered for sale. That evening we attended a U.S.O. Show filled with nostalgia and fun. Many of the 451st members wore their resurrected (ill fitted or not) old WW-II military garb. Coffee and doughnuts were served ala' Red Cross style and one of the performers was a show stopper and gave us, in retrospect to our advanced years, the desire to be young again. The performer was none other than Sally Rand and her fans (have pictures).

On Friday, September 16, eleven buses left for an excursion trip to the historic frontier Army Post, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; home of the 9th and 10th U.S. Cavalry's Buffalo Soldiers. This was a break from tradition, instead of visiting an Air Force Base. Lunch was at the Officers Club. That evening after a Wine and Cheese Appreciation Hour our Opening Ceremony took place. After the colors were in place we had a fascinating orientation on this part of the country, in fact of the whole world, by one of the historical figures of that era, Harry Truman and his wife, Bess. President Truman took a Q and A session from us and played the piano.

The evening was topped off with genuine Kansas City Jazz (who can ever forget the immortal 12th Street Rag. Saturday, the 17th we were offered the choice of two Kansas City tours. Peg and I went on the "Yesterday and Today" tour. One of the stops was the Liberty Memorial dedicated November 1st, 1921 by the American Legion. Attending, at that dedication, were Marshal Foch, Admiral Betty, General Pershing and Vice President Calvin Coolidge. Guarding this Memorial were 2 sphinx with their eyes covered so they could not see the horrors of war. Another stop was the steamboat "Arabia" Museum. In 1856 the Arabia sank in the Missouri River and lay entombed for 133 years. Recovered in 1989, her cargo was preserved in mud and all of it is still in pristine condition and on permanent display. Saturday evening we attended our Gala Banquet, Kansas City steak and after all the hoopla and speeches, danced off a few pounds.

We enjoyed a complete and total renewal of friendships by meeting old buddies and it goes without saying, we have a common bond on which to base our gatherings. We were all part of, or attached, to an exceptional organization. We gather to relive our youth perhaps for the last time. Taps are being heard more often, thus making each succeeding Reunion that much more important. ?

CASE OF THE MISSING PATIENT by L. Harvey

Ground men can often relate stories of heroism, pathos, and humor. In the following tale, perhaps all three can be applied. Stick with me as I try and pass it on to you readers. It relates to the happenings of Lawrence Harvey, Instrument Repairman in the 726th Squadron. He just recently wrote me this entry for me to pass on to you:

We left Castelluccia on the 26th of May for Naples to catch a ship back to the States. We had been in Naples a couple of days when I got the chills and sweats. I got in bed with all my clothes on, plus a couple of blankets. Then I would get real hot and throw everything off. I put up with this about one day. I got to thinking, if I died with malaria, I wouldn't get home. I didn't tell anyone but my tent buddy where I was going. I asked an M.P. where the nearest Army Hospital was, and I walked to the 45th General Hospital and checked myself in. The nurse told me to get my clothes off and get in bed. She had written all my information down and had given me a set of army pajamas. That evening my tent buddy, Bill Manley, came over to the hospital and told me we were boarding ship the next morning; I said "I'll be there!"

I had put my clothes under the mattress and not turned them in, as the nurse said I should do. I didn't see a soul nor get any medication, outside of what the nurse originally gave me. I am not sure, but I think I had to climb a fence to get out of there. I got to the ship and didn't die on the way home.

I tried to keep my G.I. Insurance, but they kept writing me that I couldn't, because I was MIA.

In Larry's case I'm sure they have cleared up the MIA situation, and changed it to AWOL, or there may STILL be an investigating party looking for him (or parts of him) over there. But can you picture the look on the nurse's face when she had to report to her superiors that one of her patients was missing. The description of the "wanted man" had to have been that he was either in hospital pajamas, or buck-naked.

Larry also plied me for answers on; "Whatever happened to?" Seems that a high school chum and he were in the same chow line and recognized each other. His chum, Frank Hooper, was also in the 726th, as a gunner on F.L. Fort's crew. This brief encounter was never followed up as Frank was killed on 16 July 1944 on a mission to Weiner Neudorf, Austria.

Larry can find further details by looking at Issue #21 of the Winter 1991 Ad-Lib (page 22). It is part of the series we did on Lyle Baker and his POW story.



TWO MAJOR BOOKS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

376th GROUP HISTORY BOOK:

"THE LIBERANDOS"

After almost 8 years of researching, rewriting and more research, a final culmination to this very detailed tome is now for sale. With 613 pages and with over 550 pictures, this book tells all there is to know about one of the 15th Air Forces most decorated Bomb Groups (arguable only in the sense that they were in the theater longer than we were - we garnered out share of awards) that saw action on the original June '42 High Level, the August '43 Low Level, as well as the later High Level Ploesti raids.

Remember this book is not for "light" reading, but is crammed with facts and figures about all aspects of how, where and when the 376th was formed and how it operated.

The primary ramrod on the project was the 376th's Colonel Norman Appold (Retired), chairman of the book committee. He, along with members of the book committee, and James Walker (author, writer, and compiler - and the ALL Group Historian); with his superb knowledge and background, have put together this book. It's one that should be on every historians coffee table; and after reading it, should be in everyone's bookcase for further reference.



The book sells for \$59.00 (including shipping and handling). You may purchase same by contacting Bill Barnes, 4304 Denton Circle, Waco, TX 76710. Make your check payable to "376th HBGVA" (Heavy Bomb Group Veterans Association). You won't be disappointed nor sorry.



"LIBERATOR - America's Global Bomber"

Another book of similar size and dedication was authored by Alwyn T. Lloyd, all about the B-24. In fact it is titled: "Liberator - America's Global Bomber," befitting its 560 pages, with over 1,100 pictures, and covering the historical aspects of the B-24 from concept; its service in various Groups, Air Forces, and Nations. It shows its many other variants as a Cargo, Anti-submarine, Photographic and Utility type aircraft. It concludes with their rapid demise, with photos showing were some of them have ended up.

Alwyn Lloyd, a long time personal friend of our organization, dating back to the 2nd 15th Air Force Association Reunion in Seattle, WA, solicited me for pictures that may be used in his forthcoming book. I received a copy of the book just in time to bring it to our Kansas City Reunion. It was on display near the Registration table for all to look at. Alongside the book were Order Blanks for the interested.

It's a worthy book for a 451st member to own, as it has the basic history of the Group and many of our aircraft pictured.

LIBERATOR

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An unabridged summary of the Consolidated LB-30, B-24, C-87, C-109, F-7 and PB4Y. This volume includes a background on the design, development and manufacture of the aircraft, operational use by the USAAF, USN, USMC, USCG and Allied air forces, and numerous data tables in the appendices. Histories of the operational units are presented by theater of operation. In-depth photo captions bring out the personalities of the crews and individual aircraft, and identify the aircraft serial numbers, unit assignment and battle letters/numbers—a must for the modeler. The appendices list all aircraft serial numbers as manufactured and their conversions, foreign assigned aircraft, and those interned in Switzerland, Sweden, Turkey and Spain. Whole chapters are dedicated to the photo-reconnaissance and transport aircraft and those in civilian service.

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CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

During the Kansas City, 1994 reunion I was offered many possibilities as to where our next reunion should be held; All the way from Maine to Hawaii. In each case I tried to politely fend off any commitment that I was expected to make. Even during the few remarks I made from the Speakers Rostrum on Banquet Eve, I tried to stress the fact that I'm always trying for the best location, plus the best prices. And as of that moment hadn't the foggiest idea where it will be. Even now I am "twixt a rock and a hard place" as to finalizing any site. But finalize I will, before too long.

At the time of reunion registration I guess the thought came to a few members that we should plan an Ocean Cruise for our next reunion. I may have been a bit abrupt, perhaps because of reunion pressures or my pending hospitalization, by saying that from all "feed-back" that I get from other Groups, cruises never work out to the benefit of the majority. For to many members the cost is prohibitive, and for other reasons it seems that cruises do not attract the numbers needed to make it a bona fide reunion. For those that can't make it, for whatever reason, they then have to wait another 3 or 4 years before they can partake. And as we know, 3 or 4 years at our stage in life is a lifetime and a half.

But what is working out for some Groups is that they hold a customary type reunion at a port city. Thereby, planning the reunion dates to coincide with the cruise schedule, and with a nationally recognized cruise ship company all reunion and sailing arrangements can be worked out to coincide with each other. In that way the non-affluent can enjoy the regularly scheduled reunion and those with a "feel for the ocean," can take the additional cruise. Give me your feed-back on that, if it interests you at all.

There is no way that we can consider a trip to Italy as a regularly planned reunion event; either. It would have to be detached and in no way could it, or should it, take the place of our normal reunion - every even year. Again, the practice of holding a scheduled reunion, and then those that want to visit Italy would leave from the airport nearby, has gained favor with some Groups. This type adventure is a little more advanced than to do a Cruise, but it's all in the realm of possibility.

Always a subject of some concern, especially to this office, is to remind you guys that your donations are needed. I hate to keep harping on it, but since the last reunion funds haven't given me much latitude in which to operate. Mailing expenses have risen (as we are all aware) and I am trying locate and recruit new members, which has a certain cost component. This office is in need of a new copy machine, one that has the ability to use regular sheet paper and has the ability to reduce and

enlarge. And there will come a time, soon, when I will be in need of a computerized scanner that will allow me to scan a photograph and by computerization place it directly into the newsletter. Technology is fast catching up with me. And being a "one man operation," technology is all I can count on. Like it was once said of a cemetery manager, "He has no staff, but he has a lot of people under him."

So, any suggestions about any of the three items mentioned; 1.) donations, 2.) copy machine, or 3.) computer scanner, will be welcome. With enough of the item #1, the other two could be purchased from this office.

This office is still on the lookout for more old Shipping Orders relevant to the 451st. I am especially interested in noting the Army Serial Numbers (ASN) of all the guys that served in the 451st. To date I have entered close to 4,000 names (with viable ASNs) into my files. These names and ASNs have, for the most part, been gleaned from these, or copies of these old Orders. Using the EM's ASN had given me a starting point in which to conduct a search. (Officers have some type of code in their serial number as to 'place of enlistment,' but I haven't cracked that code, as yet.) My search may not produce a potential member, and in some cases just the opposite - one that has died. But all this is put into the computer so I, or anyone interested, can confirm what may have happened to the subject member. So if you guys, air crews especially, had joined the Group in late 1944, or later, have copies of orders that relate to the 451st - make copies and pass them on. Of prime concern to me is the original crew makeup that went overseas together. I'll give this 'hot-shot' computer such a workout it will never forget.

MY BUDDY

They say he died in glory, whatever that may be.

*If dying in a burst of flame - is glory,
Then it's not for me.*

*In the briefing room that morning,
He sat with clear eyes and strong heart;
Just one of the many gunners,
Determined to do his part.*

*My buddy had the guts alright,
He sought not glory or fame,
He had but a job to do,
And his crew all felt the same*

*But death had it's final word;
For in its log it wrote his name,
And my buddy died that morning,
In glory and a burst of flame.*

(Submitted by R.W. Finke [author unknown])

NOTED HISTORIAN AND MUSEUM DIRECTOR TAKES SMITHSONIAN TO TASK FOR DISTORTING LEGACY OF THE ENOLA GAY

Perhaps the controversy that has been brewing about the showing of the Enola Gay in the National Air and Space Museum is cooling off with the admission that the display will be shown with no political overtones. It has been the policy of this magazine not to involve ourselves into political subjects, leastwise not with something that doesn't have a relationship to our Bomb Group. To justify our stepping over the edge, with this topic, is that the State Monument at the Fairmont Army Air Field, our final staging base, mentions Colonel Tibbets and his recruitment of crews from that air field that went on to drop the atomic bomb. And too, at our Kansas City Reunion we had a table set up in the foyer of the hotel for signing of a petition condemning the Smithsonian Institute for their seemingly blatant rewriting of history to that part of the Pacific war.

Bill Barnes, President of the 376th Bomb Group Veterans Association, at THEIR reunion had as guest speaker, George Hicks, Director of the Airmen's Museum, out of Suitland, MD. Mr. Hicks laid it on the line as to his feelings about what had transpired. Bill Barnes, knowing my interest in the subject, sent me the transcript of George Hicks' speech. I feel that it is worthy of being heard; even after the dust has settled.

It was delivered on September 2, 1994 at the Doubletree Hotel in Austin Texas.

THE ENOLA GAY ... IN THE CONTEXT OF THE TIMES

I am here today at the invitation of your group's leadership to offer some remarks about the controversy surrounding the planned exhibition of the B-29 *Enola Gay* by the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C..

You should know that I have had significant reservations about speaking out on this matter. I have not quite been sure that it was fitting or proper for one museum director, one historian to address these matters in a critical way. I have wrestled with this matter for quite some time and I have, in fact, declined several invitations to speak on the subject because for me it is a "no win" situation.

Before agreeing to be here, I consulted a number of my colleagues in the museum profession and a number of historians. Each of them have urged me on to the speakers microphone.

The real impetus which prompted me to accept this invitation came from a *Life* Magazine reporter. As we discussed the proposed exhibit and its proposed content, and the impressions it certainly convey to the visitor, the reporter said: "My God, how can they do that? When people walk into the Smithsonian they expect

facts, the truth. This is the Smithsonian -- *our national museum*. Not some manipulated version of history!"

And, that, ladies and gentlemen, is one of the prime reasons why I am here.

Second, I am a veteran. I say it with pride. So is my father and so, too, was my grandfather. Each of us has heard the mournful cry of TAPS. Each of us has known the cost of war and the battle from a first-hand, graveside station.

So, I have accepted this invitation to speak in hopes that I can adequately voice the objections of veterans past and present. I am here, too, to remind those who would listen that this *our national air and space museum*. I hope that what I have to say expresses adequately, tastefully and accurately what must be said about the controversy surrounding the exhibition of the *Enola Gay* and the proposed interpretations of the atomic missions against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Before the end of World War II, General H.H. "Hap" Arnold, with great foresight, had put aside one of every type of Army and foreign captured aircraft for the museum, and urged the Navy and commercial organizations to do the same. He wanted all the aircraft to be in one location and urged the aeronautical communities to support the establishment of a national air museum. This concept began to take hold with strong backing from West Virginia Congressman Jennings Randolph and Smithsonian Secretary Wetmore.

On January 15, 1946, Representative Jennings Randolph introduced House Resolution 5144 which called for the establishment of a national air museum as part of the Smithsonian Institution. That resolution cited the need for the museum to be "... a complete history of the airplane, starting with the first Wright airplane and carrying through every other type of airplane both commercial and military to the present time." On August 12, 1946, President Harry Truman signed the act into law ultimately becoming Public Law 722.

Now, Public Law 722 -- the original founding document or charter for the National Air Museum -- sets forth the stated purpose of the institution as follows:

"... to memorialize the national development of aviation; collect, preserve and display aeronautical equipment of historical interest and significance; serve as a repository for scientific equipment and data pertaining to the development of aviation; and provide educational material for the historical study of aviation."

The purposes of the institution were expanded in 1966 when President Lyndon Johnson signed the National Air Museum Amendment Act of 1965 to create the department of Aeronautics, Astronautics, Education and Information, Exhibits and Administ-

ration.

In all my research, ladies and gentlemen, I have found nothing that authorizes the manipulation of the Air and Space museum's charter to talk about anything else other than those fields I have just described. Our National Air and Space Museum is *suppose to be focusing on:*

* " ... a complete history of the airplane ..."

* " ... to memorialize the national development of aviation ..."

* " ... display aeronautical equipment of historical significance."

I would suggest that the advisory board -- which includes the leadership of each of our branches of the armed forces and the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution be a bit more aggressive in exercising their responsibilities and take a strong look at the subject matter and content of this exhibit. In my view, *our* Air and Space Museum should display the *Enola Gay* and it should recognize its mission as a "famous first."

The *Enola Gay* is the first aircraft to drop an atomic bomb. The flight of the *Enola Gay* did mark the dawn of the atomic age. The flight of the *Enola Gay* did hasten the end of hostilities we know as World War II. And, the crew of the aircraft from cockpit to tail gunner should be recognized for their contribution as well as the ground crew and the entire 509th Composite Bomb Group for their support functions enabling that historic flight. Recognition of the aircraft, crew and support personnel is within the stated purposes of *our* National Air and Space Museum.

The hue and cry surrounding the exhibit proposals center on the fact that it will -- if unchanged -- leave the museum visitor and our children with the impression that American use of the atomic weapons was wrong. The exhibit -- if unchanged -- will cast another form of cloud over the valiant men who flew the *Enola Gay* against Hiroshima and *Bock's Car* against Nagasaki.

These men deserve better.

They indeed deserve to be treated better than they have been and their place in history needs to be assured for all of the right reasons.

That has been another motivation for me to speak out. You see -- I have three fine, young sons. They are all products of an American educational system and history books that describe the entire campaign against Japan in 1945 in little more than a couple of pitiful paragraphs. Simply stated, our young people do not understand why World War II occurred, how it was fought, how it was won or that America suffered more than one million total casualties from 1941 - 1945 ... and better than 250,000 of that number were uniformed men and women who sacrificed their lives in a *national cause*. Our young men and women need an appreciation of American history that is factual and untainted by revisionist writings or attempts to recast uniquely American contributions to the world as we know it today.

Little more than three weeks ago, on August 10th of 1994, a bi-partisan group of 24 members of Congress

condemned the proposed exhibit of the *Enola Gay* as "anti-American" and "biased."

Essentially, the proposed exhibit depicts only a portion of the *Enola Gay* as if it were a neutered, disemboweled animal in a trophy room. The exhibit concept depicts the horrors of nuclear war and questions just why the United States of America employed such a weapon in the first place. The exhibition plans convey the impression that Japan was a *victim* rather than the ruthless, aggressive force that pursued systematic conquest of their ever-expanding sphere of influence in the Pacific.

Criticism of the exhibit comes from literally every corner of this country. Those who have written for or contributed to the exhibit from the very beginning are preparing a new, revised interpretation of history that is repugnant to me and thousands of veterans world-wide.

Let me share with you some of the objectionable elements of the exhibit.

Initially, in the first draft of the Smithsonian script -- in fact on the very first line of the very first page, there was this ... WARNING to VISITORS:

"This exhibit contains graphic photographs of the horrors of war."

This warning referred to almost 50 "explicit horrible photographs ... of death and suffering." There is an overwhelming emphasis -- "graphic emphasis" on Japanese women, children, and religious objects that have been burned, charred and scarred as a result of the use of atomic weapons. One artifact planned for inclusion in the exhibit is the remains of a lunch box that once belonged to a young Hiroshima school girl with its contents reduced to carbon dust.

There is, to be sure, an outright, blatant over-emphasis on the suffering of the Japanese who the curators and revisionist historians conveniently forget -- launched the attack on Pearl Harbor, massacred 30,000 Americans and Allies on Bataan, etc.. In the most recent revision of exhibit script, there are some 295 pages of text. Fully 84 pages of that text refer to *Japanese suffering* with some 97 photos to reinforce what I believe is the wrong message -- and which is not in keeping with the institution's charter "... to memorialize the development of national aviation ..."

What *our*, *our* National Air and Space Museum does propose is an exhibit that does not commemorate the end of World War II but proposes a macabre exhibition of armed conflict.

What should the exhibition consider? How should the *Enola Gay* be presented? I would suggest that we properly address and answer these questions:

- * How was this particular artifact instrumental in bringing about the end of World War II?
- * How was this instrument of war employed?
- * How and why was the atomic bomb used?

What were the costs -- and what would have the costs been had the weapons not been used by the United States of America?

And, more importantly, why is this subject not being presented in the context of the times ... in the year of 1945?

Now, - Before we go any further, let me say this.

The nation of Japan was, in 1941 and throughout World War II, under the influence and in the total control of a maniacal Japanese military. The leaders of the Japanese military in 1941 - 1945 were *fanatical* ..., there is no other word for it. Japan as we know it today is vastly different, - I say again, Japan of 1995 is vastly different.

But, in order to bridge the gap of generations -- museum goers, students and National Air and Space officials alike *need to look at the subject in the context of the times of 1941 and 1945.*

Let me remind you of a few facts:

Throughout 1939, 1940 and 1941, the United States of America *was involved in negotiations* with the Japanese over their conquests in the Pacific region. It was *during these negotiations* -- that the Japanese launched their carrier task force on November 25th for the ultimate surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941.

When the American people learned of the surprise attack, they were devastated. This nation - formerly divided by partisan quarrels and debates over foreign policy was then galvanized into one hue and cry: "Avenge Pearl Harbor."

Four months later eighty brave Americans led by Colonel Jimmy Doolittle took the first significant step and bombed Tokyo in a symbolic retaliatory attack. Eight of Doolittle's Tokyo Raiders were captured. Three of these Americans were summarily executed, one died of malnutrition and the remainders were held as prisoners of war for 3 1/2 years. Sixty-plus raiders escaped through China. And, the Japanese reportedly *massacred* and estimated 250,000 Chinese because the Chinese helped Americans escape!

In the words of Doolittle Raider Jake De Shazer, - a prisoner of war of the Japanese who was beaten and inhumanely treated: "*The Japanese in those days were not very nice people ...!*"

No, they were not ... not, at least, the military leaders of their forces that raped, burned and brutalized the Pacific. With just those facts alone I can not understand how our, *our* National Air and Space Museum can continue with its proposed exhibit and its revisionist approach to World War II history.

To *our* National Air and Space Museum, I would again say, tell the story in the context of the times ...

We were at war ...

Our job, our mission, our task was complete and absolute VICTORY.

I would remind you of the BATAAN DEATH MARCH ... where 30,000 American and Allied prisoners were summarily executed by the invading Japanese Army.

I would remind you of the executed Doolittle Raiders:

Dean Hallmark, William Farrow and Sergeant Harold A. Spatz.

I would also remind those who would eulogize our enemies of 1941 - 1945, we lost more than 40 percent of the POWs who were supposed to be humanely treated by their Japanese captors. I would also remind you that the standing orders to guards in the Japanese prison camps were: "If any Japanese-held territory of the Japanese homeland is invaded ... prisoners are to be executed and guards are to man defensive positions to defend the homeland."

To the Air and Space Museum, I would again say: tell the story *in the context of the times* ...

I would also point out that as the Americans and Allies advanced through the Pacific ... we were met with a skilled, defiant, fanatical and committed Japanese foe. They were tenacious and brave fighters absolutely committed to a culture that we did not understand.

Yet, American and Allied forces were resolute as we progressed through the Pacific.

We were proceeding according to the orders and President Roosevelt's policy ... that read:

"Peace can come to the world only by the total elimination of German and Japanese war power .. [which means] unconditional surrender. That means a reasonable assurance of future world peace ... but it *does not* mean the destruction of the population of Germany, Italy or Japan, *but it does mean* the destruction of the philosophies in those countries which are based on conquest and the subjugation of other people."

As we advanced through the Pacific, the American military paid an exorbitant price ... and so did the enemy. In the struggle for *Iwo Jima*, we suffered some 20,000 casualties while more than 21,000 Japanese died.

Our 1944 fire raids against Tokyo, Nagoya, Kobe and Osaka left hundreds of thousands of Japanese dead, injured and homeless - yet still they fought on.

American incendiary raids against principal Japanese cities continued on through the spring and summer of 1945.

ON: April 13 _ 11.4 square miles of Tokyo were consumed by flames.

ON: April 15 _ another 6 square miles of Tokyo _ 3.6 square miles of Kawasaki, and

_ 1.5 square miles of Yokohama were consumed in flames

And the Japanese fought on.

In raids from May 14 - 16, the city of Nagoya with its ball-bearing plants and aircraft works were effectively destroyed.

Then, again, in May 23 - 25, the Army Air Forces again raided Tokyo - effectively destroying 16.8 square miles of the city. In the six total raids against Tokyo, 56.3 square miles of the city were destroyed. By the end of June 1945, the six most important industrial cities in Japan had been ruined and lay smoldering: Tokyo, Nagoya, Kobe, Osaka, Yokohama, and Kawasaki.

Throughout these campaigns, American B-29s dropped leaflets calling for Japanese surrender ... yet, the Japanese fought on.

The island-by-island advance through the Pacific was also costly. The stubborn Japanese defense at Okinawa in June of 1945 brought about some 80,000 American casualties while Japanese dead numbered in excess of 100,000 -- many of whom committed suicide.

That was the nature of our foe in the Pacific ... brave, tenacious, fanatical, and absolutely committed to fight. American bombs killed some 330,000 Japanese and injured another half-million. At Iwo Jima 21,000 Japanese perished and at Okinawa 100,000-plus lay dead. There, too, the unrelenting *Kamikaze* attacks saw the loss of more than 3,500 suicide attacks by young Japanese pilots.

Ladies and gentlemen, make no mistake about it. The United States of America hand our Allies defeated a fierce and fanatical enemy. You may also bet your very last dollar that if the Japanese, or the Germans or the Italians had had the atomic technology first -- they would have used it against the United States and our Allies.

Faced with that kind of opposition, President Truman weighed several factors before agreeing to use this new technology against our enemies.

After the first successful test of the atomic bomb on July 16, he offered the Japanese "... an opportunity to end this war." The Potsdam Declaration as it has come to be recognized was issued on July 26th, the demand for "... unconditional surrender of all Japanese armed forces ... [Point out that] The alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction." On July 27, the very next day, the Japanese rejected the ultimatum out of hand!

In the summer of 1945, American strategy called for the invasion of mainland Japan. Plans were drawn and tactics were discussed.

The one specter that President Truman could not quite cope with was the casualty count that would result from such an invasion. How many *Americans* would be killed in such an invasion? Curtis LeMay wrote "... five hundred thousand seemed to be the lowest count some say a million."

President Truman then issued the order for the mission of August 6, 1945 ... and the flight of the *Enola Gay*.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is the context of the times in which I suggest an exhibit should be presented.

I would remind you that we were at war with a fanatical enemy who, even as they were in negotiations with the United States in 1941, ... launched a carrier task force and the attack on Pearl Harbor.

There are some that point out that there were unofficial approaches by the Japanese through Moscow to explore the *possibilities for negotiations* for peace with the United States.

To those critics I would remind them that they were *unofficial requests for negotiations not peace* and I would ask you ... in the context of the times - just who

could trust the Japanese in 1945? Remember, we were negotiating with the Japanese in November and December of 1941 when their carrier task force approached and attacked Pearl Harbor. Our intercepts of their messages reveal that the Japanese wanted to *stall* as they *talked* so they could *rebuild, refit and rearm* for the inevitable invasion of their homeland.

I would suggest to you that the use of the atomic weapons saved:

- * the lives of Americans slated for the invasion force ... including my dad;

- * the lives of the Japanese citizens and military who occupied their homeland;

- * the lives of our prisoners of war held by the Japanese throughout the Pacific,

and was therefore justified.

I would also point out a few factors that the National Air and Space Museum's interpretation seems to ignore:

- * There is no greater testimonial to man's inhumanity to man than war. Casualties are a "given."

- * The United States of America was attacked and catapulted into war. Our single solitary objective in 1945 was - **VICTORY**.

- * It is true that America used the atomic bombs in war ... and the motivations were to save lives and bring the war to a decisive conclusion as economically and efficiently as possible.

- * There were also many "positives" to come from the American *use* - of atomic energy:

- ** Our scientists involved in the creation of the technology and the weapon were also far-sighted enough to look to the future and call for the regulation of the fissionable materials and the technology.

- ** Our form of government with civilian control of the military found the functioning technology first, regulated its use -- *before it could be used on us*.

I will point out the aura, the specter, the fear of the atomic bomb in subsequent years had kept the Cold War from going "hot." All of the conflicts and international incidents since:

- the blockade of Berlin
- the Korean War
- the Cuban Missile Crisis
- the Vietnam War
- Afghanistan and others

have been contained to regions, kept conventional and devoid of nuclear combat.

I would reiterate my plea and that of Paul Tibbets and veterans all across the country -

- * Display the *Enola Gay* as an aircraft, in it's entirety.
- * Tell the story of the *Enola Gay* in the context of the times.
- * Remember we ... were at war.
- * Remember our cause was ... victory.
- * Remember that this is *our* Air and Space Museum telling *our* story funded for the most part with *our* monies and we deserve *our* place in American history and that the mission of *our* National Air and Space Museum is "to memorialize the national development of aviation; collect, preserve and display aeronautical equipment of historical interest."

To those who are responsible for overseeing the National Air and Space Museum, I would urge them all to take this matter and this revision of *American History* very, very seriously.

Earlier this week, the National Air and Space Museum issued a statement that announced the addition of 4,000 square feet of exhibit space which reportedly will focus on the war in the Pacific proceeding the atomic missions. That is, allegedly in response to pressure from veterans all across the country.

I can tell you that General Paul Tibbets was cautiously optimistic when I relayed the news to him. He said, "That's 180 degrees turn from what they had been doing -- but can we believe them?"

I don't know.

Previous statements from the Air and Space Museum specified that the Office of Air Force History and the Center of Military History have read and supported the exhibit, are FALSE.

Both the Chief of Military History and Chief Air Force Historian are on record as saying they "... do not support the exhibit plan as presented."

Ladies and gentlemen, it truly is a shame that this so-called controversy has occupied so much time, energy and expense. I do regret that the subject has been politicized. I do regret that the presentation of the subject

matter was taken out of context and editorialized by a few at the expense of the many, many veterans who served in this -- and subsequent conflicts. I regret, too, that the Air and Space Museum took a left turn from its mission statement of preserving aircraft and aviation history.

And I do regret, that we as veterans can never seem to win. We are called upon. We serve. We fight. We die, and in the end, we are still victims.

As for the *Enola Gay* -- she is a symbol of victory. That proud B-29 helped expedite the end of World War II and saved hundreds of thousands of lives -- fully half a million were Americans. The flight of the *Enola Gay* and the subsequent flight of *Bock's Car* brought down a fanatical Japanese military hierarchy that was singularly responsible for the cause and the continuation of the fight which began at Pearl Harbor.

And, one last note ...

Shortly after the war, President Harry Truman summoned Jimmy Doolittle, David Shilling and Paul Tibbets to the White House. To Jimmy Doolittle he said: "That was a helluva thing you did, launching those bombers from that aircraft carrier." To General Shilling, he commended him on the innovation of midair refueling of aircraft.

To Paul Tibbets he said:

"Colonel, anybody ever give you a hard time over the Hiroshima thing?"

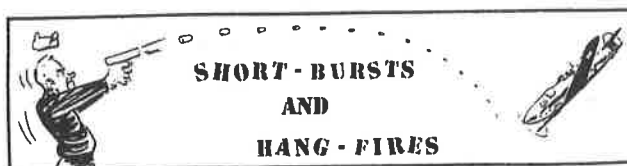
"Oh, sometimes, sir," Tibbets replied.

Truman leaned forward across his desk with a clenched fist and said:

"Anyone else has anything to say, you send'em to me. I'm the one that sent ya' and you did what you were told. Well done."

Well, Mr. President, I sure wish you were here to straighten a few things out. That museum you created has some things twisted around a little bit.

Ladies and gentlemen, can you just imagine Harry S. Truman walking into the National Air and Space Museum today



Louis Sagi, 725th ... I am enclosing my "annual dues" check for the 451st. My wife and I enjoyed the K.C. reunion. The hotel accommodations and the tours were first rate. What really made it GREAT was meeting my ball gunner, Douglas Denton, my navigator, Charles Yenknner, and my copilot, Charles Oinonen after 50 years.

(Editor .. Not only was your generous check appreciated, but so was the fact that you got to "buddy up" with part of your crew. Denton wrote some favorable comments about the four of you being together.



L - R: Denton (EM), Sagi-B, Yenknner-N, Oinonen-CP (O's)

Something like "one rose" [an EM], among the "thorns" [3 Officer Grades]. Only kidding; guys, only kidding.)

Charlie Trumper, 725th ... I was particularly interested in the note from Ernie Cummins, 60th Service Squadron, regarding thumbing a ride from Bari back to the Group. It was indeed "HEY MOE" from the 725th Squadron, Battle Number 40, that he was flying in that day. The date was 13 November, 1944. .. Little did Ernie know when he stepped off that airplane that "MOE" had only about two more minutes of flying time left in its lifetime. .. During it's career, "HEY MOE" generated a rather enviable record in combat. It flew 67 missions in 69 days. I wonder if anyone knows of a better record. I am very much interested in finding out who flew the plane to Bari on the afternoon before it's crash and returned to the field after dark. This is the flight that Ernie Cummins and one of his buddies hitched a ride. Also, I would like to hear from any person who remembers flying in "HEY MOE" at any time. If you remember, I flew the plane to Northern Italy on the day before the crash to pick up radar parts from a damaged plane that made an emergency landing at a British fighter base. I had a copilot, an engineer and a radar technician on board. But I have no idea who they were. I know it was none of my original crew as they had all returned to the States.

(Editor .. Again, another generous check to keep us airborne. And too, your comments about "HEY MOE" may bring the "trembles" back into Ernie's old bones as he recalls that past experience. Maybe that's how come the name "St Andreas," where he hails from, originated ... and all that "knee-knocking" may be shaking the earth as Ernie recalling that incident! As to your seeking more info on your ship, "HEY MOE," I hope someone out there can help us out.)

Willard Rogers, 724th ... I appreciate the information I receive in the newsletters. I wouldn't have know about Robert Burslem and Robert Yeager's deaths without it. We were on the same crew (C.E. Wood). ... You were flying with us as spare gunner the day you got hit, if I remember right.

(Editor .. AH, Willard, you bring back some less than fond memories. My strongest recollection of that mission, other than losing half of my nose turret to flak, was of Doc King, of the 727th, being first on the spot. It wasn't long before Doc Quinn (724th) took over and I went to the Foggia Hospital for treatment and REST.)

Richard D. Coleman, 726th ... I have encountered others who have been refighting the war with their unit reunions. However I was unaware of your activities in regards to the 451st until your first inquiry late last year. ... I had not known of any of the perambulation's of the 451st after February 25 1944 when my plane, "Hard to Get" was "got." Flak knocked out #4 over the IP, and when #3 started acting up I salvoed and left the formation heading away from all those black burst around us. We were limping on 2 and 1/2 when ME 109s hit us over Udine Italy. They severed the fuel lines on the flight deck and "Hard to Get" became an airborne torch. I gave the bail-out signal with the bell, and

with my chest chute partially on fire, I hit the open bomb-bay and the cool outside air. The Operations Officer, Captain Quillen, was copilot that day and he and I landed within a few hundred feet of each other. My "not so preferred" landing spot was a barbed wire fence. (Did anyone else ever see a barbed wire fence in Northern Italy?) Needless to say I spent over 14 months as a guest of the Third Reich and Baker's story brings back memories of past events which seem more like something I read rather than things that happened to me. ... RE: Fairmont - I too bought a car at Fairmont and one memorable evening the MP's fired a shot at me to stop when I wouldn't park outside after having driven on base for a couple weeks. A sudden unilateral action of the Base Provost Marshal (A retired LA cop).

(Editor .. What a joy it is to have finally (and I mean FINALLY) found you. There are some cases that I'd go to any, and all means to find a particular person, in this case you are THAT person. You guys in the 726th were a close knit group, probably due to the leadership of Major Haltom and his Staff, and to seek you guys out, and to find you, is a real coup. Now with these newsletters you may be able to fill in the gaps of Group history that followed after 25 February, and your stint with the Nazi POW camps. And too, may I also thank you for your generous donation. For a guy just getting involved, you are more than considerate.)

Hillard T. Grant, 727th ... I enjoyed reading about the 49th Fighter Squadron. I worked in the Control Tower and heard them on the radio many times. I can also remember hearing other B-24 units and the 98th and 376th as they were all fairly close by. We use to have company from guys of the 727th in the evenings, that use to come up to listen to Axis Sally. I remember the English antiaircraft crew who were stationed quite near Hiccup Tower. They use to visit us nearly every afternoon around 3 PM with the greeting, "Have a cup of tea, Yank? Of course they were hoping we would offer them some of our cigarettes. They use to say how terrible the English cigarettes were, and I have to agree with them. I remember Dave (can't remember his last name), he was in charge of the Fire Crew at the base of the Tower. He sure gave his men a work-out at cleaning the engines if they rubbed him the wrong way. Back in 1954 or 56, visiting with Bill McGee in Pittsburgh, he said, "Let's walk down the street to the Fire House." The men were washing the trucks and even the Fire House. If you haven't guessed, there was Dave who was now a Lieutenant in the Pittsburgh Fire Department.

(Editor .. Isn't it strange "What goes around, comes around." I think McGee set you up with this chance encounter with Dave 'WHATSHISNAME.' Nevertheless, it must have been nice to "rap" about old times.)

Mrs. Joseph (Doris) Henry, 725th ... You have done a wonderful job keeping the Ad-Lib going. We should have let you know much sooner of Joe's passing. We girls who "waited" the whole time for their "guys" feel like an important part of the 451st, also. I hope that this check helps to buy a little postage. Wish

it could be more.

(Editor .. You young ladies, and the offsprings of our members, are fast becoming a vital part of our organization. I, for one, appreciate your keeping the spirit alive.)

Alan May, 727th ... Thank you for sending me the back issues of AD-LIB. They awakened long dormant memories. I was at Fairmont at the inception of the 451st. I still remember how wonderful the people of Fairmont were and how they opened their homes and hearts to us. I am sorry I missed that reunion.

(Editor .. I'm sure the folks of Fairmont will appreciate knowing that you "still care." I have heard nothing but favorable comments from those that were stationed there; mainly directed at the people that tried to make us as comfortable as if we were at home.)

Wallace Baumann, 724th ... I have been overwhelmed with the package of information you sent last week. My memory is very bad after 50 years but I did recognize places, names of towns and air bases there in Italy. The folders were so interesting I could hardly put them down. ... For at least forty-five years I have tried to find some information about the outfit through the Federal Retirement Magazine each month. The 451st and 15th Air Force, as it applied to me, didn't show up. I was ready to give up when your card came a few weeks ago (Thanks!)

(Editor .. Glad to have you with us, Wally. Your newsy letter (too long to fully publish) contained many points of interest. I was particularly impressed at your concept of aircraft losses while you were maintaining decorum in the Tech Order Department. Yes, losses were incurred in great numbers on specific targets, as well as an occasional loss on lesser targets. Our purpose is to bring some of these sacrifices back into the spotlight for the enlightenment of those that have just "wondered" over the years.)

Mrs. Walter (Lucille) Rutkowski, 724th ... I read the recent issue of the Ad-Lib that you so kindly continue to send me since my husband's death (April 28, 1993) and it reminded me that your publication might be interested in his log of missions during WW-II. My husband, Walter, was a pilot arriving in Castelluccia, Italy 30 April 1944 and was assigned to the 724th Squadron. He began his missions on 5 May and his combat record indicates 50 missions completed on 4 October 1944. His records bears the name of "Thomas R. Moran, Capt., Air Crops, Oper. Officer." His log briefly details each flight, including two sorties over "Ploesti Oil Refinery northwest of city," on D-Day, 6 June 1944.

(Editor .. Indeed we would gladly accept a copy of the log, as Walter and "Doc" Moran put it together. It sounds like the A-5 file that was kept on all flying personnel. Since your letter I have pursued some of the people that made up Walt's crew. I have mailed "feelers" out to the names of Johnson, Hoskins, Theodore,

Cook and Ziegler of Walt's crew. Robert B. Johnson is the only one recruited, to date. I hope for better success as I search some more. Having the Army Serial Numbers of the Enlisted Men helps a lot.)



Captain M.A Manoogian

Morris Manoogian, 724th Ops. O. ... It seems that something unforeseen always pops up at the most inopportune times, and for an 80 year old man, it doesn't take much to ground him. However, my young 76 year old wife, (and wonderful nurse, too), my interest in the

451st Group, the 49'ers, Stanford football, the Giants, keeps my spirits at a high level. So you see Bob, the mind is willing but at times the body balks. I hope this September - mind and body are A-1. P.S. The Ad-Lib is a masterpiece.

(Editor .. I guess the body/mind coordination wasn't YET up to snuff. I checked under every table, and behind ever bar, and no "Manoog" was to be found. You threaten to attend, and guys like Rog Johnston, Bob Stone, Paul Johnshoy, always await your appearance. You don't owe them money, do you? I can't imagine you do, because you always send us the nicest of donations whenever we hear from you.)

Robert A. Johnson, 726th ... I'm assuming you received the telephone message I left when I called 15 Sept to Hyatt. Again real disappointed I missed out on another 451st Reunion. I am sending pictures of my painted A-2 jacket I planned to wear to USO show. I have my helmet, goggles and white neck scarf for



appropriate dress for that evening. Also, another picture of how I dressed up my spare tire cover on my van for the trip.

(Editor .. Sorry to hear that a death in the family caused your absence from the K.C. Reunion. Your

desire to attend certainly didn't interfere with all the art work you had done, had you been able to make it. I'll give our readers a glimpse at the spare tire cover picture you sent.)



Andrew L. Pendleton, 725th ... When recently rereading some of the earlier "Ad-Libs" I noticed the illustrations of the various Squadron Insignia and the accompanying article which indicated that the artist were unknown. I am happy to claim the insignia of the 725th Squadron as my own work. It came about as a result of an informal contest, probably throughout the Group, during, I think, the summer of 1944. I do not know if other entries were submitted, but the prize for the accepted design was half a bottle of bourbon whiskey presented by Captain Luhrs, the Armament Officer of the 725th.

(Editor .. Gosh Andy, the first thing that comes to my mind is what happened to the other half of the bottle of Bourbon. But aside from that, thanks for coming forth with the fact that you were responsible for the 725th Insignia. This must have propelled you into your lifetime career; Architecture.)

Stanley O. Dyer, 726th ... I forgot to tell you how much I have enjoyed the back issues of Ad-Lib. You will never know the feeling I had when I opened the Summer Issue 1991 and saw our crew on one of the pages, and 2LT John L. Sullivan (our bombardier) on the other. I also want to thank you for the other material in the package. I have the bumper sticker on the back bumper for everyone to see.

(Editor .. Kinda grabbed you, Huh, Stanley. That's the purpose of the newsletter; SHOCK and DISBELIEF. You may even be caught off guard to be reading this. You never know where I'll turn up. Thanks for using the bumper sticker and "trolling" the neighborhoods.)

Walter A. Tuchscherer, 726th ... I can never forget the night I arrived at the 726th. I was taken by a clerk - by myself - to what I always described as Tobacco Road Tent, where by flashlight we discovered how to get in. One space existed for a cot, and with the clerks help I got a bed made. My tent mates were sleeping (soundly, I don't know). It seemed that shortly after, the CQ came in to wake them for a mission. I never saw them again. They had appeared in dreams as "ghosts in the night."

(Editor .. Somewhat harrowing to say the least. But in looking at those crews that were lost in October, the month you arrived, we lost (according to my files) 3 planes. The pilots in command were; Gene Porter, Mike Spellacy, and Jim Rowsey. Oddly though, all of the crews made it back without being POW'ed.)

Burrell T. Rupe, 727th ... Yes, I'm the person of your card. I sure was surprised to hear of the old Group after all these years. It would be very interesting to know how many of the old 727th Squadron were left,

where they are, and how their health's are. Hoping they are better than my own; if possible.

(Editor .. So far, Burrell, we have located over 400 727th guys. Of that 400 about 75 have died since joining us. In another file I keep, we have logged close to 900 guys that have at one time or other been part of the 727th. And that is only a partial list, as I only record those that I have Army Serial Numbers for.)

Archie Piirainen, 727th ... I just had back surgery 1st August. I didn't want to chance a bad mishap by attending the K.C. reunion. The surgery wasn't healing the way I expected. After four months I am still having pain and numbness in my left ankle and foot. ... It's been a tough year on the crew of "BIG BOOBER GIRL." Hugh Holcomb, a waist gunner, passed away last summer, a victim of the "curse of the cigarette."

(Editor .. Yes, you have not only lost Hugh Holcomb, but Carl Adams and Irwin Bokelman too. If you so much as make a move in that direction - I'll kill you!!!)

George A. Evens, 725th ... I've been procrastinating on writing to you ever since I returned from KC. I was amazed at the size of the assemblage and even more so at the organized programs. It seems unbelievable that one man could accomplish so much by himself, so I must assume that you do have some help. You also must be a master at negotiating prices to get such a low room rate at a top rate hotel. The whole weekend was unbelievably inexpensive.

(Editor .. Thanks for the accolades regarding the KC Reunion. It took numerous trips down there during 1993 and 94 to assemble all the components of busing, dining, and entertainment - as it does for all our 451st gatherings. I'm glad, as a "First Timer," you found it fun, enlightening, and rather inexpensive. NOT cheap, but not as costly as would be expected. As to Room Rates; I hope I can hold that same line when I take on the next hotel.)

Tim Plonis, 727th ... [Offered almost verbatim from a phone call I recently received from this young man.] "I never knew my father that well, my parents separated when I was quite young, though my dad and I did manage to spend some time together in his later life; he died last April 4, 1994. I have always had a keen interest to find out more about him and his military career. He wasn't very talkative about his achievements in the war. My father, August C. Plonis was a pilot in the 727th Bomb Squadron. Other than his telling me little snippets of things that he had experienced while in the war, I know relatively little more. Can you fill in some of the 'blanks' for me?"

(Editor .. Tim, you sent me scurrying into my files to try and locate some paper copy on your dad. The best I could do was to find him listed on a Squadron Roster as a copilot with an Aircraft Commander named Blain (first name unknown). This makeshift 727th crew roster was used to verify who was in the Squadron on the date of its drafting; believed to have been on 29 December 1944. Lt. Colonel J.S. Hoppock was the C.O.; Captain R.E. Prouty was Ops O.; Lt. R.J. Stumpf was Ass't Ops O.; Lt. W.J. Hale (or Bale - bad copy) was Squadron

Navigator; Lt. S.S. Salt was Squadron Bombardier. Apart from that, it list the makeup of crews from #76 to #101 by all the officers and EM that were in the Squadron, and on flying status. It could well be that others of the 727th will have information on either, your dad, August Plonis or on the pilot, Blain. I'll keep you posted -- Com'on fellows look for those old 727th Shipping Orders.)

Lorraine McCallister, 726th ... My great-uncle was Francis A. (Frank) Johnson, and he was from Spencer, Iowa. His rank was that of Technical Sergeant, and we know that he was a radio operator/gunner on a B-24 Liberator. As far as we know, his base was in Italy. He had flown eleven missions and was on the twelfth when he was killed. The date was August 22, 1944.

According the newspaper articles saved by my grandmother, the target for the twelfth mission was Vienna, but the formation was attacked shortly after leaving its base by a large number of German planes. Uncle Frank's plane was hit and caught fire from nose to bomb bay before exploding. Two crew members survived, the bombardier, Joe Grace, and the pilot Maurice J. Beaucond, Jr., who wrote to my great-grandparents a year later. During the course of that year, Uncle Frank was listed as "missing in action." It was decided to leave Uncle Frank buried with his comrades in Europe. Last summer, I traveled to Europe and while there visited his gravesite. His final internment was the Ardennes American Military Cemetery, twelve miles south of Liege, Belgium. There are over 5,200 American soldiers buried there, many of them from the Army Air Force. I know that there were hundreds of men in these various groups and the chances of you knowing my great-uncle are extremely remote. However could you tell me anything about where you were based in Europe, what flying a mission was like, what your mission targets were, and what was like for you over there?

(Editor .. Another opportunity for you guys to add to the information I sent Ms. McCallister. I don't know if she has been contacted by Grace or Beaucond, as I did pass on their addresses. Plus, whatever else I had relative to her quest - I also gave her. I'm sure what she's looking for is someone that knew her uncle personally. Any information you can funnel through this office, I'll be glad to pass it on.)

Charles "Chuck" Thomas, 727th ... Inez and I really enjoyed seeing you at the K.C. Reunion. The whole reunion was great, as usual, thanks to your considerable efforts. Your well-planned programs are high points in our lives.

(Editor .. No one was more pleased to see the two of you, than I. Your presence is always appreciated. 'Specially when you slip in from Hawaii, or is it Colorado?)

Steve Cushner, 725th ... I was thrilled beyond words that I was able to meet up with, greet, and bear hug my bombardier, Abbott Sydney, whom you wrote about recently. It was 50 years of "catch-up time!" Was also delighted and thrilled to see my ball turret gunner - George Scheer. Also other crew members of the A.W.

Johnson crew. We exchanged many tails (oops) tales of our Castelluccia days.

(Editor .. By now Abbott has filled you in on your former pilot Albert W. Johnson, and the problem we're having getting him to join. And, too, isn't it strange how you can come to these reunions and not find a crew-member; and suddenly, the next one you attend - there they are. It sure makes them more meaningful, doesn't it?)

James Hulderman, 727th ... Reading about the 60th Service Squadron reminds me of a story. We arrived by truck at the 451st around January or February, 1945, at about 2:00 AM. We asked where our tent was. We were shown a hump in about 6" of snow ... Our tent! We slept on the 1st Sergeants floor the first night. Having our tent set up we were looking for some form of heater. Looking around, another gunner and I found a tent with nothing in it but a stove. We asked several GIs standing close by and they said no one was using it. About a week later our tent flap opened and several officers entered. We snapped-to and one of the pointed to the stove and said, THAT'S IT! ... One stove went back home as of then, and we were beginning to count the days we would serve in Leavenworth. I think we were told we could take the stove as a laugh. Anyway the next day some GIs from the 60th gave us a drum and pipe and a barrel of 100 octane gas and helped us set it up. Nothing was ever said about stealing a stove from the 60th Service area that we heard of. I still think we were set-up. It sure scared the devil out of the other gunner and myself.

(Editor .. It seems that you are always end up being the new kid on the block. Welcome [then] to the "old 451st," as per that story, and welcome again [now]- to the "new 451st," as per your signing in. Since you joined us we have located about 4 of your crew, and found that at least 2 have died since leaving service. I can't seem to get a line on your pilot George Cox. But he will turn up in time.)

Everett Caldwell, 725th ... "Thank you" for the very pleasurable time that my wife, Frances, and I had at the 1994 K.C. reunion. Not only was it my first 451st reunion, but also my first commercial airline flight, even though I have 25 years longevity between USAF [active duty] and the NY Air National Guard.

(Editor .. It can't exactly be said that you achieved a bunch of firsts in 1994, but some were notable. It seems that I remember that you were also a POW, as of 3 July 1944. That was also a first for you, and one that you wouldn't repeat for no amount of money. Thanks for the obit on James Duke, your crewmate in POW Camp.)

Sid Winski, 726th ... I believe Al Roemer gives the date of Lt. Hunt's crash as Feb 9, 1944. This doesn't jibe with the dates in the Year Book, Page 185. I believe the date was Feb 8, 1944. On that date I flew the Group lead ship, Col Eaton was in the right seat. Some crews expressed concern about the heavy ice on the wings [I think it must have sleeted that night.] I



Famous "Three Feathers:" Captain Winski's A/C

remember Col Eaton saying, "Winski, take a look and let me know if you can get it off." I stuck my head out of the top hatch; the wings appeared to have about 1/4 or 1/2 inch of ice, maybe a ton I guessed, but they still were of airfoil shape. I returned to the pilots seat and said, "I think I can get this plane off." Without hesitation Col Eaton said, "Let's go!" I assumed Col Eaton was aware of the poor devils following at 30 second intervals trying to become airborne in the prop wash of proceeding planes with all that ice on the wings. Maybe Lt Hunt's plane had more ice than other planes. I believe ice and prop wash [wing tip vortex] caused the crash. This was probably the Group's first fateful day. Our primary was obscured. We flew to our secondary, Piombino. The bomb run was long. The flak was accurate. One burst directly on our nose, a chink went thru the nose turret removing the top of the nose gunners head. ... I believe this was the Group's first combat fatality.

(Editor .. Your right about the date, Sid. It was, and could only have been on the 8th of February: no mission was flown on the 9th. Both the book and my KIA file proves that. I should have double-checked it. I know Al will forgive me if I make corrections to the date I have in his current journal article. The name of the nose gunner you lost that day was, Sgt Leo F. Doring.)

Warren Wingfield, 725th ... I say thanks, Bob, for sending the "Ad-Lib." It was a pleasure to read. I'm proud to have been a member of the 451st Bomb Group. ... I still say the B-24 Liberator was the best for its day. Those who flew the missions, and the people who serviced them, knew their capabilities. Now, as we all know, it's getting late in the day for our members. I'm sure these reunions bring back many memories, a lot of good ones, some we are not so fond of, but, non-the-less, you do a fine job promoting them. Again thanks for your effort. Looking forward.

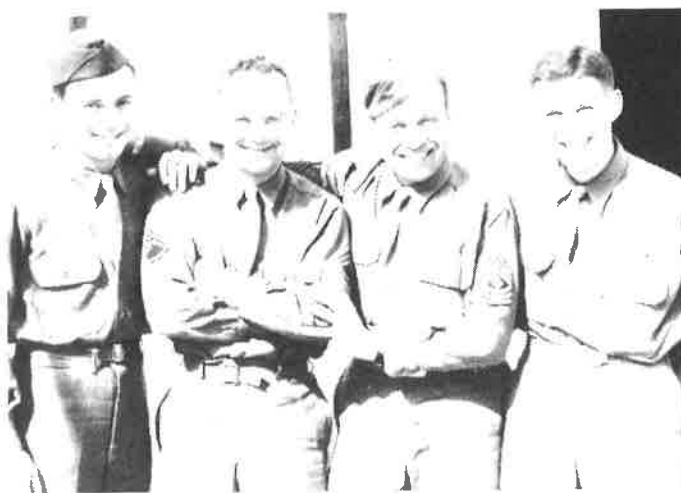
(Editor .. As one of the gunners on Clark Nelson's crew, you can surely appreciate what's being written about as to combat - and life-styles, as we endured them back then. I've often wondered if someone that had not

experienced what WE had, can feel the camaraderie; the fear; the unexpected, by just reading some of what's contained in the Ad-Lib stories?)

William Womack, 724th ... Yes, I know "O'Connor, John." I was a M/Sgt Flight Chief in the 724th. So my transport overseas was with O'Connor and crew. I can remember all but the Navigator, who handled the nose turret most of the time, as best I can remember. I had a moderate stroke in August '93' and my memory is reduced to small amounts. My handwriting has also suffered. To fly as a crew member I had to take a "bust" from M/Sgt to T/Sgt, which I did. I was shot down on a milk run over Orbetello, Italy. For the next three weeks, I got civilian clothes, slept in a cave, bummed a meal about every three days. My mother was a Gold Star Mother due to that, and I have a certificate of my death to show for it. I'll try and write more in detail at a later date.

(Editor .. I sure would like to know more about your experiences, as a result of that mission. I know you were with Walt Graber; that one of the crew [Emil Mason] evaded; two of the crew were KIA [Albert Anderson & James Horan]; and all the rest were declared as POWs [including you]. Did you eventually evade, too?)

Norman W. Mochel, 724th ... I received the packet you sent me and have read all the copies of the Ad-Lib ... It brought a lot of memories back that had been dormant for a long time. You have had some conventions that sound great, I particularly wish that I could have



724th Orderly Room EM Staff

L - R: Cpl Sanford Beck, S/Sgt Harry Fox, 1st Sgt Palmer Gums, S/Sgt Alvin Laich

attended the one at Fairmont Army Air Field ... I don't know how you were able to put all this organization together, but you must have worked long and very hard; I think you deserve a medal.

(Editor .. I highly value your opinion as to the restructuring of this new organization. Not because you were a 724th officer, but because you were our Adjutant for as long as I was in the Squadron. If anyone knows

organizational structure and paper work, you do. I think I still have a couple "passes" that you, or 1st Sgt Gums, signed. Do you think they are any good, yet? I also have the permit you signed to allow me to transport a Baretta pistol back to the States. As to the Medal you suggested; several have been proposed but they all look like oversized anchors to me, and were to be presented off a small barge in the middle of Lake Michigan. Most of those I declined.)

Vince DiLella, 725th ... So far the town of Lecce has never been mentioned. That was the town we landed in, out of Africa. I understood the 451st was looking for an air field to operate out of, but the one in Lecce was too small for the bombers. It was used as an Italian fighter field, I might have been one of the first enlisted men from the 451st to arrive in Italy. I was picked as an interpreter to fly with the skeleton crew. They did not need me, as the Italian Officer that greeted us spoke very good English. I was glad of that because my Italian was not too good. I was grounded shortly after the Regensburg mission. My hydraulic system was hit along with my chute and I was not able to operate my turret. I was able to fit into the tail turret with the harness to my chute, but had to leave my chute outside the turret. Not being able to fire my guns and fight back knocked me out of action. It gave me too much time to think. I did get a piece of a ME-109, I think

(Editor .. Tell me about it Vince. I also had to leave my chute outside of my nose turret. But when the chips were down, and I had to make a quick evacuation of the turret, I could always count on my back-up; my navigator or bombardier. It pays to have friends in high

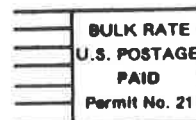
places.

Leroy Stefen, Hdq ... Thank you for the information about the Kansas City reunion. It sounds like a real winner. Sorry to say, we will not be able to attend. I'm having arthroscopic surgery on my knee which will leave me quite immobile just about the time of your reunion. ... I have some advice for you, Bob: 'Don't get old.' Of course the alternative isn't very desirable either. ... I'm sure you'll have another great reunion. They are always so well planned and worthwhile. Those we have attended have been a real joy.

(Editor .. Stef, without you, and your lovely wife Dorothy, the place really seemed empty. You "konked-out" just when we were instigating a close order drill program for the men. I was hoping you could lead the troops - but not from an easy chair, but right out there making those intricate "Column Left, Right Oblique, To the Rear --- MARCH's". We could have had Bill Bennett, out of Headquarters - Operations Section - do it but he's been doctoring, too.)

A.J. Woods, 725th ... The reunion in K.C. was a roaring success. Your choice of hotels was excellent. We arrived on Thursday and I mentioned to the bellboy that we were with the 451st. He told me to go ahead and register, that our rooms were ready for us. ... Since returning home I've had a chance to reread some of the recent "Ad-Libs." In issue 23, page 31, the photo from the 725th Sqdn was of, from Left to Right; Gale Donahue, William Tuney and Abbott Sidney.

(Editor .. Thanks, FINALLY the dilemma of whose with Abbott Sidney at the bulletin board is cleared up.)



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