



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

Issue 26

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Fall 1995

PICK ON MINNEAPOLIS; WILL YOU? - JA TAK & OOF-DA!

Our 1996 site has been located. Amid the blaring of bugles, the roll of drums and the cheers (and jeers) of the populace, we have accepted the locale of Minnesota; primarily Minneapolis; specifically the Minneapolis-St Paul Airport Hilton.

The Hilton will afford us the accessibility to the "Twin Cities" major airport; the Minneapolis/St Paul International Airport (formerly called Wold-Chamberlain Field). Although considered the HUB for Northwest Airlines, the other airlines; American, Delta, TWA, United, USAir, America West and Continental Airlines, frequent it as well. Shuttle service from the airport to the Hilton, is without charge - as is also the case when going from the Hilton back to the airport. (Neat, Huh?)



The Minneapolis-St Paul Airport Hilton

And for those of you who are asking; What about the Mall of America, will we be able to go there? The answer is YES! Not only will you be nearby, but the Hilton is making plans for their shuttle service to be available to you at most times during the day.

The Mall of America (Third largest attraction in the U.S.) is just one of the amenities that the "Twin Cities" can offer us. We plan to have a full agenda of activities, common to the area, for you to enjoy. We hope to offer you enough to make your trip interesting, but not to lose the fact that you want time to spend with crew and tentmates.

The dates of the 451st Bomb Group Reunion are; starting on Wednesday, 18 September (lose the Jet Lag Syndrome-DAY), up to Sunday, 22 September (Spiritual Interdenominational Church Services) finale.

It should be pointed out that the Hilton lies south of the city of Minneapolis on Interstate 494, which is an encircling highway that makes accessibility, by vehicle, to the hotel quite easy. Also, coming up from the south on I-35W you would just hang a right (heading East) onto I-494 and before you know it, you're looking at the Hilton logo to the right. Since everything seems so "right," this can't be all wrong.

More details will follow when we send out the Registration Forms. But for now you have the "crux" of the Where and When. You already know the WHY!

The "JA TAK & OOF-DA" is the Scandinavian influence emanating from some early Minnesota settlers.

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"AD-LIB"**451st BOMB GROUP (H), LTD.
PUBLICATION**

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perty owned by a 451st Bomb Group, 725th Bomb Squadron member named Andrew "Mike" Stauth. Mike was the Engineer Gunner for the Frank McQuaid crew, and flew his 50 missions in less than 5 months time. He always felt that he owed some of his luck to the protection that was given by the "escorting P-51's" that he saw from his top turret. Now in respect to that era he flies a 1/6th scale fiberglass replica in their honor.

Mike first spotted a similar model in the back of a pick-up truck while wintering in Scottsdale Arizona. Curious as to where it came from, he left a note under the wipers and asked for further information. A Mr. Maurice Sugden, out of Hallock Minnesota, made contact and a deal was formed. Mike purchased one and had it mounted atop a pole in front of his Motel, replete with the tail markings of the 451st.

Over the course of time he has had many favorable comments, and some serious questions as to: Why, How, Where and What's the connection between a motel and a pint-sized P-51? Mike explains by calling it his "Guardian Angel," since it was once his protectorate and now its his prodigy. Since mounting it to its present position, Mike has brought more business to the Sugden enterprise. Now if they just made a B-24, Liberator!

You should stop by whenever you come into Dodge City. It's the only motel with a "Little Friend" soaring away (OVERHEAD, as before) near its front door. But remember, Mike and Helen spends much of their winters in Scottsdale - snowbirding, you know. But if you can find him, he'd enjoy rapping with you about his new "Motel Motif."

I should add that the newspaper; "The Wichita Eagle" ran quite a story on Mike and his "Little Friend," last May 1995.

YOU'RE NOT HAVING VISIONS: IT'S REAL

Mike Stauth Proudly Displays P-51: His Wartime "Little Friend"

"JUST SUPPOSE"

Suppose your driving through a Kansas town without a clue as to just where you are. Then suppose you looked up and saw a stationary P-51 Mustang, with its props whirling in the Kansas breeze, but it ain't going nowhere. Then taking another "suppose;" suppose you took into consideration the days of WWII and you remember them crisscrossing overhead, and the reassuring comfort they gave you back then. Now advance yourself to some 50 years from that point in time, to now then, without a doubt, you have to be in Dodge City Kansas. And to further pin-point your location, you are in front of the Econo Lodge Motel on Wyatt Earp Blvd.

Now, after taking all those "supposes" into consideration you are going to find yourself looking at the pro-



2 P-51's Drop in at Castelluccia di Sauri AF

YOU KNOW YOUR GETTING OLD WHEN:

Everything hurts, and what doesn't hurt, doesn't work; OR, ... The gleam in your eyes is from the sun hitting your bifocals; OR, ... You feel like the night before and you haven't been anywhere.

GREECE REFINES MEDAL PROCEDURE

Recently this office has received letters from hopeful applicants for the Hellenic Greek Medal telling that, after sending their request for the Medal, they have heard nothing. Some have had their request submitted to the Greek Embassy since just after it was announced in the Issue 24 publication of the Ad-Lib.

Somewhat concerned that the information in Issue 24 was in error I contacted the Greek Embassy by phone to verify the status of their offer. I was told by the Air Attache, Colonel Dim. Georgiopoulos, (HAF), that some of the procedures, and qualifications, have been changed to grant only those that actually flew missions against Greece to receive the award. It seemed that the Embassy of Greece has been inundated with hopeful, but unqualified, applicants.

The letter I received from the Embassy of Greece in Washington, DC, reads as follows:

Mr Karstensen,

Further to our telecom on Friday 9 of June, please be advised of the following:

a.) Those qualified to receive medals are those individuals who served under the Hellenic Armed Forces, or in Units of the Allied forces and who participated in operations only in Greece during the period of 28th of October, 1940 through 8th May, 1945.

b.) Specifically with regards to Air Force, attacks or landing at Hellenic Airports..

c.) The required documents which must be submitted for the awarding of medals are the following:

1.) Declaration that indicates the year of service, the operations which the applicant participated in, or any other document which supports the right for the awarding of a medal for service performed during 1940-1945.

2.) Certification from the U.S. Department of Defense or a copy of the Log Book which indicates that the applicant participated or served in operations in Greece, during the above time period, as well as indicating the unit in which the applicant served.

3.) Declaration stating that the applicant has never been convicted in any court of Greece.

d.) For those who have served in the Army, inquiries should be directed to the office of the Defense Attache'.

Sincerely; Colonel Georgiopoulos, Air Attache'

What seems to be the glitch, is that they want verification and documentation that you flew A specific mission against A specific targets in Greece. And from our history that could only be the two (2) missions, #127 and #128; Athens/Eleusis Airdrome on 24 September 1944 and the Athens Area Sub/Pens on 25 September 1944, respectively. If you have no evidence of having been on these missions (evidence in the form of copies from your A-5 file), then the Government of Greece rules you out. If you have not heard from them

personally, then review your flight history and if you had flown either of the two missions, and can document it, give them another try.

NEW 'RUPTURED DUCKS' AVAILABLE FOR WWII VETS

This was one of the caption heading I found in the July issue of the Stars and Stripes (YES, the Stars and Stripes is still in publication). The article reads as follows:

Do you know where your "Ruptured Duck" is? Otherwise known as the Honorable Service Lapel Pin?

The small gold-plated brass badges, issued to all service members honorably discharged between September 1939 and December 1946, got their nickname for the more than 12 million veterans who returned to civilian life after WWII.

The emblem had it beginnings in 1925 when the War Department authorized a "Badge of Service" for honorably discharged veterans. Department documents described the decoration as "an eagle perched within a ring that displays seven white and six red vertical stripes and a blue chief along the wing bearing the words 'National Defense'."

Veterans who wore the pins on their civilian lapels gradually replaced them with organizational or service club lapel pins which seemed more appropriate for peacetime.

A lot of Ruptured Ducks went astray.

WWII veterans may receive free replacement pins. To be eligible, they must have served between 8 Sept., 1939, and 31 Dec., 1946. The verification process takes up to eight months of more, according to the Pentagon, but it maybe shortened if applicants include copies of their WWII discharge papers, War Department AGO Form 4 equivalent.

The article continues with the procedure to obtain the pin:

Army Air Force veterans seeking replacement Honorable Service Lapel Pins should write to: Air Force Reference Branch, National Personnel Records Center, St. Louis, MO 63132. Ph. (314) 538-4218.

To those that showed surprise that the STARS and STRIPES was still active, please look further for their ad on how to subscribe to their weekly publication;

ON THE SUBJECT OF:

International B-24 LIBERATOR CLUB Seeks New Members

And as informational follow-up, for subscriptions to papers and magazines. At least those oriented to our wartime affiliations, may I offer this item that crossed my desk not too long ago:

The International B-24 Liberator Club is dedicated to preserving the history of the B-24 Liberator bomber and its derivatives. Consolidated Aircraft Company designed the Liberator in 1939 in response to the Army Air Corps' request for a long range bomber. The company produced over 18,000 of the twin-tailed aircraft for use during WWII at plants throughout the country including San Diego, California; Willow Run, Michigan and Ft. Worth, Texas.

The club keeps alive the memories of its designers, crews and admirers and has done since its creation in 1969. Started by the late Robert McGuire, a former B-24 combat photographer, the club has defended the Liberator's reputation for over 25 years. Not considered the most attractive or graceful of WWII's flying arsenal, the Liberator nonetheless provided an incomparable ser-

vice during the second world war and during the Korean conflict.

The BRIEFING, the club's quarterly publication, is distributed to over 3,000 club members, as well as to schools, veterans organizations and museums worldwide. By sponsoring aircraft exhibits, flying displays and speaking engagements, the club continues to educate the public about an historic aircraft whose first mission took place long before many of today's citizens were born. Club membership is \$15 per year for U.S., \$18 overseas, and includes a subscription to the organization's highly acclaimed, BRIEFING. For more information, contact George Welsh, Manager, International B-24 Liberator Club, 15817 Bernardo Center Drive, Suite 102, Box 124, San Diego, CA 92127-2322. Tel: Voice/Fax (619) 679-1957.

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FOLLOW-UP ON FAIRMONT ARMY AIR FIELD PLANS

On page 15/16 of the last Ad-Lib (Issue 25) we ran an update on what was happening out at Fairmont, Nebraska; our old "final" training base. Since that time I have been told that the new State Historical Marker is now in place on Highway #6, North of the base, and East of the city. I have not yet had the opportunity to see it, but am anxious to do so. The Fillmore County Historical Society, under the guiding hand of Don West, has done a remarkable job to get it sanctioned by the State, and to get it in place. When you drive past it, you can look at it with pride .. as it was your contributions to the Fillmore County Historical Society that made it possible.

My plea for responses to the possibility of some of our people attending the "Fairmont Army Air Field Reunion" on June 15, 16, and 17 of 1996, seems to have fell on deaf ears. To the best of my recall, hardly anyone has commented on taking part. I'm sure that there will be some nearby members that will attend, but

to date no one; further away, that is than from "out-of-state," seemed to have taken the hint. Maybe another "jab" by yours truly will get you off the fence.

Being that Father's Day falls on the 16th of June; why not drop a broad hint to the kids that Dad would like to take part in this Reunion. The kids need time with Dad, and this would be the perfect time to do a little "bonding." No telling what they would learn about what Pop did during the war. Some of your stories could be confirmed, once you are with guys from your remarkable past.

YOU KNOW YOUR GETTING OLD WHEN:

Your little black book contains only names ending in M.D., OR, ... You get winded playing chess, your children begin to look middle aged, OR, ... You finally reach the top of the ladder, and find it's leaning against the wrong wall.

CAPPLEMAN CREW PROVES

YES: YOU CAN GO BACK

FIRST THE 1944 ODYSSEY

It's always been said, "You can never go back." Somehow that seems to infer that none of the emotions that you once felt, can be recalled to the point that you can relive that special moment over again. Especially going back to the scene of an incident that happened more than 50 years ago. But - it can be done with proper timing, the right companions and a coordinated effort in bringing you to the scene of where it all happened. This happened to the crew of Lt. George S. Cappleman (727th), starting on 2 August 1995; exactly 51 years to the day that the crew was forced to bail out over Southern France. Five surviving members of the Cappleman Crew; Bombardier, Engineer, Radio Operator, Nose and Tail Gunners and family members, including Jody Dandrew Keller, the sister of Cameraman Winston F. Dandrew, - the single fatality on the mission, and myself, journeyed to France, the site of this momentous adventure.

There they met members of the French Underground, and some of the people that had befriended them when they had parachuted behind the German lines some 51 years earlier. Throughout their ordeal, during the month of August 1944 they were in constant danger of being captured. But with the aid of the gallant French, they were concealed and cared for until such time as the advance patrols of Patton's 3rd Army came through and liberated them.

The mission on 2 August 1944 was to bomb the Le Pontet Oil Refinery in Southern France. The crew that flew the mission came overseas together. All except for the bombardier who replaced the crew's regular bombardier and navigator. That replacement Bomb/Nav was 1LT Robert W. Gillies (now Lt. Col., Ret.), an original member of the Edward A. Hook crew.

The mission to the target was without serious incident, but over the target they received flak that knocked out one of their outboard engines and diminished some of their flying ability. Unable to maintain altitude, and with mountains and a long over-water flight to overcome, the pilot chose to bail the crew out over a sparsely inhabited area. That area was in the mountains near the Rhone River valley. Specifically the area near Vanos, St. Etienne, and Annonay. All crewmen performed the bail-out successfully with the exception of Winston F. Dandrew (Photographer). His chute failed to open properly and he was killed upon impact.

The crew were gathered together by the nearby farmers and brought to a central location. To their good fortune they had landed in an area where the German Army had little control. It seems that the French Underground, and the Marquis were in control of the area, and except for occasional German patrol and aircraft strafing, they were reasonably safe. On one such strafing, Lt. Gillies was wounded and had to be evacuated to a nearby French medical facilities, then to an Allied hospital upon liberation.

Sergeant Winston F. Dandrew was buried in the Catholic Cemetery in Vanos with full military honors (as best as could be done under the circumstances) with the crew in attendance. The crew had stood guard over the casket in the church before burial and fired a rifle salute at the burial. His body was

later reinterred in the Rhone Military Cemetery at Draguignan (Var), France.

A few days after bailing out, the crew went back to the site of the crashed "Patsy Jack" (a/c #42-64445) and salvaged several damaged 50 cal. guns and usable ammo. These guns were stripped and made into one



ORIGINAL "CAP" CREW

Standing: John Lahey, Navigator; Warren Paulsell, Copilot; George Cappleman, Pilot; Roy White, Bombardier.

Kneeling: Tom Dow, Gunner; Harold Mehl, Gunner; George Lizotte, Gunner; Jim Lewis, AEG; Ted Zukosky, ROMG; Winston Meunier, Gunner



Surviving Crewmen

Standing: Pilot, Cappleman; Copilot, Paulsell; Bomb/Nav, Gillies; Gunner, Mehl; ROMG, Zukosky.
Kneeling: Gunner, Dow; AEG, Lewis; Gunner, Lizotte; Gunner, Meunier. Missing is Cameraman Dandrew (KIA).

good operating weapon. They were also "invited" (a poor choice of words) to accompany the French on raids against the German troops. Their role was to act as guards so the French could accomplish their intended mission. They were also asked to detonate a bomb that had fallen onto French soil. Thinking that they were working with a bomb familiar to their training, they proceeded to detonate it. Unbeknownst to them it was a high explosive Navy General Purpose Bomb and not the type they were use to; and when it was set off it relieved many of the nearby buildings of most of their windows.



Harold Mehl Buries A Fallen Comrade

The crew functioned in many capacities while in the safety of the French Marquis. They worked together with some recently parachuted in OSS troops. An assignment passed on to them was to level off a field that could be used by a C-47 to bring in supplies for the Underground. Their work went for naught as the supplies were later parachuted in. They accompanied the French on raids and in general aided them when asked.

They were liberated when they heard that some of Patton's troops were making a "run" down the Rhone Valley. They literally walked out to meet them. The tank commander they encountered was taken by surprise when he was asked, in perfect English, where the closest U.S. military headquarters was. After spending close to a month in French hands they were finally sent back to Bari, Italy where they were processed to return to the States.

NOW THE 1995 ODYSSEY

Back in early February of this year (1995) this office received a letter from a French historian; a Mr. Philippe CASTELLANO of Mandelieu France. He had picked up my name as organizer of the 451st Bomb Group. He was interested in making contact on behalf of another historian, Marcel ERTEL. He pointed out his specific interest was in the Cappleman crew and wondered how many I had in our Roster. I responded with what information I had and was rewarded by a return fax expressing his, and Marcel's thanks.

Continuing interest shifted to Marcel ERTEL, whereupon Marcel told me of his research into the incident of the "Patsy Jack" crash, and his wanting to know more about the Cappleman Crew. I tried to fulfill all his requests and through limited translation procedures we managed to get our points across.

As our correspondence continued it became apparent to me that Marcel had more in mind than to just do simple research. He approached me as to how many of the surviving crew would like to come to France and participate in ceremonies dedicating Monuments relevant to their adventure. The only expenses involved would be the air fares, as Marcel, and the various villages, would pick up the lodgings, transportation and meals.

Before I subjected the Cappleman crew to this question, I first contacted a Mrs Betty Karle out of Mena, Arkansas, who had spent time in France under similar circumstances. She told me that if the offer was made, "Go for it!" She had been privy to such a wonderful experience and found it exactly as they had described.

I immediately sent letters to those of the Cappleman crew that I had on the roster, and made intensive searches for those still unfound. We had, at that time, on file the Pilot, George Cappleman; AEG, Jim Lewis; ROG, Ted Zukosky; Gunners Harold Mehl and Tom Dow. Through later research we found that Copilot Warren Paulsell and Gunner George Lizotte were deceased. Winston Meunier was found but expressed no interest in joining, either our organization nor the expedition. Robert Gillies, though not a regular member of the crew, was also on file. One by one the crew consented to take

part in our odyssey.

George Cappleman was one of the first to express his interest in attending; but sadly he passed away on 19 April, only a month or so after our first invitation letter. But in his stead we induced his wife (Wilma), son (Burt), daughter-in-law (Tammy), and grandson (Cortney) to join us.

Marcel was most interested in having some member of the Winston Dandrew's family join us. It took considerable searching, phoning and writing to local newspapers to locate one of his two remaining sisters in the Upper New York area. Jody Dandrew Keller kindly consented to join us and to try and overcome her reluctance to fly.

As correspondence crossed the Atlantic between Marcel and myself, I could see that Marcel was a man of vision. He sent me letters that I was to pass on to the Mayors of the various cities that our people resided in. He requested that the Mayor's assign a newspaper reporter to tell the story of what HAD, and was about to happen as a result of what the Cappleman crew had done in 1944. As intermediary, I was called by the various reporters to amplify on those wartime achievements. Some of the cities proclaimed a day (by Council decree) for the person thus honored.

Knowing what Marcel could accomplish, on this side of the Atlantic with just a little help from me, I felt assured that his efforts on French soil would be more than we could ever imagine.



Harold Mehl Takes His Turn at Flying Air France's 747 Across the Atlantic Ocean

And we were not to be disappointed. When Harold and Catherine Mehl and myself deplaned at Lyon, France, on the morning of 3 August, we were braced, and embraced, by reporters, TV cameramen, Mayors and other dignitaries. Since we were the first to arrive we were filmed and interviewed (in broken French/English) to our heart's desire. Champagne was served in a special room set aside for the Cappleman Crew. Harold, Kay and I (and our newly formed entourage) awaited the next flight out of Paris, Amsterdam and London for the rest of our contingency. We discovered later that Bob Gillies' flight had been cancelled from Los Angeles and

was set for the next day. He so informed us by phone. Jim Lewis (with his two sons, Stanley and David) had been delayed in London and, unbeknownst to us, would not arrive for another day. In the interim Tom and Geraldine Dow, Ted Zukosky, Wilma, Burt, Tammy, Cortney Cappleman and Jody Keller had arrived. In total (when we were finally together) there would be 15 of us to make the pilgrimage to the site of the 1944 wartime incident.

After our initial meeting we were taken to a typical "French outdoor restaurant," somewhere's apart from the airport. We were feted with an elegant lunch, replete with wine, bread, entree and fromage (cheese) ... and coffee, that we always found could easily melt your spoon.

When everyone was assembled, baggage accounted for, we loaded aboard a chartered bus and traveled the 60 to 70 miles that brought us to the village of Riotord. Riotord lies south-southwest of Lyon, in the beautiful mountains of Massif Central. Our hotel, La Forestiere, was typical for the region. We occupied most of the 11 rooms that were the hotel. Our meals were prepared by the hotel owner, who, in his travels, had lived some 4 years in England and could speak the English language with ease. The La Forestiere was a family run operation with Martial CAPPELLE (owner and chef), his lovely wife, Dominique, and her parents to assist. Apart from all rumors to the contrary, we Americans were treated with the utmost kindness and respect by all the French citizens we encountered. It should be remembered that this is/was not a resort area, and their livelihood was through farming, and forestry. Thus, as would be the case where their livelihood depended on tourism, courtesy to the traveler was not a MUST. But we received their warmth and compassion, regardless of our purpose.



Marcel ERTEL (French Host)

Indicates Impact Point of "Patsy Jack" on 2 August 1944

Our first full day (5 August) was spent in revisiting some of the places that were important to the Cappleman/Patsy Jack Crew. We visited the site of where the Patsy Jack struck the ground, and the farmhouses where some of the crew were brought together, when found by



Crew Returns to Scene of 1st Hiding Place

Zukosky, Mehl, Dow, Lewis, French Farmer (witnessed the rescue, as a boy), & Gillies.

the French.

On Sunday, 6 August, we began our Dedication Ceremonies. We journeyed to Besset, a hamlet near St Julien-Mohlesabate where the first of our monuments was in place. It seemed that half the Department (what we would call Counties or Parishes) of Haute-Loire had turned out as we had many hundreds in attendance.



First Monument Dedication



Tom Dow Reunites With Frenchman Louis Pain (Friends From The Distance Past)

A most impressive moment came when, prior to the Monument Dedication, 5 parachutist tumbled out of their aircraft and landed nearby. The last two parachutists to land, each carried a flag; one the Tricolors of France and the other, the Stars and Stripes of our United States.

Speeches were made by dignitaries, such as Colonel Marston, Air Attache from our American Consulate in Paris; Marcel Ertel (our host and coordinator for all events); Counsel General/Mayor from Dunieres, Mr Jean-Pierre Marcon; Mayor of St. Julien-Molhesabate, Mme Josiane Couq. Other dignitaries present were representatives from the French Air Force, French Navy and various other branches of government. It was indeed a splendid tribute to the men of the Cappleman Crew.

One particularly moving moment came when I was approached by a white haired French gentleman that showed me a letter that he had once received from the United States. At the bottom of the letter was the signature of Thomas Dow. In a halting manner he asked me if I would point out Tom to him. I took him over to Tom and his wife and asked Tom if he recalled this gentleman. One glance at the letter and Tom realized that he was once again with his old comrade from that time so long ago. Emotions were hard to suppress as each realized that a friendship begun over 50 years ago was again being rekindled. Louie Pain became Tom's close companion for the next couple days. It was one of those touching moments that showed, "You can go back."

Our next official presentation came later in the day and was made in the City of St Julien-Mohlesabate. There we were offered the honor of unveiling a monument to all the Cappleman Crew (replete with individual crewmembers names inscribed); and a special tribute to Winston F. Dandrew, whose life was lost on the mission. The citizenry honored Winston Dandrew in a very special way. They renamed the village square, "Winston Fleming Dandrew Place." Winston's sister, Jody Dandrew Keller was there to accept the honor of this magnanimous gesture.

After each ceremony comes those happy moments of dining and celebration. Nowhere were we denied the



Outside City Hall in Saint-Julien-Molhesabate In Recognition of W.F. Dandrew, Cameraman (KIA)



2nd Monument Dedicated to Cappleman Crew

pleasure/honor of meeting the Mayor of the communities, receiving a commemorative medal, and partaking in a toast of Champagne.

The next day, 7 August, was no exception. We were taken to the Catholic Church, in Vanosc, where Winston Dandrew's body had lain in rest, prior to his burial. We attended a special Mass in his memory.

Upon leaving the church we were again besieged by special ceremony to memorialize the Cappleman Crew. After wine and snacks we were escorted to the school where most of the crew were housed in August 1944. According to the crew, not much had changed, but to find the exact spot of where they slept became a challenge. Too much time had passed, without having given much thought to all the exactness' of the incident.

One thing that did prove to be of a comical nature; It came when some of the crew were discussing their detonation of the Navy bomb nearby, when, through translation of the story, one white haired gentleman came forward and said he remembered it quite well. Thinking he was jesting, the crew asked him what made that incident so outstanding in his mind. His reply was that he was the glazier and had the job to replace most of the "blown-out" windows. He was immediately taken into the "inner circle" and hugged with honors.

That day saw us drive the short distance to where the

crew actually landed on French soil in 1944. We parked across the valley from the hillside of the landing, so a good view could be taken of the spot. One of the local citizens volunteered a car to drive Jody Keller to the spot where her brother had died. Together with Harold and Kay Mehl, a translator, and the driver, they proceeded to the area of the fall. There they met people that were privy to the demise of her brother. Although painful, Jody realized the high regard that the French had placed on her brother. Together with what was to come later, Jody fulfilled a wish she had harbored since learning of her brother's death during the war. She was now, more than ever before, taking up the family scepter that her brother had passed on to her that fateful day in 1944.



Tammy Cappleman and Jody Keller View Hillside Where Crew Landed

8 August had us off and running once again. Only one official function at the Mayor's office at Saint Paul En Cornillon, and then to visit one of the most colorful churches in the area. It was a "family church;" built high up on a mountain side. It had been built and maintained by a large landholder; the Cornillon's, who had once been the predominant family of the area. The drive to the church, with our tour bus, was beset by switchbacks, hills and steep grades - plus a bit of road construction. Once there we examined everything from the burial vaults to the top of the steeple. We, because of our new-found influence, were privy to everything and anything the caretaker had to show and could tell us about.

9 August found us with a somewhat leisurely schedule. Aside from a little elbow bending (formal meeting with the Mayor Mme Josiane Cuoq, of St Julien-Molhesabate (replete with more wine), we were feted to a picnic of gigantic proportions. Some 50 people that had worked closely with Marcel in making our visit so memorable, were there with much food and drink. There was no lack of communications as "sign language" and "facial expressions" seemed to get across the message that was intended. It was as close to a "family feeling" as anything we had encountered while over there.



8 August in Mayor's Office - St Paul En Cornillon



Harold Mehl and Tom Dow Give Mayor Josiane Cuop a Friendly "Heave Ho" at Massive Picnic



Banners Cover All Approaches to Riotord Lewis, Zukosky, Dow, Mehl and Burt Cappleman



The next day, 10 August, found us up early and loading for our 250 mile trip to the Rhone National Military Cemetery near the city of Draguignan, France. This day was to have great significance for Jody Keller, for it would be the first time that any member of the family had visited Winston's grave. And too, it also happened to be the birthday of the deceased. He would have been 78 years of age on that day.

It would also afford me the chance to research members of the "Vail Crew (724th)" who were lost on 11 March 1944, and were seen last over the Mediterranean Sea.

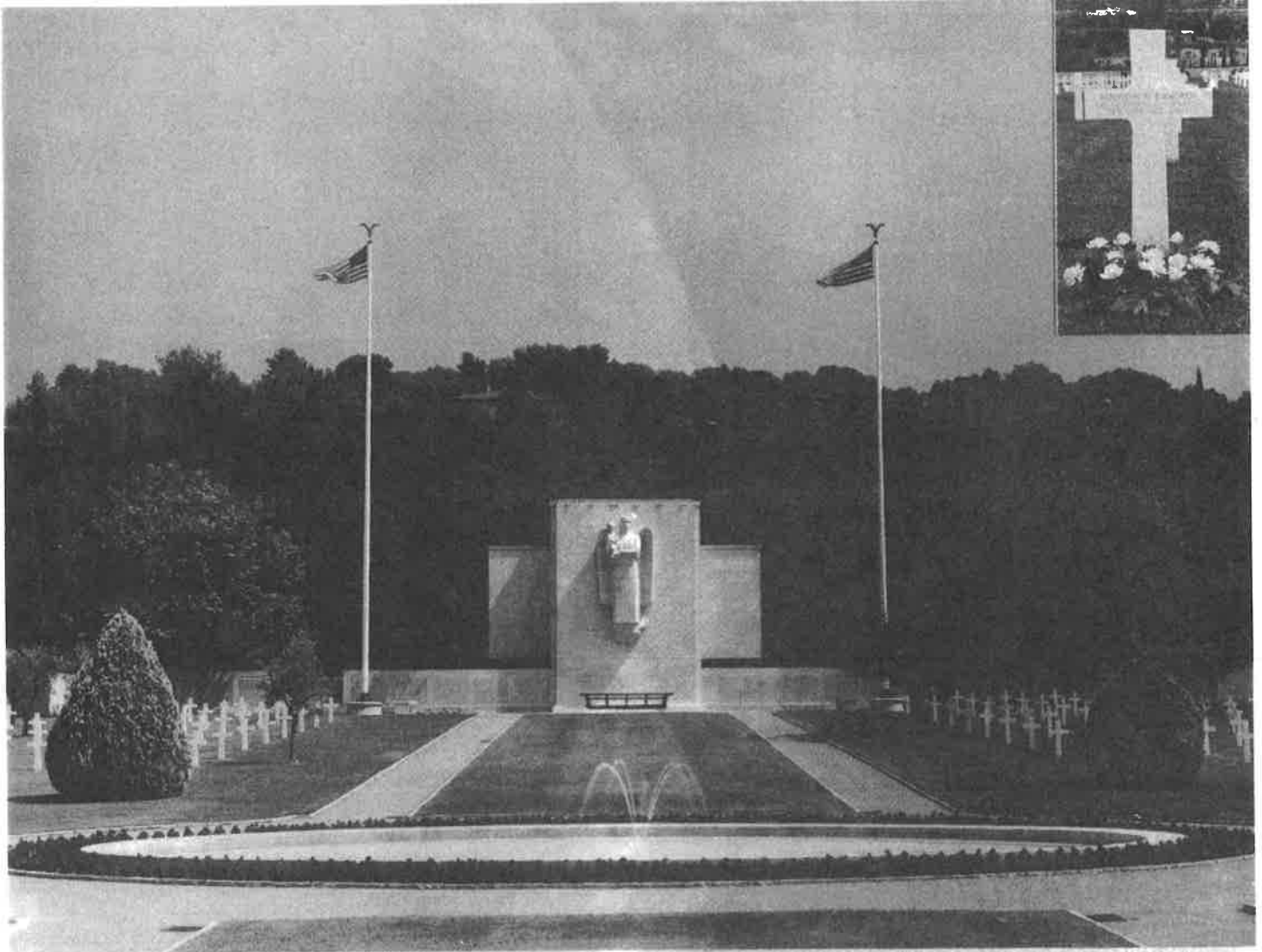
Enroute to Draguignan we stopped along the way, and to our surprise we found that we had a fully stocked larder of food and drink stashed away in the luggage compartment beneath our feet. This picnic arrangement was furnished by our French friends that had joined us for this pilgrimage. As the trip progressed we were more in debt to these kind folks for the kindness they showed towards our well being.

We arrived at the cemetery and announced ourselves to the American Superintendent: Brendan J.B. Derby, Sgt/Major USA (Retired). He was aware of our coming, as Marcel ERTEL had called in advance. And too, this 451st office had ordered flowers, a month prior to our visit, to be placed on the grave of Winston Dandrew, on the date of our arrival. We were immediately escorted to the gravesite and with due ceremony we all paid our respects to our fallen comrade.



Gravesite Of Sergeant Winston F. Dandrew, USAAF

Leaving Jody Keller to pay her solemn respects to her brother, the rest of us were shown around the Chapel and to view the "Wall of the Missing." It was there that we found the names of Major Theodore E. Willhite (flying as Command Pilot on 11 March) and Almous C. New (gunner). Of the 11 on board, they were the only two whose bodies were never recovered from the sea. The rest of the crew: Claude U. Vail, Pilot; Seymour B. Schneck, Navigator; Edward Antonik, Bombardier; and



RHONE AMERICAN CEMETERY AND MEMORIAL
Dragonsguon (Vore), France



Jody Dandrew Keller With Her Brother, "Flem"

Gunners, Jack L. Beatty, Raymond A. Kaudelky, Joseph J. Macsuga, Kenneth J. McKeeman, Paul T. Otstot and Salvatore D. Alaimo are all at their final resting place; the beautiful Rhone Military Cemetery.



Marcel ERTEL Dips French Tri Colors at Claude U. Vail's Gravesite



**Standing Before the Beautiful Mosaic in the Chapel
Ted Zukosky, Jim Lewis & Bob Gillies**

Before heading back to Riotord we made a brief appearance at the Mayor's office in Draguignan. We were presented with a verbal tribute, some wine, and a beautiful medal of the city. Unbeknownst to us, Marcel had made prior arrangements for us to be thus honored. We were beginning to learn the influence that this man had over some of the political offices in the areas that we were visiting. It was outstanding!

The next day, the 11th, saw us in the quaint city of Le Puy-En-Velay. A quick, but detailed, tour of one of the renowned churches (perched high on a hillside, and a challenge to get to), a visit to the market square, then a formal greeting by the Mayor of Le Puy and the Consul General of the Department of Haute-Loire at their combined offices (replete with cocktails and a formal luncheon).

Then it was on to the birthplace of La Fayette, General in our American Revolutionary War. This beautiful estate was surrounded by gardens and scenic walks. On the grounds was planted an American Oak, brought back by La Fayette at the end of the Revolutionary War. That oak proudly stands amid the splendors of its French surroundings.

A custom that prevails with the operation of the estate is that any notables (such as we apparently were) were ushered into a Grand Room. This grandiose room was replete with a huge fireplace at one end. Upon entry the fire is lit and the guests are served wine or beer, as



Jody Keller at Entrance to Lafayette's Birthplace

desired. Needless to say, with outside temperatures of 85 degrees or more, who needed the heat emitted from a roaring fire? But "custom is custom" and they have been a nation much longer than we have; so we just accepted the heat and drank their beer.

Since the Cappleman's were to leave the next morning, many of our local benefactors dropped by the hotel that evening. The Mayor of Riotord, Hippolyte Bernon, presented us with a beautifully crafted goblet inscribed with the name of his city. Wilma Cappleman was presented with a table doily that was made from the parachute that her husband had used in his bail-out. Seems that George had given the parachute to his French friends in 1944 for what they had done for him and the rest of the crew. Wilma was overwhelmed to have first seen it on one of our junkets; and now to have it formally presented to her. Her return to the US was with gratitude and appreciation to Marcel for his thoughtfulness, sincerity and generosity.



Wilma Cappleman Gifted With Doily From George Cappleman's Parachute

On the 12th, the remaining 10 of us (Bob Gillies had returned to the US on the 11th) piled into private cars and drove to the countryside where Marcel, Mady (his



ERTEL Family: Marcel, Mady & Anne Marie

wife) and Anne Marie (daughter) lived. Knowing Marcel's penchant for details and for correspondence, I was not surprised to see his office much like mine - stacked with un-filed material. While at his home we enjoyed a bit of Champagne and some patio socializing. It was on this occasion that we had the chance to visit with his good neighbors; Jeannine and Rene Cesaratto (I say visit haltingly, as my ability to speak French starts with "Bonjour" and ends with "Merci"). Jeannine and Rene were generous financial backers to Marcel's mission. They did it out of respect for their only son that was killed in an air accident several years ago.



H. Mehl, J. Lewis & T. Zukosky Examine Salvaged 50 Caliber Machine Guns From "Patsy Jack"

Marcel showed us his out-buildings that he used to

store some of the wreckage of the "Patsy Jack." He had several bent and rusted 50 cal machine guns in his inventory. Also sheets of aluminum exterior that were crumpled and with jagged edges; but still bore the colors of the USAAF. Hydraulic, oxygen and electrical pipes, with numerous feet of wire also adorned his shed walls.

That evening we were invited to an outdoor wedding reception to be held in St Julien-Mohesabate. Lucky for us (or maybe for the bride and groom) by time we arrived the wedding was over and the happy couple had departed. We were again greeted with warmth and friendship as had been the case throughout our stay. We were served what I called a "Peasant's Meal." It consisted of cabbage soup, sausage, boiled pork, side pork, bread and lots and lots of wine. Later there was a dance that made the festivities a roaring success - and maybe a conclusion; as none of the remaining crew seemed to make it through to the end - whenever that was. We all got back to the hotel, almost on our own, as one by one we faltered and were taken back to the hotel by our friendly benefactors.

The 13th was to be our last full day in France. Marcel was kind enough NOT to schedule anything special for us to do, or see. We were left on our own to see if all the gifts that were given us, could fit into our luggage. Jody had been presented with a "slab" of crumpled fuselage measuring about 16" by 24". I was also presented with such a trophy, but opted, courteously, not to take it and try and get it through customs. I presented it to Marcel to put alongside his 50 cal machine guns. All of us packed far more than we unpacked when we came.

The evening was not without fanfare. Mayors, Deputy Mayors, drivers, friends and their families came to join us in a final farewell. There was little ceremony as we had, over the course of these past two weeks, gotten to know each other quite well, despite the language barrier. One final impression that brought a lump to each of our throats was the effort we Americans put into singing the French Marseilles as our benefactors began to leave. With respect to our effort, certainly not to our voices, they looked on in awe and thanked us for being there - back in 1944 and now in 1995.

The next morning, early, we were taken to the Lyon/Bron airport and departed France for our flights home.

POST EXCURSION COMMENTS

From *Gillies, Robert M.*: I have written to Marcel, Anne Marie and Mama expressing my thanks and appreciation for everything. I also sent a few pictures and a copy of the General Orders for my Purple Heart "earned" in Vanosc. It was a great trip, wasn't it?

My strongest impressions are first of the generosity and friendship of the French people we met in Haute-Loire and Ardeche and second of the Rhone Cemetery at Draguignan - such great beauty and feeling of peace.

Keller, Jody (Dandrew): I got through customs without paying duty. He (Custom Agent) asked me what was in the white box. I told him pieces of an airplane, souvenirs of the wreck and other war mementos (he asked

WHICH war?) and newspapers re: dedication ceremonies, etc., and when his eyes glazed over I knew I was home free. They never even picked-up on the bullets. I could have been a terrorist - or maybe THEY have a sign on their forehead.

For your part in this endeavor, which I realize was enormous and time-consuming, I thank you. Marcel would never have found us without you. How unlike our society are the French. The people are basically the same, but some of the differences are outstanding once you live among them.

Such beautiful country, generous people and the French love for spectacle, ceremony and celebration were heart rendering. But if I ever see another fly on French Bread, or a pile of grated carrots, I'll faint dead-away.

Again - Thanks for the spectacular piece of time those 2 weeks were. It was like stepping out of the present and into the past. Almost medieval at times. I was glad to get home, but will always cherish the memory of that experience and the people I met and lived with.

Lewis, James H.: First let me thank you for the wonderful job you did in communicating with Marcel Ertel to arrange the trip back to France. "Across the ocean arrangements" are hard to make for one person, much less the group that you made the trip possible for.

The wonderful friendly people of the mountain villages we were in proved to be what I told friends who said, "France would not be the same," but I told them the area we were in during 1944 would not be any different as far as the French people were concerned.

The monuments they had prepared, along with all the dignitaries involved (Air Attache from the American Embassy in Paris, members of the French Parliament and the Mayors of all the surrounding villages) that came to attend the unveiling of the beautiful monuments with an engraved "B-24 Liberator," and the 15th Air Force emblem in full color with the "PATSY JACK" crew members' names on them.

Another highlight (the whole event was a HIGHLIGHT) of the trip was the visit to the beautiful little cemetery in Vanosc, where we had laid to rest the Americans that were mortally wounded while we were there. Their bodies had long since been removed to either one of the National Cemeteries in France, or to their homes in America.

One of the National Cemeteries was the Rhone Cemetery in Draguignan, where the body of Winston Dandrew was laid to final rest. Along with us to visit his grave was his sister Jody Keller, of New York. This was a very touching and somber moment for all of us, but the beautiful grounds and buildings there, I am sure, made her feel better to know that this final resting place of her brother was so well cared for.

To sum it all up, Bob, for my two sons (Stanley & David) and myself, I would not take anything for the refreshing memories of France and their gracious outpouring of love and appreciation, from the oldest

Frenchmen down to the youngest child; the story of the Americans who came to fight for freedom still is there in all their hearts.

Mehl, Harold & Catherine: My impression of our trip will be a lasting one and I assure you it will be one I will always be happy to remember. The people were all gracious, generous and respectful to us; as they were 51 years ago. Catherine and I both feel we were very, very fortunate to have had the opportunity to go back in time and to be treated as hero's. I never felt that I was one, but after two weeks with the French people, they were beginning to convince me that I was.



A LAST LOOK BACK
Harold Mehl With French Soldier and German Sympathizers

Dow, Tom & Geraldine: Our hats are off to the two "super heroes" of our trip to France! Marcel - and you, Bob! It's hard to imagine the amount of detail and planning the two of you achieved ... especially with the language barrier.

We appreciate all the efforts made by the Mayors and their colleagues - from meeting us at the airport, being our guides and interpreters, and even giving us a farewell cocktail party on our last night at the Inn; and for "Auld Lang Syne."

The Memorial Ceremonies and Dedications were outstanding and more than we dreamed of. All of the greetings and dinners were wonderful. We will never forget how much, so many people did for us. We felt very honored and special.

When I met Louis Pain at the first ceremony, many memories came back. But the greatest pleasure was when we went to Vanosc, Louis' hometown. That is the town we were first brought to, and to see the church that we stood guard, and the schoolhouse where we slept was very overwhelming. All of my memories of the town returned. It was wonderful seeing Louis, his wife and children!

The town of Vanosc, as well as others, hasn't changed much. They are still beautiful, with their red tiled roofs and all the abundant flower pots. But most of all, the people are so warm. The Mass at the church in Vanosc was very special, especially seeing the number of townspeople who attended the Mass and outdoor ceremony.

When, and if, we ever go back to Riotord, I'll bring screens for the windows of the Inn; if the Inn Keeper gets the swimming pool fixed!

Le Puy was one of the most beautiful towns we visited. The Church and the Statue of the Virgin Mary were a magnificent sight.

Cappleman's, Wilma, Burt, Tammy & Cortney: As we sit here trying to sort through our trip memories, many things come to mind.

Our first impression has to be the warmth and compassion of the people of these villages. They opened their communities to us just as they opened it to the 451st crew half a century ago. Seeing them and meeting them gave dimension and personality to the stories George told.

George spoke of the shelter provided to the crew by these people. Being there and seeing where the crew stayed and worked gave me a deep appreciation for the sacrifices made during the war. George appreciated that shelter more than a five star medal.

For myself and my family, seeing the reenactment brought to reality what we had heard about years before. It provided us a sense of "sharing history." Participating in the celebration gave me and my family great pride for being at least an extended part of the 451st crew.

Our thanks go out to those warm French people who participated in both the event and reenactment.

Zukosky, Ted: Thank you for the photos and the reminder that I had promised to relate to you my feelings in regard to our sojourn to France.

In the 50 years that have passed since my first visit to France I had given very little thought to the events of the 3 years spent in the Air Force. Now at the age of 73 I was reminded that some good may have come from those years expended in service.

It was gratifying to me that the French people have held we few in such high esteem. We were a very small group of many thousands who contributed to the Freedom of France, and still some 50 years later they sought to honor the crew of the "Patsy Jack."

I shall always remember the efforts of Marcel Ertel and his family, and the citizens of Southern France, in extending the honor of recognition of our minute contribution in their liberation. I shall never forget the "red

carpet treatment" given to the few remaining members of the crew and their families.

Karstensen, Bob: Being a part of this odyssey was truly a chance to feel the warmth, the generosity, and the respect that the French people still feel for the Americans. Even as this tome is being written I am receiving, through Marcel ERTEL, letters from school children that have taken the time to write what they have learned from this friendly invasion. These feelings have to have been generated from the parents, or perhaps even the grandparents. It is not a masked appreciation, as I believe those of us that participated will attest to, it was genuine.

But all thanks has to go to Marcel ERTEL, and his lovely daughter, Anne Marie, who, without their determination this would never have happened. They left no stone unturned in their quest for bestowing honors on the "Cappleman Crew." There wasn't a day that passed but what some newspaper, some television station, some radio broadcast wasn't espousing the fact that we were there to renew our alliance with the people of the area. I personally carried a letter from our President, Bill Clinton, and my Senator, Paul Simon to the people of France. Jim Lewis carried a similar proclamation from his Texas Governor, George Bush. But, more than anything we brought to France, they were more impressed with just seeing the crew members that had been part of their lives 51 years ago. I guess the legacy lives on.

As Marcel and Anne Marie finishes up this aspect of their historical research, they now launch into another. They has found the location of another crash site, that of a F6F Hellcat Navy Fighter. And they have researched the basic history of the deceased pilot, Lt Commander Harry Brinkley Bass. (KIA on 20 August 1944 flying off the Aircraft Carrier Kassar Bay during the invasion of Southern France.) Now it is their goal to locate this family and to place a monument in his honor. They have asked me to try my skills at finding the family and to extend a 1996 invitation to them to witness and celebrate the same ceremonies that was bestowed on the Cappleman Crew. The United States Navy has already immortalized Commander Bass by naming a Destroyer; the BRINKLEY BASS, in his honor. My search goes on!

KEN COLLINS RELIVES 1944 MISSION THRU 1995 VIENNA TRIP

by: Ken Collins

The following is a recap of my Hungarian visit and the events leading up to it.

DATE: August 22, 1944. Target Lobau Oil Plant outside of Vienna. Intelligence report; probable 60 -70 single engine enemy fighters and flak from total of 312 guns.

Enroute to the target our ship was hit by ME-109s about 10:00 am. I bailed out and seconds later the ship exploded. On my landing I had a Hungarian reception committee waiting for me and they took me into a small town, where in the course of the day, the town police

station became a collection point for other airmen who were shot down that day.

In the afternoon some of the local police brought in a sergeant who was shot down on his return from the target. He was very upset as the police forced him to remove the bodies from a crashed and burned aircraft. The police showed me the dog tags that Joe Levine (I later learned his name) was forced to remove from the bodies. They were from my crew and a photographer who was on the ship.

I never saw Joe Levine after that day and lost track of him until he came into my store, by chance, 41 years later.

Fast forward to 1995 and the Stalag Luft III Liberation Reunion, "Down Memory Lane" with a revisit to the P.O.W. camps. Knowing that I would be near Hungary on April 25, I contacted a Hungarian friend of mine, who is bilingual and lives in Budapest. In trying to locate the exact town in which I was captured, I contacted the Maxwell Field Records Center, and George, my Hungarian friend, contacted the Document Center in Budapest. The town we sought was located and George made an appointment for us with the town clerk to review the 8/22/44 events. He picked me up at the nearest railroad station and we drove to Maryargenes.

The town clerk took out a huge volume of records and turned to August 22, 1944, and there, entered carefully by hand was a list of those who died that day. My crew members were listed, plus other airmen and a few local residents who also passed away on that day.

I asked Judith, the town clerk, through George my interpreter, if there was anyone still alive who might remember the events of that day. She did; and we drove out to his hut, where our mission was explained to him. He invited us in and when we mentioned 8/22/44, although it was quite a few years ago, he perked up and said he remembered the day very clearly and proceeded to describe the air action. He told of the large number of German fighters that were in the air and the planes that crashed and what the locals did with the remains of the crewmen. He was part of the burial party. He also told us that some of the captured airmen were roughed up by the locals and that after the war they were punished. Also, he said that one of the local craftsmen carved a memorial in wood for the American graves that stated, "In Memory of 14 Airmen Who Gave Their Lives for Freedom; for Hungary and the World." After the war, the bodies were re-interred in Allied cemeteries in Europe, or in the States. Needless to say, this was quite an overwhelming experience.

Names on the town ledger were: Irving Stern, who I believe was the photographer and not part of our regular crew; Frank Johnson, Maurice Beaucond, also not on our crew; (Beaucond did not perish that day and now lives in Texas - Francis "Frank" Johnson was part of



CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

You guys are the GREATEST. Since the last newsletter you have offered sufficient funds to buy a copy machine (ZEROX) that has all the "bells and whistles" that I need to operate efficiently. Now I need a computerized scanner to reproduce photos that can be integrated directly into these newsletters. So, the next time you pull out that checkbook, see if there is a little something left over for the old 451st.

On another subject. As you have noted on the first page, Minneapolis is the selected city for our 1996 reunion. I want you to give EXTRA consideration to attending. Our gather-

pilot Beaucond's crew and he perished on that mission). The following dog tags were recovered from the crew that I was flying with; Alfred M. Donelson (pilot), Richard A. Koolish (navigator), Willie N. Hobbs, (gunner); Charles M. Cain, (gunner); James W. Nelson, (gunner); John F. Bernabic, (gunner).

I only have one set of pictures covering the Town Registry; the old gent, and local historian. If I can get another set of pictures, I will send them along.

I am enclosing copies of: The 8/22/44 briefing, debriefing records, the German pilot's debriefing forms who shot us down, and a copy of the planes that were destroyed that day as taken from the Hungarian Army files and as given to my friend, George.

If you can use any of the above, please do. I enjoy receiving your issues, so keep them coming.

(Editorial Summation) Just to "flesh out" the fine narration that Ken Collins offered about his 22 August experience, may I add this; 5 aircraft were lost that day. One from the 724th with pilot Alfred M. Donelson flying "Toddlin Trollop" (it should be noted that copilot Jack I. Brady, and gunners Daniel M. Pagac and Joseph Pantek were not mentioned in preceding narration as KIA). 725th lost one aircraft, "Scrappy," piloted by Robert L. Worsthorn (all bailed out successfully), 726th lost two aircraft; "Old Taylor," piloted by Maurice J. Beaucond (7 of 9 KIA), and "Wet Dream," piloted by Valerian E. Klein (3 of 9 KIA). The 727th had the loss of one aircraft, "Con Job" piloted by Richard A. Turnbull (1 of 11 KIA).

And although we consider the 22 August mission as one of special note, the mission on the following day, 23 August was even more devastating to the 451st. On that mission, to the Markersdorf Airdrome near Vienna, we lost a total of eight (8) aircraft. 3 came from the 724th; Pilots R.L. Beach, J.H. Powers and C.E. Donaghue. From the 725 we suffered 3 more losses; W.H. Malakowski, K.A. Whiting and G.S. Panyity. The 726th had one loss; H.S. Clapp, while the 727th also subtracted one from its inventory; that aircraft flown by R.J. Anderson.

ings have been highly commend by those that attended, and recently highly publicized in the Retired Officers Magazine. Our talented novelist, William "Andy" Anderson (725th Pilot) had a 5 page spread on how much reunions mean to us old timers. He used our Irving, California Reunion as his focus point. After reading the article, I can't imagine how anyone would want to pass up their old Unit's reunion. We're all getting a bit older and we need to bolster our ego's by just being among guys that went through the same hell as we did. Don't back off from attending because you think that since none of your tentmates are there, you won't enjoy the festivities. I've found that we've had people wander in (without registering) and look over the amenities and then because no one is of their acquaintance, they leave. I've always stressed that you can always find someone that remembers and incident that you were part of, and from there a friendship builds. Unless you are a complete introvert, you should make out okay. If nothing else, the diverse programing is certainly entertaining. I'm sure that Minneapolis will not be any different.

"LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON (Continued - 3rd Installment)

by: Dr. Royal C. Gilkey

A second mission was flown on July 14, 1944. Unlike the morning mission, wherein many enemy aircraft (including Me 109s, 110s, 210s, 410s, plus FW 190s) were seen, not one showed up in the later mission flown nearer home in the afternoon. Ghedi airdrome, located just south of the Alps (near Brescia, Italy), was the target for P-38 dive-bombers from 82nd Fighter Group, under the protection of "Lightnings" from the 49th Fighter Squadron. The object of the attack was to destroy an "American Liberator" bomber (B-24) stashed away in a revetment on Ghedi's airfield. Not long after take-off at 1616 hours, the "49-ers" rendezvoused with the 82nd's planes at 4:30 p.m. over Triolo Landing Ground. From a rendezvous altitude of 4,000 feet, they flew on to Valli di Comacchio (Valley of Comacchio) along Italy's north Adriatic coast before flying inland towards the target, which they reached at approximately 1815 hours. They stayed in the target area for about 20 minutes at an altitude of 10,000 feet. It was reported that bombing results were excellent, the "Liberator" bomber being hit twice and left in flames. Some cumulus clouds were observed at 11,000 feet, and a thunderhead lay off to the northeast of Lago di Valli de Comacchio (Lake of the Valleys of Comacchio). The P-38s stayed together all the way back, going their separate ways from a deck-level departure a few minutes after 8 p.m. over Triolo Landing Ground. Seven of the eight pilots who had taken off for the mission (led by Lt. Gunvald B. Thorson, from Brooklyn, NY) completed it and so received sortie credit. One early return for mechanical trouble, of course, received none. The 49th's two-flight squadron had done it's job well.

..... (Editor; While reviewing the history of the day for the connection between the 451st BG and the 49th FS, I ran across an 'Escape Procedure' that was unbeknownst to me. It reads as follows: "Latest reports show that aid can be secured in Budapest area and in Budapest itself: mingle with migrants (largely Jews), who will help to secure necessary papers for travelling in Hungary. Proceed South. Aid can be secured to cross border into Yugoslavia.")

On 15 July 1944, Squadron pilots flew a long-range mission to the Ploesti oil fields, their assignment being to escort heavy bombers out to attack refineries there. A score of 49th Squadron's planes were off at 7:50 a.m. Three of them had to return early, two for mechanical rea-

sons and one because of cockpit trouble. Seventeen flew to the target, arriving at 10:20 a.m. and staying until 11. Flying third position in the Group, the 49-ers covered the target area at an approximate altitude of 26-27,000 feet. Pilots said they saw the bombers but never caught them, having arrived at rendezvous some five minutes late. They blamed adverse weather for this. Oil smoke was observed rising from the target area. While no enemy air resistance was encountered, flak was. It was heavy, accurate and intense. Over Yugoslavia, a couple of P-38s took flak in the radiator, causing a loss of coolant. This obliged them to feather an engine and leave the Bosnia area in a beeline for a return to base. Pilots observed contrails above them after crossing the Danube River on the way to the target, but these produced no complications. Weather was bad during the trip. Midway across the Adriatic Sea, the weather socked in, causing the P-38s to nose down in an effort to get under the cumulus overcast. That failed, and an attempt to climb above the overcast did little good. All this resulted in delay. Check-points were not reached on time. Visibility was limited over the Yugoslav mountains. The target was rimmed by cloud formations, interfering with visual accuracy. There was a good deal of radio-jamming by the enemy. The 17 pilots finishing the mission received sortie credit.

..... (Editor; Despite the fighter escort being tardy, we fulfilled our mission by bombing the Creditul Minier Oil Refinery while the 5th and 49th Wings targeted the Romano American Oil Refineries. Although the Group faced the possibility of 242 flak guns in Ploesti area (91 in immediate target area) no a/c losses were reported and only minimal damage to a/c. Apparently no enemy a/c appeared to destroy our concentration.)

On 16 July 1944, the 49th Fighter Squadron gave penetration, target, and withdrawal cover for four heavy bomb groups of the 55th Wing out to attack the Wiener Neudorf aircraft factory in Austria. Minus two early returns for mechanical reasons, the Squadron's P-38 occupied the second position in the Group. They reached Lake Balaton in Hungary and then flew on to the target area with the bombers, remaining there for almost 20 minutes. Then, the cut south of the target for the rally point but before reaching it, met up with bombers coming off their runs. After covering the withdrawal to prudent limit, they effected a departure at 15,000



Wartime Insigne of the 49th Fighter Squadron



Troy Keith, Colonel USAF (Retired)
1st Commanding Officer of the 14th Fighter Group
Photo Taken While Stationed in Tunisia

feet, not far from the coast of Yugoslavia, 15 minutes after the noon hour. A direct course homeward brought all the pilots back to base. They reported having observed 10 enemy aircraft in the air in the target area. They were flying towards the southeast and drawing contrails. Noticed above and behind our planes, they made a 180-degree turn and headed to the northwest, apparently not wishing to engage. A barrage of flak was thrown up in the target area. It was heavy, intense, and accurate; but took no toll of our fighters. Other planes did not fare so well. One of the bombers under escort was seen in a downward spin at 1015 hours just north of Neusiedler See (Lake) located southeast of Wien (Vienna). A trio of parachutes was seen descending at the scene from an altitude estimated at 22,000 feet in the vicinity of Neusiedl am See (Neusiedl on the Lake). A pair of "Lightnings" appeared to have collided about 10 minutes before target was reached, their altitude being 24,000 feet. One of them was seen in a dive with both engines afire, and the other had an engine trailing smoke. The 49th Fighter Squadron, however, lost nobody. Flying second position in the Group, all 15 pilots belonging to the 49th Fighter Squadron landed safely at 1240 hours, with no losses of their own to report. Lt. Lenox (2nd Lt. Jack (NMI) Lenon, from Enid, Okla.) showed himself to be an efficient Squadron leader on this mission, bringing all back safely.

..... (Editor; The 49th Wing joined with the 55th Wing to bomb the Wiener Neusdorf A/C Engine Factory 10 miles south of Vienna. History records that we lost no a/c.

On July 17, 1944, the 49th Fighter Squadron set off in another direction, this time escorting a couple of 49th Wing bomb groups to a target in the south of France, namely, Arles - the apex of a triangle between Marseilles on the Mediterranean coast and Avignon upriver on the Rhone. Bombing the Arles railroad bridge was the assignment. Fourteen of the Squadron's P-38s took off at four minutes to ten in the morning, leading the 14th Fighter Group to a rendezvous with the bombers at coordinates (4222N 1000E) over the sea between Italy and the French island of Corsica (la Corse). Rendezvous took place early at 10 minutes to high noon 16,500 feet

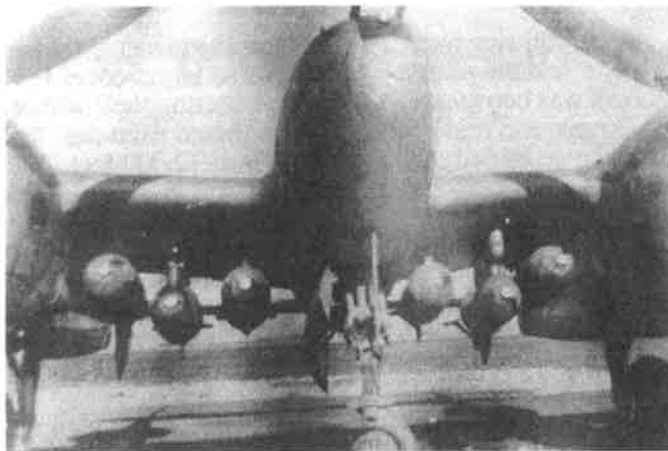
over the water. The flight resumed to the target area, which was reached at 1310 hours, altitude 23,000 feet. The fighters stayed in the area for about a dozen minutes, then departed to the rally point from which they headed home. The bombers were covered in withdrawal to a prudent limit, their escort leaving some of them at 1410 hours 20,000 feet over the coast of France between La Seyne and Hyeres south of Toulon. Despite a scattered bomber formation, it had done effective bombing. Arles bridge sustained two hits, and one end of it was left in flames (although many bombs fell wide of the target). No enemy air resistance was encountered, but flak was run into over Le Vallon's airdrome and above the Rhone River. A smoke screen was spread over Toulon at 1239 hours, making it difficult to see. Boats were spotted on Lake Berre (Etang de Berre) just inland from the Mediterranean coast. Enroute, cumulus cloud formations floated over the Apennines, stratus produced an overcast from the island of Corsica to the coast of France; but skies over France were clear. The return trip ran into cumulus over Corsica but less of it over Italy. Threatening thunderheads appeared west of home base at Triolo Landing Ground. Pilots reported seeing a shot-up B-24 under P-51 escort crossing the French coast at about 1410 hours. There was a radio report that a half-dozen Me 109s were attacking another "Liberator" bomber, but the Squadron's pilots were unable to sight anything. The "Hangmen" who returned from the mission received sortie credit, but the two who returned early as spares did not. Major Abbott (Nathan M. Abbott from Vermont) led both Squadron and Group on the Arles mission.

..... (Editor; On this occasion the 451st BG bombed the Arles Railroad Bridge while the 484th BG took on the Tarascon Railroad Bridge. The 451st recorded no losses. Escape procedures read as follows: "People in area are friendly. Stay away from coastal cities."

On July 18, 1944, the Squadron underwent an exercise in futility. Its pilots were to escort several groups of the 304th Wing in an attack on the Fuel Plant and Engine Works of Friedrichshafen in south Germany, just across Lake Constance (Bodensee) from neutral Switzerland (Schweiz). The order of the day was to cover the bombers during their penetration into the target area, bomb-runs over it, and withdrawal to a prudent limit from its environs. Well, our P-38s never reached this objective. Solid overcast rising to 19-20,000 feet over the Adriatic Sea northeast of Ancona disrupted plans. The pilots toiled around for some 20 minutes in an area located at 4410 N. 1405 E. watching groups of bombers turning back. That meant one thing to them -- the mission was being aborted. So, our P-38s set course for home. Upon arrival, there was nothing significant enough to report. None of the pilots received sortie credit because of the abortive character of the mission. Neither flak nor enemy aircraft had been encountered while they were in the air. Solid cloud coverage provided an insurmountable obstacle to combat flying.

..... (Editor; Records show that we overcame the adverse weather and bombed our target. We lost one a/c when it crashed landed at our field after the mission.

Not known if it was due to flak, fighters or mechanical problems. (a/c #42-78478 "Politician" 726th Squadron.)



**Full Load of Ordnance Hanging Beneath P-38
49th Fighter Squadron**

'Twas a different story on July 19, 1944. Again, the mission was to escort bombers briefed to attack St. Johann in south Germany near Munich (Munchen). In addition to their escort duties, the Squadron's pilots were to conduct a fighter sweep of the Munich area. Seventeen "Lightnings" took off at 0818 hours, but not all finished the mission.

Two returned early because of mechanical difficulties. A third P-38 pilot and plane were lost in a crash south of Udine in northeast Italy. Our planes flew third in the Group, providing top cover for the 37th and 48th Squadrons. Over the target, the 49th Squadron stayed at 30,000 feet. Rendezvous with the bombers had been effected at 24,000 feet. The "Lightnings" escorted B-17s to Chiemsee (Lake Chiem), southeast of Munich, where they took their departure and headed for the big south German metropolis at 1050 hours, their altitude being 30-32,000 feet. At noontime, the P-38s flew southeastward to the area around Udine where a railway was strafed. The pilots reported that the bombers kept an excellent formation. The 14th Fighter Group's formation was good, until its three squadrons got separated after leaving the bombers.

Upon arrival over Munich, the pilots saw an oil fire arising from the city, leading to the presumption that bombers from the 8th Air Force had already attacked it. The B-17s' bombing results were not observed. For 15 minutes after half-past 12, 49th Fighter Squadron P-38s worked over the railroad running from San Giorgio di Nogaro's station (4550 N. 1312 E.) as far west as 4548 N. 1306 E. The strafing attack at San Giorgio paid off because a locomotive met destruction there, and as many as 30 boxcars were damaged. At the western limit of the run, another steam locomotive blew up, putting the number at two destroyed.

As to flak, some was encountered off Pola at the southern end of the Istrian peninsula on the way to rendezvous. A great deal of anti-aircraft fire was flung up from Munich. Intense and accurate, this flak was both the tracking and barrage type. Fortunately, pilots of the 49th Fighter Squadron did not run into it.

Two pilots ran into one another, however. They were Lt. McConnell (2nd Lt. Walter C. McConnell, Jr. From Cornelius, N.C.) and Lt. Bryant (Lt. Oliver Bryant, from Wilmar, Cal.), who had the ill luck to collide in the target area. The McConnell plane sustained damage to the propellor, while the Bryant plane had 5-6 feet of the left wing tip sheared off in the collision. Fortunately, both men managed to get back to base; but the McConnell plane had to be bellied in south of Triolo Landing

Ground because it's fuel tank had run dry.

They say it never rains but it pours. A second collision marred July 19th's flying. It took place over San Giorgio's railway station (4550 N. 1312 E.) and involved planes from two squadrons; the 48th and 49th. When he collided with another P-38, Lt. Thompson (2nd Lt. Richard R. Thompson, S. Seattle, Wash.) had no chance to survive because the impact caused his craft to flip over on its back and slam into the railroad station.

All this happened while both pilots were flying on the deck in a strafing mission. The tragedy occurred during the noon hour (roughly 12:30 p.m.). It served to underscore the risk involved in strafing missions. There isn't enough altitude to get out of a stricken plane by parachute. Some pilots are fatalistic about such missions. Others refuse to dwell upon the dangers, concentrating solely on doing the job. They have to be admired.

Trying to change the focus to a constructive note, Assistant S-2 Royal C. Gilkey offered the good news that Premier Hideki Tojo was reported out as number 1 warlord of Japan. General Yoshijoro Umeza, Chief of Japan's Kwantung army, had been appointed in Tojo's place.

..... (Editor; The mission of 20 July 1944 was a stand-down for the 451st, thus not included in this report. The 49th Fighter Squadron did fly as escort to the 5th Wing (B-17s) on that day.

On 21 July 1944 it was reported that an assassin had failed in an attempt to kill Hitler with a bomb. Germany's wartime reverses were offered as the reason. There would be the devil to pay for this. From our point of view, things were looking in the right direction. Perhaps Hitler's THIRD REICH was beginning to crack.

A troublesome mission was undertaken on July 21, 1944. Escorting bombers to an attack on synthetic oil refineries at Brux in Germany was the assignment. ... (Editor; according to 451st legend, Brux was listed as being in Czechoslovakia - two and a half miles northwest of Most, Czechoslovakia.) "Lightnings," 14 in number, took off on the mission at 0821 hours. A dozen finished the mission. There were a couple of early returns, one for pilot sickness and another coming back as an escort. The other 12 got back to base at 1235 hours. Our pilots led the Group for the first half of the mission, then flew top cover while the 37th Squadron took over the lead. Trouble loomed ahead.

An early rendezvous was effected with B-17s at these coordinates, 4655 N. 1332 E. The time was 1020 hours; and the altitude, 23,000 feet. A help call came in from other bombers out in front. At 1105 hours, it was discovered why. About 50 enemy aircraft hove into sight at

about 1105 hours. By this time, the coordinates were 4830 N. 1330 E. Most were FW-190s; and the remainder, Me-109s. The air space involved was between 23,000 and 28,000 feet. Flying in three's and four's, the Luftwaffe fighters were beyond our range initially, but they came in to attack. They launched their attack from above the bombers, approaching them at five o'clock direction wise. What broke up this aerial attack was effective firing with tracer bullets, which managed to scare off a half-dozen Me-109s. A second attack by approximately 15 FW-190s aiming to hit the bombers' right flank was similarly broken up before it could get underway. By turning into clusters of the enemy's planes, our fighters succeeded in warding them off from subsequent attacks on the bombers and kept them at a distance. During the melee, one "Flying Fortress" was seen going down from 22,000 feet at 1105 hours. South of the 49th Fighter Squadron area of combat, a couple of Me-109s fared badly, being seen on fire and going down in a spin (at 4820 N. 1330 E.). Weather complicated the situation. Stratus layers between 18,000 and 20,000 feet completely covered the middle part of the route taken by the Squadron. There was thick haze along the way up to the Alp mountains. Cumulus lay scattered in the combat sector. Contrails became visible above the freezing level at 16-17,000 feet. Some flak was encountered just east of the Austrian city of Klagenfurt, but it was moderate and inaccurate. A claim to have damaged an Me 109 was submitted by 2nd Lt. George T. Johnson (Pico, Cal.) His was double duty. He had started the mission as flight leader but took over the job of leading the formation when Squadron Commander Major Nathan M. Abbott (Burlington, Vt.) took sick and had to return shortly after rendezvous at 1020 hours. Thus, it turned out to be an eventful mission, in which 12 of the 14 original pilots got sortie credit, having completed the 1,000-mile round trip at 12:35 p.m. Of course, the pair of early returns did not.

..... (Editor; Not to go completely unscathed on this mission, the 451st had 7 a/c hit by flak (2 severe - 5 slight). A/c #42-78428 "Eskimo Nell," 726th was forced to make an emergency landing on the island of Vis. No fighters were encountered.)

The next day, 22 July 1944, produced a less eventful mission. It involved escorting four Groups of the 49th Wing to Rumania (Romania) for a bombing attack on the petroleum refinery at Ploesti (Ploiesti). Eight Squadron pilots took off at 0821 hours, but one had to return early because of mechanical difficulties. Seven reached the target, flying second in the Group. Rendezvous took place at 10:45 a.m., the altitude being 22,000 feet. B-17s were picked up in the vicinity of Rosiori de Vede along the railroad to Bucuresti (Bucharest). There was no sight of the B-24s they were briefed to meet at rendezvous, but those bombers were found a little south of the Rumanian capital. The reason for the mix-up may have been reaching the rendezvous site 10 minutes too soon. At 1115 hours, the fighters were over the target at 20,000 feet, not withdrawing from it until 1134 hours at about 18,000 feet. Thus, they fulfilled their assignment,

having escorted the bombers during penetration and provided target-cover for them for some 20 minutes before protecting their withdrawal until 1245 hours when they departed from the "heavies" over Kragujevac, Yugoslavia at 12,000 feet. As to observed results of the bombing, petroleum smoke could be seen rising through a smoke screen obscuring the target. Target weather was clear, but flak plagued the skies. Barrage and tracking-type flak caused our pilots some concern, but there was no enemy air opposition. A lot of strato-cumulus was run into over the Adriatic at 18-20,000 feet. Solid cumulus cloud lay on the other side of the Danube River at 18,000 feet. Strong winds along the Danube blew the fighters a bit soug of their course coming and going. The long mission covered 1,250 miles.

..... (Editor; Mission started out poorly. A/c "Goosey Lucy" crashed on take-off, killing 7 of the 11 on board. Lt. Morfit pilot and Lt. Skinner (Ass't Ops O.) serving as copilot. On mission it was reported that 6 aggressive Me 109s made attacks on the low flight. No losses sustained from either flak or fighters.)

Before day's end, the S-2 office (speaking through Lt. Royal C. Gilkey) informed the Squadron that the Red Army had taken Ostrov just south of Pskov, the main German bastion before the upper Baltic states. This development along the Eastern Front stimulated speculation whether the Third Reich was cracking. A "Generals' Conspiracy," led by Junker militarist, was momentarily shaking Hitler's Reich. Reichsfuhrer--SS Heinrich ("Hangman") Himmler was selected to put down the "High Command 'Officers Clique' revolt" bloodily, if necessary. The next day's stand-down (July 23, 1944) enabled Lt. Gilkey to recapitulate and elaborate on the military news that was filtering in through intelligence channels (of course, being careful to avoid divulging any classified information). He mentioned again the Pskov, central anchor point of Germans' Esthonia line, had been captured by onrushing Soviet troops, giving them the key to Esthonia's occupation. Germany's defense positions in Eastern Poland were apparently crumbling before the soviet powerhouse, which was stretching the tank and infantry tentacles of four armies toward Warsaw, their next goal. Russian troops had driven through German lines northwest of Brest-Litovsk and had crossed the Bug River, the German demarcation line of September 1939, to menace the Polish capital from two directions. Carrying out "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" policy, Russian troops were even now menacing Lublin (southeast of Warsaw), well-known as Hitler's slaughterhouse for Jews, following the capture of Kholm (Chelm).

YOU KNOW YOUR GETTING OLD WHEN:

You join a health club and don't go. OR, ... You begin to procrastinate but never get around to it. OR, ... You make contracts that nobody can meet. OR, ... A dripping faucet causes an uncontrollable bladder urge. OR, ... You know all the answers but nobody asks you the questions. OR, ... You look forward to a dull evening.

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

ERNIE CUMMINS' 60th AIR SERVICE SQUADRON JOURNAL (Alias: Ernie's Journey)

(Con't from Issue 25)

COMMENT

In a number of places along the main coastal road going north-south on the Adriatic side of Italy, the highway runs parallel with a railroad and at times jumps from one side of the tracks to the other, via sharp "S" turns. These crossings are guarded with gates and their operation is manual. The watchmen seem to be older types, sometimes crippled, and we surmised were retired railroad employees, or maybe military veterans on pension. Small stone houses were built adjacent to the crossings where the watchman and his wife could reside with a few chickens and a garden plot.

One clear spring day in 1944 I was driving "Little Abner," being chased by "Daisy Mae" (the 40 foot flatbed trailer), north on such a stretch of level road, when I pulled to a stop behind several other rigs that were waiting behind lowered gates at a crossing. With me was John Keefer, and a minute later another 60th truck pulled up behind us, a 2 1/2 ton'er carrying rations, driven by "Speedy" Leedy, and his copilot was Fred Nunzie, who was of Italian decent. Other vehicles were stopped on the other side, and some drivers were down having a smoke and jawing with each other.

"What's going on, John? I can see three miles up that roadbed from here, and there sure as hell ain't any train coming!"

"Well, that English guy wearing shorts is sure giving the watchman some sort of argument. They're waving their arms like windmills!"

"Hey Mate! How long ya' been stuck here?" This to a Canadian dispatch rider leaning on his motorcycle on the shoulder of the pavement.

"About ten minutes. The Eyetye keeps pulling out a pocket watch and pointing up towards Foggia. I guess a train is due, and the gates go down by the clock. No wonder Musso lost the war!"

Fred Nunzie walked over and delivered a short but forceful speech, the watchman raises the gates, and Fred trots back to his truck, pausing to tell about the exchange.

"The thing that convinced him was I pointed to that big Sherman tank on the Limey transport, threatened to unload it and chew up these precious rails so the train couldn't run. Poor guy only has one leg so we couldn't very well beat the hell out of him. Say Ernie, we got some canned peaches in the rations. Have you got a knife we could use to stab one open?"

One of the things that PFC Nunzie did that seemed strange to some of us, he avoided interpreting for us

with his countrymen. He spoke Italian well, but never let that fact be known when he was out with the public. Sometimes he would hear some clever merchant talking with his wife about how they could cheat the Americans out of some money, and that kind of thing really irked him. It made him despise his own kind. He would blow his stack and cuss the offender in colorful language, chopping him down to quivering jelly in most cases.

When men went on pass from remote camps to larger cities, the motor pool furnished transportation. CPL Kondraski took a 60th truck into the city of Lecce to bring men on leave back to Manduria. He was a dark Polish lad with a pride in his wavy hair, and he chose a stake body Ford which had a V-8 engine and soft springs. There were no bows or canvas top on the truck, but it was not raining that winter day, and the men would be snug enough in overcoats and mittens in the open. The Ford had one headlight out, the left one. When they were on a narrow section of road after dark, they met a larger truck whose driver saw only one light and therefore didn't use the shoulder on his side. Kondraski got over as far as he could and almost stopped, but the other guy kept coming. The cabs missed each other but the body of the big boy hooked the bed of the Ford and the whole stake part went over the side into a ditch, tearing the "U bolts" off the frame leaving the chassis on the road. Of the six men riding in the back, five got only bruises, but San Giovanni hit his head on a rock and broke his neck. He was wearing a heavy knit cap, and didn't have a mark on him. The 60th's only dead, Rest in Peace! San Giovanni was a talented artist and sign painter who lent a hand painting names on equipment, or pretty girls, fierce animal leads, a pair of dice, or cities nicknames on the nose of warplanes.

Hitchhikers were plentiful, as most of the road traffic was Army rigs, either American or English. As drivers we could tell which of the hitchers were new overseas, because they carried canteens and wore sidearms, expecting the enemy to jump out from behind a tree at any moment. The only bad part about letting them on a semi-rig was if they stood on the deck back of the cab, their feet got tangled in the air hoses coupled to the trailer, and when we made sharp turns these sometimes became disconnected. I lost my air once out in the country due to just that, and narrowly averted a serious accident. But the passengers thought it was great fun, thinking I had control all the way. Only they didn't realize how I was really sweating at the possible consequences.

While the 60th was at Gioia del Colle we lost some

good men by way of transfer into expanding 15th A.F. units, and in return we got replacements of lower rank and with fewer skills than those who left the cadre. One that came to us in January of 1944 was a Mexican with a problem. He was assigned to my tent, and I had a hard time getting to know the man. Small physically, he was quiet, withdrawn and if described in a single word, it would have to be "brooding." We put him to work changing tires and watering batteries, and SGT Kolb thought he might advance to flushing radiators and changing fan belts. His lack of communication with those around him was his big handicap. We called him "Izzy" which wasn't remotely like his real name, Carlos Delgado, because he muttered a phrase that nobody understood, or could interpret that started out with "Izza---."

After ten days or so, Carlos received a letter, which he read and reread over and over. I asked him who it came from, and he said his mother. A week passed and he decided to come out of his shell a little bit. He asked if I would write down what he said because he desired to send a letter to his folks in San Antonio and could not "push 'de penzil" so good. With this as a starter, he gradually confided in me more than his other new mates in this strange place far from his home.

The trademark phrase came out of Carlos at strange times, I noticed. When we were sitting inside our tent and two or three fellows might walk passed on their way to the mess tent, talking about anything (the possible menu, what happened on their last pass, the manifold pressure on an aircraft engine), our Mexican friend would burst out with his "Izzalywhdaza" remark. I failed to get a glimmer until he slowed it down for me and it translated into "It is a lie, what they say!" Now the problem was to find out who "THEY" were. That was easy when you put the phrase in context with overheard conversations that had nothing to do with Carlos personally. He just imagined the talkers were discussing him. But what where they saying that he protested as a lie?

"Come on Carlos, those guys aren't talking about you -HONEST! Now what is it that you think they are saying that stirs you up so? Get it off your chest; tell me about it..."

Kicking the dirt, he said very softly, "They say I sleep with my sister."

After a chat with the Major and his consultation with a Chaplain, we got Carlos transferred into a Military Police unit, where he became a stockade guard, patrolling fences with a shotgun. Somebody had ridden the kid too hard and broken his self respect. With his persecution complex, I hope the prisoners he was set to guarding don't rap too loud or they might feel some buckshot.

January 31 / 44 - Somewhere in Italy

Dear Mabel: Early in the morning, another one of those frosty numbers. Just finished eating hot cakes, bacon, mush, coffee one orange; real butter and plum jam on the flapjacks, Hi.

Last night I drove a truckload of fight fans to the

boxing matches, and our boy was beaten in three rounds by a little French-Canadian weighing 122 pounds. Eight contests during the evening, with at least five being good even scraps. The Britishers in the audience hollered for their blokes, and we Americans for ours. Several negroes were winners in their weight classes, very fine boxers, too.

Pay day today. When I was telling Carl (the Mexican guy) about my allotment to you, I asked if he had a wife, or was he even sending money home. His reply indicates about what a mental genius he is --- "Can't tell you, we are keeping it a secret." How do you like that? So far I haven't gotten a single sentence out of him that makes sense, or is logical.

A package from Alice came yesterday, containing four paperback books and (of all things) one of those indexed letter and bill files that expand a-la camera bellows, hi. For half an hour I studied and figured what on earth I could use it for. Then it dawned on me ... LETTERS! That being what it was designed for .. of course the obvious eluded me, hi, hi! That Alice never knows when to stop, does she? Now my Peanut's letters go under "C" for Cummins, "L" for lover, "P" for Peanut, and "W" for wife. Even then I expect an overflow, hi. The whistle is blowing to call us to work, will finish later - E.R.C.

(Time now 8:00 P.M.) Big pinochle game going on over on Harold's bed, Rube is inhaling a cup of noodle soup and outside the SGT is calling off the names of guys to fall-in for the Pay Line. Will have to get myself over there pretty quick and collect, hi.

Made up another big bag of laundry, and had my hair cut today. Shampoo too (done in my helmet), so Ernie is very light headed now, hi. Got my money now, not more than half the crew was in camp so the line moved very fast. As you can guess the non-profit pinochle game disbanded, and in some other tent a poker game is now in progress. I started reading a Zane Grey novel, one that Alice sent. During the day, between jobs, I can reach to my hip pocket and dash off another chapter. Golly how I miss your quick smile and funny remarks, and of course that busy bee trot around the house like Groucho Marx! Love to my baby. ... Ernie

February 7 / 1944) (Excerpt)

I enjoyed an Italian dinner the other day with Tony and his family. Tony is a guy 58 years old who worked eighteen years on a railroad in New York, so he speaks good old U.S. lingo. His family does our laundry and gives us wine, so when he decided to slaughter two young goats last Sunday he invited us to share one, while his relatives ate the other, hi. Real tasty when roasted; better than lamb. Also had spaghetti, bread, wine, salad, nuts, fruit, coffee, and best of all -fried potatoes! We ate in his house (he owns five houses as well as some farm land), and we were waited on by his little girls. As the kitchen was on the ground floor and their dining room upstairs, the children would enter in a file of six, each with a separate plate of a course; and the only thing we could have eaten more of was the spuds. As fast as Tony's wife would fry them, the little

kids would steal 'em off the plates, so when the dishes arrived upstairs, the supply was a fraction of what left the stove, ha. Tony has the best wine around here. I had four glasses of his sweet white wine during the two hours we were being glutton gluttons.

Oh yes, the question of who was with me! I went with Rube Voegel, John Kraft and John Keefer. The two Johns are from North Dakota and Pennsylvania. That time in December when I ate that expensive meal in town, I was with Harold Crooks, and enroute we joined up with one of our cooks and a K.P. (We have steady K.P.'s who work in the kitchen on different shifts for extra pay).

29 February 1944

Dear Mabel: Good morning; yep, it's eight A.M. on the last day of this short month. Cloudy weather with a bit of wind, and prospects of rain. But today is the day they give "lires" away, so the boys will be having a big time tonight, hi.

Honey, I think I'll try to tell some of the things that happened when I was at a dinner with an Italian family. Just little details so you can picture how they live. First; the house is on the level of a cobblestone street; in fact two steps below. You first encounter a glass door with wood shutters inside and a curtain beyond that. The area beyond is just one room, with two alcoves screened off by cloth curtains. One a closet, the other a storage space for fuel, food, etc.. The furniture consists of a double bed (all the wide beds I have seen are made by placing two single beds close together), a table with eight straight chairs, a chest of drawers, and a stove which will be described later. The pride of the family is a real Singer Sewing Machine! One 15 watt bulb on the ceiling does the lightening, while the cooking is done by charcoal in a little nook placed under the lone window.

The stove is a strange one, but common in this country. It is made of a square of wood about two feet each way, and maybe five inches high. Set in the center is a metal pan, similar to a round dishpan, where the charcoal is burned. A tiny poker is used to stir the coals, and everyone arranges their chairs around the stove in a circle with their feet up on the wood frame. When the table is moved to the center of the room for eating, the stove is placed beneath it so the people get heat on their legs and knees, hi. Cigarettes are lit from red hot coals; and glowing embers are borrowed by neighbors to start their own fires, as matches are scarce.

The mother of the family was busy unraveling an old wool sweater to get yarn for knitting socks for her kids. I gave her a sleeveless shirt and a pair of shorts that I used in Africa so she can cut them down. In return she sewed on a shoulder patch and N.C.O. stripes on a sun-tan shirt of mine.

During the meal I produced a can of Guava Jelly I got in a Christmas box, and that made a big hit with the kids. It is very sweet. They spread it on brown bread, but most of it got transferred to their fingers before entering their mouths, hi. They think my pockets are an unlimited source of supplies; soap, gum, tooth paste,

cigarettes and matches. I took a picture magazine with me, too, and they all looked through it.

We G.I.s only understand a few words of Italian, but it is surprising how far you can make those stretch. I was even conversing with the "Papa" about false teeth, hi. I was able to tell him that the father of one of their former visitors (another 60th Soldier) had died in America. I showed "Mama" the socks I was wearing (Ruby's knit ones), and explained how I received them. Also let them know that no longer would a certain drunken pest be pounding on their door asking for vino. This was due to his error one night when he hit an M.P. over the head with an empty wine bottle. Until the M.P. either dies or recovers, this fellow is restricted. So he won't be staggering around town for a long time. All that talk with about a dozen Italian words, and their meager-understanding of English, my, my! ... Ernie

(Addendum from Ernie' Journal - Mailed in early October 1995 - passed on with the hope that the inferred officer will not respond, or if he does - has forgiven.)

This happened inside the 60th campsite in Italy one dark night in 1944. "Red" was a recent transfer into the Squadron, assigned to Transportation as a driver and heavy equipment operator. He was on interior Guard Duty and his assigned post was the shop area, where four or five trailers and a few walled tents were "clustered" together. These held our Instrument Shop, Machine Shop, Electrical and Radio Shop, Carpenter and Paint Shop, Turret and Armament Shop, Etc, etc. The trailers, unoccupied and locked at this hour (about 3 am) with starlight provided fair vision after one's eyes adjusted to the darkness. The floors of the trailers sat two feet above ground, wooden steps and a small porch had been built at the entrance doors.

Red sits on one of these steps with a raincoat folded beside him, his M-1 rifle resting stock down on the ground at the opposite end of the step, leaning against the trailer. From his vantage point red can see all the equipment and territory he is responsible for guarding by looking ahead or right and left.

A stealthy hand reaches out from beneath the trailer and grasps the rifle, another hand holding a flashlight emerges and shines a beam on Red. "On your feet soldier, you are under arrest! Call the Sergeant of the Guard. You'll do time in the stockade for sleeping on duty."

Red answers, "No I won't Major, I heard you twenty minutes ago down there crawling around getting your uniform dirty. You could shoot me, but if you pull the trigger it will be the last thing you will do in this world." At this point he reaches under the raincoat and produces a carbine. "You see SIR, this here gun is loaded and that one ain't."

(Con't next issue)

YOU KNOW YOUR GETTING OLD WHEN:

You sit in a rocking chair and can't get it going.

727th GUNNER OFFERS "MY DIARY"

by T/Sgt Matt A. Cindrich

A simple title like "MY DIARY" may seem inconsequential to the average reader. As the trend would be in today's world, friendly and hostile relationships may be contained within its covers; both of the male and female involvement. But get involved in a wartime diary, or journal as I call them, and you find nuggets of cold facts that gives the reader an insight into the writers psyche at the time of writing. Such was what Matt Cindrich passed along to me recently.

Like so much of the material I've received recently, this was composed on the spot (Castelluccia Air Base) and at the time of its happening; between May and August of 1944. In its rawest form it still merits inclusion in this Ad-Lib. Matt gives details and emotions as noted after each mission. Many of his entrees can be related to by other air crews, and the aircraft damage by the ground crews.

It should be noted that Matt was the Radio Operator on the crew of pilot Hubert E. Anderson (727th). Other crewmembers were: Keith O. Daudermann, Copilot; William R. Glynn, Navigator; Lloyd B. Trussel, Bombardier; AEG, Royal M. Allen; Gunners, Harry E. Noskoskie, Donald R. Outman, Haskell T. Michael, Hector Sapien.

The aircraft they brought over was "The Wolf Den." It all starts like, "Once upon a time:"

May 12, 1944 - Arrived safely to our destination from Topeka Kansas to Castelluccia, Italy. Lonely place, so far.

May 13, 1944 - The ship that we picked up at Topeka (The Wolf Den) was taken from us. Hated to give it up.

May 14, 1944 - My birthday and had to spend the evening on guard duty. I was 21 years old. Had two quarts of wine to drink.

May 15, 1944 - Spent the whole day loafing, nothing to do.

May 16, 1944 - Our first flight today, a practice

flight. Were given the ship "Susan Diane." About two hours of formation flying at 20,000 feet. Was much harder to handle than the "Wolf Den." Andy didn't like it. Its been on a few missions also.

May 17, 1944 - Today was to be our first mission. All of our crew was anxious to make the first trip. Ship assigned to us was "Little Butch." Had been on 30 some missions and credited for 5 enemy planes shot down. Takeoff time was 11 o'clock that morning. Loaded with ten 500 lb. bombs, we were all set to go. "Little Butch" failed us! On takeoff we had a crack-up and pretty bad. Mike and I were in the back end. 8 men in

the front on the flight deck because the tail was too heavy. 7 men escaped out the top hatch. But Lt. Trussel, our Bombardier, was hurt pretty seriously. The No. 2 prop fell off and penetrated the fuselage and caught Lt. Trussel. Mike and I also got out of the back. Waiting for the plane to blow up. Fire crew got to us 15 seconds after we stopped. But no one would go after Lt. Trussel who was trapped inside. Sapien went into the plane to get him out. Then a Major went in to help him out. Luckily the plane wasn't afire. With the bomb bay doors torn

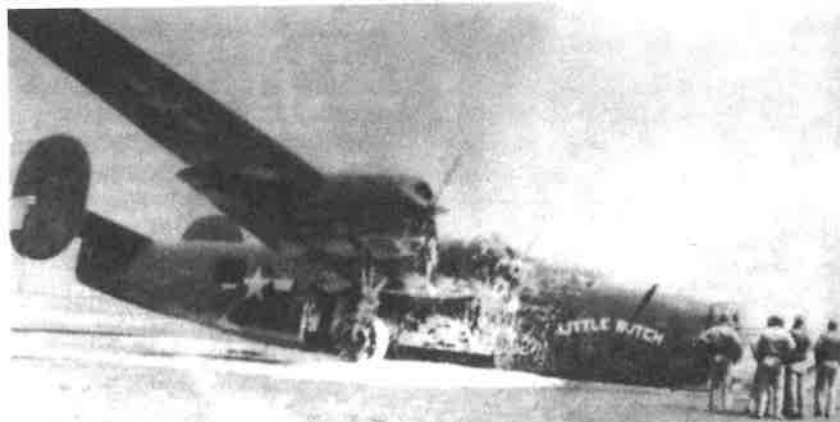


Standing: W.R. Glynn, H.E. Anderson, K.O. Daudermann, L.B. Trussel
Kneeling: H. Sapien, D.R. Outman, M.A. Cindrich, H.T. Michael, H.E. Noskoskie, R.M. Allen

off, it enabled the men to pull Lt. Trussel out from under the bomb bay. Gasoline was pouring out in streams. Took him to the dispensary and had to give him blood plasma. Don was also hurt. He hurt his ankle and couldn't walk. So they took him to the hospital for an x-ray. And also took Lt. Trussel to the station hospital. The good Lord was with us to help us out of that mess. Roy and I had bruises on our legs, just slight ones. Harry got a bump on the head. Lt. Daudermann, our regular copilot didn't go along. We had another copilot, Lt. Massare, to go with us on our first mission. All hoping for Lt. Trussel to pull out of it. Expect to go see him at the hospital tomorrow. About 5 of the bombs flew out of the plane. I was knocked out of the waist window. Wanted to jump out when the plane was still going, but something held me back. Scared us all to heck. But we still have that first mission to get in. Fingers Crossed.

May 18, 1944 - Today we took up "The Jane Lee"

on a practice hop. Got up to 18,000 feet and had to come down. Had a gas leak. Fumes all over the plane. The slightest spark and ----. The boys were on their way to raid Ploesti. But bad weather had stopped them. So they had to turn back.



"Little Butch" After Tire Blow-out on Take-off

May 19, 1944 - Today we were quite busy. Put an extension on our tent. Didn't fly today either. Andy was up for his first mission, and had to go up again this afternoon at 4 o'clock. None of us had to go up but Roy, the engineer. I painted the wolf on my jacket with match sticks. No brush handy.

May 20, 1944 - Another day of leisure. No one flew today. It rained most of the day. Painted two more wolves on Harry and Roy's jackets. Have still 4 jackets to go.

May 21, 1944 - Nothing doing today. What an easy life!?

May 22, 1944 - Today we finally put in our first mission in "Con Job." The target was Marina di Massa, Italy - a munitions dump. We were at an altitude of 15,000 ft. It was a milk run. No flak, no fighters. An escort of 40 P-51s. Don didn't go, bad foot.

May 23, 1944 - We didn't go on today's raid. Andy, K.O. And Roy went up on a test hop. They took up a radar ship. Sure wish we were on today's raid. Right at the front lines. No flak or fighters.

May 24, 1944 - Today we started on our second mission. But didn't get there. Was a rough raid. Plenty of fighters and flak. Three of our generators were out. So we had to come back. Went up in the "Crater Maker." After we got to our tents we were called to go on a gunnery mission. The waist guns went out. Target that day was an air field in Wiener Nuestadt.

May 25, 1944 - Today we were given the "Crater Maker" again. Loaded with ten 500 lb bombs. All of us can't help but sweat out take offs. We got up okay. About two hours after take off we lost one engine. But got it back okay. Mostly over water today. At the target no opposition. No flak or fighters. Another milk run. We sure bombed hell out of the place. Had P-38 escort. This makes our second mission. But we still have to see our first flak coming at us. Lt. Trussel is getting along nicely. A grand guy.

May 26, 1944 - Went on our third mission today. Expected to see plenty of fighters and flak. The target was in the center of France, a marshalling yards. It was a mighty long trip, 8 hours. Everything went smooth until on our way home. We were about 30 or so miles

from our home field and ran out of gas and had to make a forced landing. We darn near all bailed out. But the engines held out just long enough. Just as soon as we landed the gas went out. Andy could hardly get enough power out of the engines to taxi. But we finally made it to a parking place. No. 4 engine was burning on us, so Andy had to cut No. 4 engine. The plane we had was

again the "Crater Maker." We sure did have bad luck here lately, but Andy always brings us in. All of the boys are getting gray hairs here. But the good Lord is still with us. The gas tanks were dry when we stopped. We refueled and got home okay. Still a few of us sweating out takeoffs and landings. One landing we made at the other airfield, we thought for sure that we would go through the same experience that we had the first mission. We landed after another B-24 had landed on the side of the runway. Just a few more like we have been having and I don't think I'll stay as young as I should. This makes our 3rd mission. We sure bombed hell out of the place. Had a cameraman with us. Today we all got mail, loads of it. We sure are happy. Another thing, Sapien was in his ball turret over the target and on our way back he was stuck down there. We couldn't understand him. But I used the clutch wrench and that is what he wanted me to do. Then he turned the ball manually and got out. We worked a few hours trying to get the ball up. We did. We bombed at 21,000 feet.

May 27, 1944 - This makes the third mission in a row. But we saw what it was really like. Flak flew at us alright. Before we hit the target the flak started popping. The guns were accurate today. They hit a few planes. I don't know if any have been shot down. A few were wounded today. Our ship, "Con Job," was hit on the bomb door and in between No. 1 and 2 engine. Not anything to worry about. As usual we hit hell out of the target. Surely wish my missions were ended. Then back home to my wife and baby. It would take one hell'va load off my mind. Still sweating them out. We had a good ship today. Again we had a gas leak. Target was in France again; a JU-88 airfield.

May 28, 1944 - Today we all went to see Lt. Trussel. He is getting along very nicely. Going to take him to another hospital in Bari. Later we went to Foggia. What a place! Bombed to hell. Spent our time at the Red Cross. A beautiful place. The women and kids in town sure do look sickly. Most of them have sores on their feet. Makes one sick to look at them. Got some good ice cream in town. Pretty good stuff. Got back to camp at 2:30 and went to a movie that night. Saw "Never a Dull Moment" with the Marx Brothers. Pretty good.

May 29, 1944 - Today we weren't scheduled to fly.



"Bodacious Critter" With Major, Major Damage

Don't know where the boys went. Were carrying 100 lb bombs. One plane, "*Bodacious Critter*," cracked up as we did on takeoff. Radio Operator quit flying after the crack-up. But still no one was hurt. This squadron is losing quite a few planes. Just so it isn't lives.

May 30, 1944 - This day adds to our missions. Went to Germany - to Wels on a/c "826." Target was an aircraft factory. Boy, today the boys really gave them hell. Just the 1st Squadron done all the damage. The flak was medium, but another Group away from us sure did have it plenty bad. A Squadron in back of us; well, one of the 24's was blown to bits. Very few fighters were seen. Didn't attack any of our ships. Our escort of P-51s and 38s sure do keep them away. Was to be good escort, in with all the Groups. They are our protectors. We had a double today. So that makes 6 missions for us. Won't be long now. They do go by fast. But as usual, I was scared stiff. The good Lord always beigns us back. Darn near ran out of gas, too. Just sweating out the plane is enough. The flak wasn't so bad. Guess we will go on tomorrow's raid also. Here's where we got the "Air Medal" today.

May 31, 1944 - We finally went on the Ploesti raid. Those oil fields sure were burning. The smoke from it was up to 20,000 ft high. We were up to 23,000 over the target. The flak busted mighty close to us. I was wondering when one would come up to hit us. I prayed mighty hard. Had 3 boxes of tinsel. Roy and I got rid of it in a hurry. Had a few flak holes in the plane. But just so we get home safely. Today was a double and it made us 8 missions. Only 42 to go. Took up "*Con Job*" today. No trouble with it today. Today was also payday. Got \$280.30.

June 1, 1944 - Today we had a stand-down. We all went swimming and loafed most of the day. Played poker at night.

June 2, 1944 - We made another raid today on Bucharest. We were the first over the target. Very little flak this time. Shot one rocket at us. We bombed rail yards, and I mean bombed. Got us up at 1:45 A.M. No sleep. But we got back at noon. We were up in "*Susan Diane*." All went well today. No fighters.

June 3, 1944 - Were scheduled to fly but the target was filled with bad weather. Some went to town. Mission was called off.

June 4, 1944 - We went up today on a mission which added to our others. Now we have 11 sorties. The target was a bridge which was a main supply line. Took up six 1,000 lb bombs. Had a good plane today, the "*Bodacious Critter*." The bombardier accidentally dropped the bombs out through the unopened bomb bay doors just a little before we hit the target. A great mass of smoke. There isn't anything left to the place. This mission made it a little closer to coming home. The boys on my crew got their S/Sgt ratings. Roy and I was hoping for T/Sgt soon. Won't take long. It sure made the guys happy, just as it did me.

June 5, 1944 - Today's target was bridges. Six 1,000 lb bombs on the "*Royal Prod*." A milk run. Just a little trip to Rimini here in Italy.

June 6, 1944 - Today the boys went to Ploesti. Had plenty of flak - few fighters. We didn't fly.

June 7, 1944 - Started on our 13th mission today aboard the "*Royal Prod*." Got half way but had to turn back. No. 4 engine was out. It vibrated so that it shook the whole plane. It was the roughest we've seen yet. Bounced all over the sky. Began to give me the jitters. They fixed it up so Andy, K.O. and Roy have to take it up and test hop it. It was an easy mission. Hated to miss it. Today we had hot coffee and sandwiches to take with us. Much better than K-Rations. Target was in France.

June 8, 1944 - Today was a stand-down day. We're pretty busy in the tent. Put in a wooden floor by Harry' and my bed to keep the dust down. That was all.

June 9, 1944 - Today was very exciting. Went to Munich to bomb hell out of a FW-190 plant in the "*Royal Prod*." Carried forty 100 lb bombs. Incendiary. The flak was plenty. Had about 286 guns. This was a rugged trip. Didn't drop the bombs on our target. The overcast was too bad. So we bombed another target. Hit flak about 8 different times after leaving the target. We weren't much past the coastline, over the water, and one 24 was straggling. 7 ME-109s attacked him from the nose. We got to shoot at them. I gave them plenty of my ammunition. Don, our Nose gunner got one fighter. It went into a spin and fell in the water. This was the first fighters we've seen so close. Fun while it lasted. But in S-2 about 6 guys tried to claim it. Don't know who will get credit for it. This was a long trip. We all kept our fingers crossed so we wouldn't run out of gas. This mission was our 14th. Don's 13.

June 10, 1944 - We went on today's raid also. Flak wasn't so thick. The target was Venice Oil Tanks. They hit it bad. Same target as yesterday, only we carried six 500 lb bombs. No fighters. Escort; P-38s. About 6 hours on the "*Susan Diane*."

June 11, 1944 - We didn't fly today. Took it easy. Boys went to Rumania.

June 12, 1944 - Another day of rest. It was a stand-down. No flying. Going on tomorrow's raid. Got our fingers crossed.

June 13, 1944 - We had one tough raid today. It was at Munich Germany. Boy they sure do have plenty of flak there. Some 286 guns. Saw one 24 blown to bits.

One parachute was seen. The good Lord was with us again. We got one big flak hole in the plane. It tore a fuse box right off and ripped some wiring. Surely didn't want to go today. There were more fighters there, but our escorts took care of them. Just so we got home. On our way back some guns from shore took shots at us. We scrambled. Made it back okay. Went up in a new silver job, the "*Sweaty Betty*." Beautiful ship. Today was a double. This makes 17 sorties.

June 14, 1944 - Went on a fairly easy trip to the Danube River. Was a double sortie, also. The flak wasn't too bad. No fighters were seen. Saw another ship go down. Don't know if it were a fighter or a 24. Hit the target right on the nose. Five men bailed out of a B-17, but don't know why. The plane flew on and on at an altitude of 20,000 ft. Went up in a silver job; the '867.' This make 19 Sorties for us. Four in two days; that's mighty good. Hope it keeps up.

June 15, 1944 - Another stand-down today. No flying. The boys got their Air Medals today. They sure are beautiful. Makes one feel proud. We hope to get ours in the next batch.

June 16, 1944 - No one flew today. Fixed up around the tent.

June 17, 1944 - We were about to takeoff, but the mission was cancelled. Most of the planes took off. We were about to, but didn't. We put in another quarter of the floor by Sapiens cot. Beginning to look like something now.

June 18, 1944 - Bad weather held us down. No flying.

June 19, 1944 - Had briefing, but we had a stand-down. No one flew. Cleaned up the tent. Went on practice hop.

June 20, 1944 - No flying today, but were quite busy. Put a door on the tent. Took most of the day.

June 21, 1944 - Today we were briefed on another target. It was to be the longest attempt by a B-24. we would travel over plenty of flak, but our only worry was for gas if the trip was attempted. More than half of us wouldn't return. Would have to bail out over Yugoslavia, or ditch in the sea. And I didn't like either. The Colonel said if we were sure of running out of gas; have the crew bail out over Yugoslavia and let the plane go. The trip was to Breslav, Germany. Supposedly the capital now. Was to blow the town to hell and get rid of a few Germans. But it was called off; thank God. We had a good ship, "*The Jane Lee*;" easy on gas. Might have tried a shuttle run to England.

June 22, 1944 - After that long rest we finally went on our 20th mission. It was to Trieste, but there was an overcast over the entire land. Saw just a few puffs of flak here and there. We hit a few bridges in Rimini. We were there once before. No fighters were seen. Carried sixteen 300 lb bombs. If only they could all be that easy. Had a good ship; "*Sweaty Betty*."

June 23, 1944 - Today we had "*Con Job*," and went on our 15th mission, 22nd sortie. Went to bomb Giurgiu,

Rumania. Bombed oil refinery and storage. Had a new type of incendiary bomb. Took up ten 500 lb bombs. The mission was a rough one. Had bad weather all the way over. The clouds were thick. The formations just separated in all directions. B-17s were with B-24s, but after a while we got into formation. This was really something to sweat out. We couldn't see the plane next to you. Just prayed that we would get through it. We hit the target alright. Flak was heavy and accurate. No fighters were seen. Due for our 1st Cluster to the Air Medal.

June 24, 1944 - Had another stand-down today. Andy and the boys went to Bari to see Lt Trussel. I couldn't go. Andy Turkovich came here to see me. It sure was good to see him. We had quite a talk. He stayed all night. Hadn't changed a bit. He's been all over the place and seen plenty. Is with the Medics. Left the next morning. Was the same as he use to be back home. Sure wished he could have stayed longer. Had a big rain today. Saw a U.S.O. Show today. Was rather sexy, but had a good juggler.

June 25, 1944 - We didn't fly today. Andy and the other officers were at Bari to see Lt Trussel. He's getting along well. Will be out of bed soon. His back is broken in three places, along with his shoulder. He was glad to see the boys.

June 26, 1944 - Well, I didn't think that I would be here to write in my diary today. We went on our 24th mission to Vienna, Austria. Hit more oil places, and it was certainly rough. Those guns were too accurate. They had our altitude perfect. The flak burst just alongside the ship, "*Jane Lee*." Plenty of it. We had some big flak holes in the plane. One piece just missed Andy's head. Another put out No. 1 engine. One just missed Don, the nose gunner. And another cut a hydraulic line. We fixed it with some tape and a rag. Quite a few planes went down, also. But most of the fellows got out. Seen plenty of parachutes floating in the air. They got the target alright. We lost one of our Squadron planes there. A new crew was in it. Pilot's name was Oakes. And at "*Zagreb*," at about 10,000 ft high the monkeys started shooting at us. Just lucky they didn't get us. When we got home we sweated out a landing. Two planes cracked up landing. This is a rough business.

June 27, 1944 - Today was a stand-down. we went to Foggia.

June 28, 1944 - Had another rough mission today. It was a double. Went to Bucharest in "*Sweaty Betty*," to bomb rail yards. Sure was plenty of flak, but not too accurate. We got out of there in a hurry. It was a plenty long trip. A lot of fellows finished their missions today. That leaves only 11 crews to fly. We will fly plenty now. Just so we can get back every time. This mission made it 26 for us. We are now on the way down; 24 more to go.

June 29, 1944 - Another stand-down today. Our E.M. Club has opened as of this date. We have quite a place there. Plenty to drink. Roy got drunk last night. Harry and I intended to, but we went to a movie instead. Saw "*Meet Lily Pons*."

June 30, 1944 - Started to Germany, but had to come back due to overcast. Got 4 cans of beer in our PX rations.

July 1, 1944 - Scheduled to fly today. Mission was cancelled due to bad weather. Target was to Munich with the "Patsy Jack." Surely is rough there.

July 2, 1944 - Crew wasn't scheduled to fly today, but Allen and I were scheduled to fly with other crews. Neither made the trip. I was with Read's crew. We lost an engine just as we were about to takeoff. We tried "Crater Maker" and "Royal Prod," but still didn't get off. "Prod" had a gas leak. Roy was with Hook's crew as engineer; they took off but came back. Something wrong with an engine. Glad we didn't go. Target was Budapest.

July 3, 1944 - We went on today's raid. Sorry we did go! Everything went fine until the flak got started. We had our new bombardier with us, and a copilot who put in his last mission today. Bill and K.O. didn't fly. The flak was too accurate today. One 88mm shell hit us and did a lot of damage. Don, our nose gunner was killed; decapitated. Don had yelled "FLAK" and that was his last words. The shell hit him right in the head. Blew the turret all to hell. The bombardier said we were hit in the nose, and after seeing what happened he got hysterical ... just screamed! Didn't attempt to do anything for Don. There wasn't anything we could do. The bombardier shook like a leaf. That man won't fly anymore; he's a total wreck. Sapien went to look at Don, but there was nothing he was able to do. We took up ship "876," a silver job. Target was Bucharest.

July 4, 1944 - A stand-down today. Glad of it. Didn't care to fly after yesterday.

July 5, 1944 - Went on today's mission to bring us up to 30 sorties. Wish I were done. Got my fill of this combat. Target was Biziers, France. Bombed marshalling yards with "Con Job." Had a little time with fighters. We didn't get much flak. Glad of it. Only 20 sorties to go.

July 6, 1944 - Today we hit a target at Aviano, Italy. This was the first easy mission we have had for quite some time. Flew "Dirty Girty." Not a burst of flak. Wish our next 19 are like today's. This was a single - made us 31. I'm just about making these last ones. I hope I can finish 50 without going nuts.

July 7, 1944 - Our crew wasn't scheduled to fly today. The boys had a rough one. Flak and loads of fighters. JU-88s, Me-109s and Me-110s. The flak was aplenty. Thinking of our next mission scares me. I've been scared silly. Hope the Good Lord protects me through my next 19 I still have to go. Got our Air Medals today.

July 8, 1944 - Had another rough one again - to Vienna. I thought they would never stop shooting at us. We lost an engine on "Little Butch #2" before we hit the target and had to drop our bombs. I was scared silly. Can't take much more of this. Had an escort of P-38s and P-51s. They bagged a few enemy fighters. Some fellows went down. Saw 18 chutes. Hitting all rough ones

lately. This made 33 missions for us. Only 17 to go.

July 9, 1944 - Had a stand-down today. Another day of rest. Wonder what comes tomorrow?

July 10, 1944 - Had another stand-down today. Good thing.

July 11, 1944 - Started on a mission to France today with "Con Job," but had to turn back. Our inverters went out. Had to salvo our bombs. The boys bombed a submarine pen. Knocked out 7 of them. Flak was fairly heavy. It was a long hop.

July 12, 1944 - Went on today's raid, which was to France. Bombed marshalling yards in "Crater Maker." Flak was accurate. Had a little time with fighters. Our ball turret wasn't working. When we hit the coast of Italy, we ran into some very bad weather. Ceiling was very low and our gas was running low. We landed on a B-17 field; ate a steak sandwich and refueled. Took off at 6 PM for home. It rained quite a bit. This was the worst weather we've seen. Hope we don't hit that kind anymore.

July 13, 1944 - Stand-down.

July 14, 1944 - Went on an easy mission today. Didn't have much flak, but still I sweated. Hope I make it. We got assigned to a ship, "Sod Buster." Will fly it until we finish our missions. So they say. Most of the missions are singles now.

July 15, 1944 - Today we went on another of our rough missions. Target was Vienna. Flak was aplenty. We sweated that one out. Again it was "Sod Buster." This made it our 37th sortie. One piece of flak hit my flak suit. A souvenir for me.

July 17, 1944 - Again we flew "Sod Buster." This makes 38 sorties and I surely am sweating them all out now. Can't hardly take it any more. Went to France. Another 8 hour mission. Hope I get to finish these last 12. I've got my fingers crossed and praying hard. Took a few pictures of formations.

July 18, 1944 - No flying; Stand-down.

July 20, 1944 - Went to hospital with a fever of 104 degrees. Sure was sick for 3 days. Spent 6 days in the hospital. Had a good rest. C-Rations didn't agree with me.

July 27, 1944 - Got home from the hospital. Feel pretty good.

July 28, 1944 - Went on today's raid to Ploesti in "Sweaty Betty." Sure was rough. We had our hydraulic system shot out. Roy worked hard trying to fix it, but with no results - and we just about didn't make it back. Threw out all our ammunition and loose stuff. Couldn't close our bomb bay doors. Got shot at again at 12,000 ft when we went over a German plant. They nearly got us. Thought we might ditch, but finally made a forced landing on a B-17 field. Had about 30 gallons of gas left. This is 39 for me. The boys have 43. Harry went to the hospital with a bad stomach.

July 29, 1944 - Stand-down today.

July 30, 1944 - Went to Budapest today in "Sod Buster." Made it 40 sorties for me. Flak was rough, about 20 fighters zoomed past our left wing. Glad they didn't make a pass at us. Missions are getting awfully rough now. Can't wait to finish.

July 31, 1944 - Another single to Bucharest in "Sod Buster." Flak didn't get too close to us, thank God. This makes 41 with 9 more to go. And am I sweating them out. The boys have 45 now. Harry had to be operated on for appendix. He had 41 sorties. Going to see him today.

August 1, 1944 - Stand-down today. But there is a practice hop scheduled. We were taken off because planes had to get fixed. Glad of that. Probably go on tomorrows mission. Hope it isn't too rough.

August 2, 1944 - The crew wasn't scheduled to fly, but I flew with the Colonel in "Dirty Girty," the lead ship as radio operator. My first time with the radio, and I hope I never get that job again. It was too rough to suit me. Our Squadron got shot up bad. "Patsy Jack," with the Cappleman crew went down. Haven't seen flak so accurate. I didn't think I would ever get back this time. Again my prayers were answered. Over the target we had our hydraulic system shot out and a piece of flak went through one gas tank. I was told to shoot a flare and had another to shoot shortly after. I was scared silly, but something told me to sit down. Just as I sat down, right in the spot where my head was, a piece of flak came through the glass and just missed the pilots head. It seemed like the flak would never stop. Another piece of flak tore through the side of the ship just by the radio receiver and another missed the top turret gunners head by a hair. I thought any minute the ship would blow up. Another piece went through the wing by the landing gear. We expected to land with a flat tire. Here again I thought I would witness another crack-up. But the flak just missed the tire and we came in okay. Hit bad clouds, also. When I came down I was a wreck. I shook so I couldn't control myself. Couldn't talk without a stutter. This has been about the worst mission I had been on. Thank God I made it. This was a single and made me 42 sorties. It won't be long now and I'll be finished. Still have my fingers crossed and praying hard. The target was in France.

August 3, 1944 - After the rough one yesterday our crew went on today's mission. We didn't get much flak but still I shook from seeing the bursts. We got two holes in "Sod Buster" today. Today was a double. Makes 44 for me, K.O. and Glynn. Andy, Roy and Mike got 47, and Sapien has 45. Just a few more to sweat out. Harry is pretty bad. He had a ruptured appendix and now they have a tube going through his nose to his stomach getting out the poison. His stomach is swollen. Harry's a good kid. Hope and pray he pulls through. He has 41 sorties, but I don't think he'll fly anymore missions. Hope he gets to go home with us.

August 4, 1944 - Stand-down today. We went in to see Harry. He looks pretty good. Better than he did two days ago.

August 5, 1944 - This is something to really write about. Got news today that I was the father of a baby

boy. Knew it would be a boy. When I finish my last 6 missions, the boys and I are going to celebrate. What a day! We didn't fly today; bad weather.

August 6, 1944 - Today I had to sweat it out. We went to France today to bomb marshalling yards. The whole Air Force went today. All planes that were available went. There seemed to be thousands of planes out there. The weather was pretty bad and on the return we had to make a landing in Corsica. "Sod Buster" ran low on gas. I was shakier than ever. I expect something to pop in France. An invasion, I'll bet. Today Roy got news that his wife had a baby girl, born on the 31st of July. That's good news.

August 7, 1944 - Went on a rough one in the "Sod Buster" today. Target was Blechhammer, Germany. The flak was pretty heavy. Andy, Roy and Mike finished up today. K.O., Glynn and I have 3 more to go. Sapien has two more. Hoping and praying I make tomorrows okay. Am flying lead radio operator again. Will be glad when I'm done.

August 8, 1944 - The mission was called off today due to bad weather; and it was an easy double to Blechhammer. Sure would have like to have gone. That would have left me with 1 to go. Just a bit closer.

August 9, 1944 - Wasn't scheduled to fly today. The boys went to Bucharest. Wasn't too bad.

August 10, 1944 - Sapien and I were scheduled to fly today, but on different ships. My plane had to come back. Oxygen system was out. Sapien went on. The target was a single to Ploesti, and a rough one. Sweated him out today. This was the Groups 100th mission, so the boys that didn't fly had to go to the ramp and wave the boys in. All ships came back but Sapiens. I thought for sure that he had gone down. Didn't know what to do with myself, but 1/2 hour later the ship came in. They had some trouble over the target. Their #2 prop ran away and they lost altitude. The Germans tried like hell to shoot them down. They were over enemy territory all alone hoping that no fighters would attack. The #2 engine caught fire and the flames reached way past the tail. The pilot cut off the gas and finally put the fire out. The boys had their chutes on and were ready to get out. Had thrown out all the ammunition and stuff to make the ship lighter. This was Sapiens 49th mission. Sure was glad to see him get back. He has just one more to sweat out.

August 11, 1944 - We had an easy single to Northern Italy in "056." This would have finished quite a few guys, but the mission had to be called off due to bad weather. Sure hated to miss this one. No flak - no fighters. This would have left me with two to go. Will I ever finish?

August 12, 1944 - Had to go to the same target as was scheduled yesterday, and the same ship; "056." Something unusual. But I was happy. We were to bomb gun emplacements in Northern Italy, near Genoa. I flew with another pilot that was finishing up. Made our bomb run but couldn't drop the bombs because we were off course. A few dropped bombs but with no results. They sure bungled that deal. And to top that, they headed

right for a flak area. Luckily the guys shooting at us were a little off the beam. We were at 18,000 ft and that isn't very high. A few bursts hit mighty close. This makes 48 for me. Only two to sweat out. I hope I have an easy double tomorrow.

August 13, 1944 - After missing the target yesterday we went back to the same place in ship "196." Air Force is determined to put those guns out of commission. This is our second try, third time scheduled for that target. Well, the boys who will be in on that invasion should have a few less guns to worry about. We hit hell out of the place. Flak again was light. I'm glad of that. Only 1 more to go. Would like another easy single to finish up. I flew with K.O. today. Rinehart, the pilot, finished up. Bill and I have this last one to go. K.O. has two more.

August 14, 1944 - Today is my day. Put in my last mission in "196." We hit a target up near Toulon, France; bombed coastal guns. Each flight had a gun position to bomb. On our way we saw an invasion fleet. There must have been 1,000 boats. Guess they will hit France and Italy where we bombed the guns. Something is going to POP soon. Now this leaves only K.O. to finish his last one. Pretty soon I'm home to my wife and baby, Mom and Dad, and all. What a great feeling to be done for a while. Hope I don't have to go back.

August 15, 1944 - K.O. put in his last mission to France, near yesterdays target. They bombed at 13,000 ft. Bombed a road to cut off the Nazi's. The fleet landed this morning at Nice and Toulon. This finishes up our crews' 50 missions each. Celebrated last night in the officers tent and hit the mess hall later and drank gin.



"Little Butch" - Note Gash Where Prop Blade Entered Flight Deck

YOU KNOW YOUR GETTING OLD WHEN:

You join the health club and don't go .. You begin to out-line enthusiasm .. You decide to procrastinate, but never get around to it .. Your mind makes contracts that nobody can meet .. A dripping faucet causes an uncontrollable bladder urge .. You know all the answers, but nobody asks you the questions .. You look forward to a dull evening .. You walk around with your head held high, trying to get use to your bifocals.

727th PILOT FONDLY REMEMBERS HIS COPILOT

by: Terrell "Pep" Prewitt

Here is a copy of the obituary of Gary Wheeler I told you that I'd send to use in the Ad-Lib as you see fit.

He was a darn good copilot. I'd been transferred from B-17s; 1st Pilot, in a B-17 Group with fly-away airplanes and full crews just about to go overseas. All 1st pilots were transferred to Boise, Idaho, given 4 hours check out time in B-24, and on to Wendover, Utah. After the 4 hours we (1st pilots) all turned out at 11 o'clock at night to meet our copilots. So we all met in the ready room - and there were all these new 2nd Lts grumbling.

They started calling out names, and came to "Wheeler," the Major says, "Meet your 1st pilot; Lt. Prewitt." Gary says, "Like Hell! I come up here to fly fighters." The Major says, "We just changed that." Again Gary says, "Like Hell!" Then the Major really dressed him down in short order.

We agreed to disagree on the B-24. And although he didn't like it, he was always there and did his job and was a good copilot. I always felt real bad that things turned out so bad, he becoming a copilot.

Soon as he finished his missions he hooked up with a 51 outfit and as you can read in the obit, he had a hell of a time.

I saw him once in the hospital in Denver and he was having a bad time. Shot in the lower leg. Saw him again in Cheyenne, Wyo. Drove up to see him; he was okay then.

He "six-gunned" an Arab out of a German motorcycle with a side car in North Africa. We loaded it and flew it onto Italy and toured the whole damn countryside. Drank a lot of Cognac - had a whale of a time. Carried .45 all the time and it was the difference in staying alive several times. Those little kids running the streets at night sure played hell with the GIs.

(editor) Garrold Wheeler transferred into the 31st Fighter Group and flew 15 missions with them. He was severely wounded while strafing in the Vienna area; downed and captured by the Germans. Later liberated by Patton's 3rd Army he spent two and a half years in Army hospitals recovering. When separated from service (Medical Retirement) he became active in horsemanship and worked actively in that field. He died at 78 years of age in McAllen, Texas.

OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

JO EATON SUCCUMBS

If any organization had a "First Lady" the 451st certainly had a GREAT one. Many of us met her for the first time in Norfolk, when we conducted our reunion there. But to the many others that remember her for the time spent in Fairmont, Nebraska, she became the stalwart for the wives of the men training at the old base.

I speak of Jo Kathryn Eaton in the past tense because word has been received from Sallie Eaton Elliott, daughter of Bob and Jo Eaton, that Jo Eaton had severed her earthly bonds and is now with her late husband, Bob Eaton.

Sallie writes: "I am writing to tell you the sad news that Mother - Jo Eaton - passed away on July 29th from complications from emphysema.

She survived Dad by 2 years and will be buried alongside him at Arlington National Cemetery on August 10th.

I know she so enjoyed the 451st Reunion that she attended and was so touched that you made the trip East when Dad Died. It meant a lot to her that you were present at Arlington and it was wonderful that she got to see you.

She died very peacefully, as Dad did, and we feel she was blessed to have been spared hospitalization and a Nursing Home.

We hope to continue keeping in touch with the 451st over the coming years, as it played such an important part in the life of my Mom and Dad.

Sincerely, Sallie (Eaton) Elliott.



SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Agnew, William D., 727th - 1995
 Barnd, Robert E., 726th - 19 July 1995
 Burke, Larry J., 726th - 16 August 1993
 Cappleman, George S., 727th - 19 April 1995
 Doedyns, John G., 727th - 23 May 1995
 Dye, Claude R., 726th - 25 June 1995
 Griffith, Roscoe H., 726th - 1993
 Hattersley, Joseph W., 726th - 23 March 1995
 Juha, Edward J., 724th - 15 July 1995
 Michael, Haskell T., 727th - January 1995
 Pascoe, Harry J., 726th - 15 March 1995
 Waggoner, Jack T., 725th - 17 April 1995
 Wheeler, Garrold E., 727th - 18 February 1995
 Witherow, Donald W., 725th - 12 January 1995

Special Monetary Considerations To The Memory of:

Lawrence J. Stauth - 727th; by his brother, Mike Stauth.

John G. Doedyns - 727th; by his buddies, Herb Schrader, Lenny Strickler & Terry Tomberlin.

James McKnight & Garrold E. Wheeler - 727th; by Terrell Prewitt.

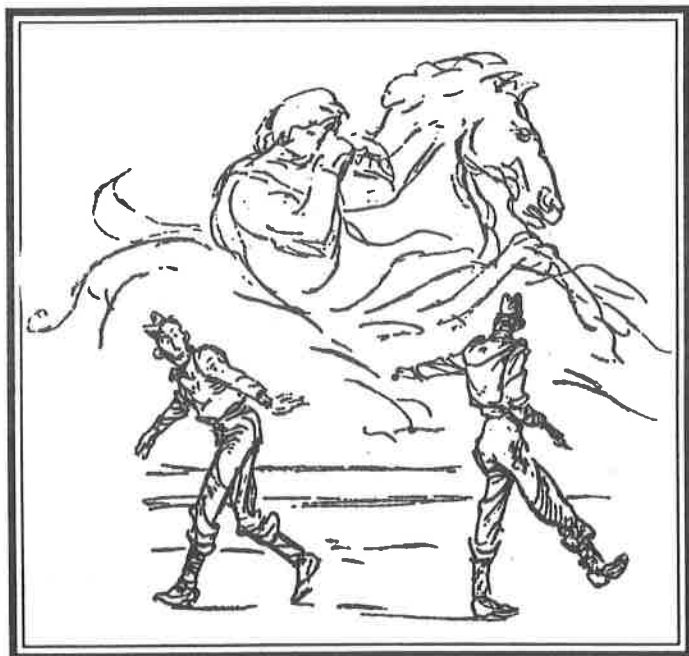
Robert E. Barnd - 726th; by Ed Kaczmarek.

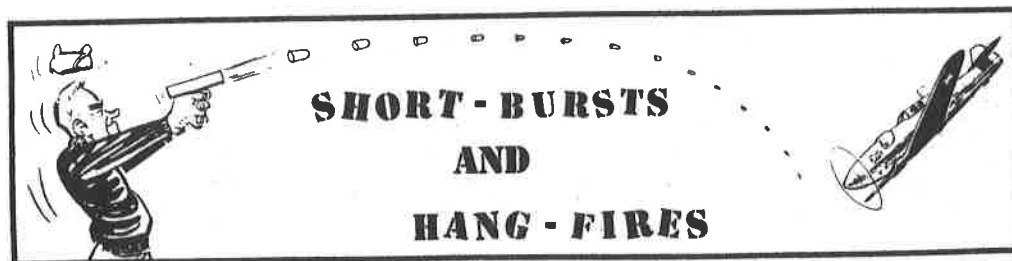
Joseph W. Hattersley - 726th; by Kenje Ogata.

Harry J. Pascoe - 726th; by Wilson Landis & Leroy Stefan.

Joseph J. Yavasile - 727th; by Jim Ivey.

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

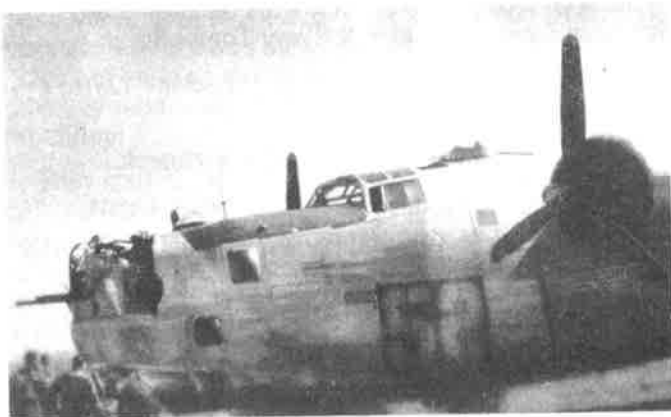




Chuck Fishbaugh, 726th [ARMORER] ... I was pleasantly surprised to see the letter you had from Lt. Richard Coleman, pilot of "Hard to Get" (726th). That was my first assignment plane as Ground Armorer in February 1944. I remember his name, "Big Dick" and a pair of dice showing fives painted under his cockpit window. Another thing I remember about that day he left on the Feb. 25, 1944 mission, two of the crew members (gunners) had a short fist fight before they climbed aboard. I've often wondered if they made up before they bailed out.

(Editor ... I can't account for the outcome of the fist fight, I can only account for the names of the EM's that were on board that day. There was: John P. Mahoney, Paul Mouton, John L. Chamberlin, Leo Greenberg, John J. Haley, Ernest L. McNeese [KIA], Elzie E. Blankenship. Oddly there were 3 Staff's and 4 Buck Sgt's aboard. To me that counts up to 7. Odd, too that one of them wasn't a photographer - at least no one was listed as such. Maybe the battle was that they were vying for a gun position.)

Clyde Laws, 726th [PILOT] ... I just want to thank you again for making it possible for me to have a reunion with my copilot, Stanley Holda, after fifty (50) years ... I'm sending a few picture, and if you can use them; have at it! The B-24 #52 with the nose turret shot out may be the one Karl Eichhorn mentioned in the summer '93' Ad-Lib on page 12. He also mentioned this airplane ran short of fuel and made a forced landing at Pescara on the 24th of April. I flew my last mission on 24 April to Roverto M/Y in Italy and landed at Pescara short of fuel ... Thanks a million for all you have done. Take care of yourself, and "keep me feeling young" with all the newsletters.



With Top of Nose Turret Shot Away - Could this be Laws' AC?
Test your recollection.

(Editor ... Thanks, kudo's like that make me feel that my efforts aren't totally in vain, as, at times I'm prone to imagine. I keep alive by my interests in what you guys feel and think, both about the Ad-Libs and the Reunions. Keeps me feeling young, too!

Paul Johnshoy, 724th [PILOT] ... I seem to remember that somewhere you mentioned you would like to receive copies of old Orders, etc., that carried serial numbers and other information - SO: I received this copy from the son of Walt Flannely, who's name is Bob. He is a police officer in New Jersey. Bob is looking for some pictures of "GASHOUSE," suitable for enlarging and framing for a display he is making in memory of his Dad. It's fun to see the interest some of the children of guys in our outfit are taking in the history of the 451st. If you keep track of them his address is: Robert Flannely, 154 Albright Lane, Paramus, NJ 17652.

(Editor ... I have corresponded with young Flannely and searched my files for "GASHOUSE" photos, but could not find any that he may not already have. I will keep him in mind as I accumulate photos from guys that wish to donate them to the cause.)



"Gashouse" & "Stone Crew," Including Crew Chief, Walt Flannely

Phil Beckwith, 724th [CREW CHIEF] ... I noticed in the last Ad-Lib, that in Kansas City Kenneth Edwards got his dance, but this "Red Head" got the kiss'.



(Editor ... You sure did, Phil -- and here's the proof. Whats more, Sally Rand ain't been the same since.)

Merle Larson, 727th [PILOT] ... Saw a picture of a Ken Edwards - I had a "Ken Edwards" (flight engineer) from Staunton, Virginia. Last time I saw him he looked a lot younger the guy in the picture. I wonder if they're the same? RE: I remember the "ice on wings" mission. Only it wasn't ice, as I recall, it was FROST. For some reason frost is worse. It seems to wreck the "boundry layer of air" more. I don't know exactly why. I've seen light Cub type airplanes refuse to fly with a load of frost. We'd have lost all of the B-24s on that deal if God and the Sun, and the 4 PW engines per a/c hadn't removed most of it while we were taxiing out. ... I had the entire flight and ground crew scraping it off with scraps of lumber. I told them to concentrate on the first 1/3 of the wing chord. We only had about 15 minutes before taxiing. That's like cleaning 1/3 of a city block of sidewalks.

(Editor ... Com'on back to Minneapolis and see for yourself, next September. With a little inducement we may be able to get him and Phil Beckwith to face off in an amour toujours contest with the ladies. ... As to your encounter with frost laden aircraft, I leave that to you pilot type guys to resolve that problem.

Harvey Brown, 725th [COPILOT] ... I am totally ashamed that I have not thanked you for the wonderful get together and dinner (Minneapolis Hilton Hotel) that you arranged for some of old ex-451st'ers. I really have no excuse.

I talked to Wally Forman a few weeks ago and he appreciated and really enjoyed being asked to join us. Also I finally got to meet Nick Zender after talking to him many times.

(Editor ... That WAS a nice get together, wasn't it Harvey? Our outside guest, Historian Wally Forman, was certainly a welcome attendee. His knowledge of all

451st aircraft was outstanding. But since that dinner we have lost one of our most dedicated members, Bob Barnd (726th). I attended his funeral at Jordan, MN, late this last July.)

Marcel R. Loya, 724th [ORDNANCE] ... My new and permanent address is now: 1933 Beach Wood Drive, Freeland, WA 98249. Please send all news and future reunion info to this new address. I hope you and your loved ones are in the best of health. As for the wife, Sylvia, and myself, we are "okay" - so far. Say hello to all of our friends of the 451st and 724th Bomb Squadron. I'm sending a little donation. So, take it easy and God Bless You.

(Editor ... Thanks for the Change of Address. It sure helps in getting word out to you guys., And also takes the "egg off my face" when a comrade tells me that his mail gets returned when sent to the address I've given him. I hope more guys take your hint and grant me the chance to update their file with new addresses and phone numbers whenever you make a move..)

Marion Tennison, 726th [GUNNER] ... I wish that I had heard of this organization a lot sooner, for even in 1992 you held your reunion in Los Angeles and I could have been there! Oh well, better late than never. I fully intend to make the one in 1996 even if it is held on the moon -- in fact especially if it's held on the moon! If the rest of the gang can get there - so can I ... I was so thrilled to have some way to get in contact with my former crew members that I completely overlooked the fact that all this paper, and work, can't be free. So please accept this donation along with my deepest thanks and appreciation for the outstanding job that you have done with this organization.

(Editor ... Thanks for the generous check and the kudo's regarding our effort. It was indeed unfortunate that we located you only after your pilot, Jack Holtz, had passed away. However I think we have enough of your crew located that you won't be without someone to write/talk to.)

Kendall Young, 727th [OPS O. & SQDN CO] ... I am enclosing some info I received from T/Sgt Piirainen (727th). I could find nothing in my records, or my memory of use to him. I suggested he contact you and told him I was sending his data to you.

Archie Piirainen's lament: Of the many unusual and bizarre happenings of WWII in the 727th BS, 451st BG, 15th AF, even after a half century has past, this may be another unusual story. It has to do with of a tail gunner receiving the DFC medal for work done by the flight engineer on 5 May 1944. The target was the Ploesti oil fields in Romania.

On July 5, 1995 I received a telephone call from the widow of Carl B. Adams, S/Sgt (Member of the Roger Sprowls Crew), requesting information of why he got the DFC Medal? I was both perplexed and mystified by the inquiry. He had not performed any unusual actions besides being in his tail gunner's position throughout the mission.

After studying the events of that day, 5 May 1944,

from my diary and memory, I came to the conclusion that I should have been the one to receive the DFC.

It seems that Group Headquarters had gotten the wrong names, or information. Or that the widow of Carl B. Adams somehow has the wrong information.

Since you were the Operations Office of the 727th BS at that period of time, you might be able to clarify whether I was, or any of the crew were entitled to receive the medal. It's a lot to ask of you to remember the details of any happenings of half a century ago.

I am sending a copy of my diary and newspaper clipping of that period.

(Editor ... Indeed the information that Archie passed on to Ken Young (and he in turn forwarded to me) seems to indicate that Archie was responsible for patching up the "Bigger Boober Girl" in the air so it could make a crash landing back at the base. Just how these mistakes take place has to be laid at the feet of some inept clerk, or to the political vindictiveness on the part of some Staff Officers. Some medals were awarded just for the benefit of special friends (whether earned or not); or some awards were left to dangle if the recipient was not vocal in his quest for what was promised. And the ultimate was if an award was put into the channels and the recipient ended up KIA or MIA; then the whole awarding procedure may be scraped. Such was the case with Winston Dandrew (Photographer 727th), who was considered for the DFC for the Blechhammer mission of 7 July 1944, but no follow-up was taken after his demise on 2 August 1944. Again, I hate to pontificate, but there are numerous incidents that I've heard of regarding errant awards. But how to follow-up on getting what you deserve ... I haven't the foggiest. Chuck Paddock (Pilot 725th) seems to have circumvented the system by getting 2 belated DFC's for his crew a couple years back. Just how he did it, and who he contacted, will have to be answered by he-himself.)

George Tudor, 725th [PILOT] ... As to your recent surgery; I hope you have been treated successfully. I remembered you had a prostatectomy which I would like to think would have had very good results. As the results of your treatment are finalized and known, I bet the Group would really be interested in the outcome. I know I would.

(Editor ... Have no fear, ole' Bob is still here. And suffering no worse from the experience. In fact, George, if you hadn't reminded me I'd have forgotten all about it. No, I'm feeling fine and finding more things to involve myself in than ever. Thanks for your concern ... But thinking in terms of your previous letter where you told me to caution the other members to get the PSA, and various other medical tests from their doctor, I couldn't go along with you more. You believe I have an influence on some of our members and that my surgery would prove that even a "scarty cat," like myself, could make it through all right. All I can say to those that fear going "under the knife;" is that I had no pain - only discomfort. Just make up your mind and get it done. You may be as lucky as I was, but you will never know unless you try.)

Stanley Jackson, 724th [PILOT] ... Seeing and reading the enclosed article (Retired Officers Association Magazine) the articles brought back so many memories of good fellowship. I was pleased that you were recognized in the article, by Bill Anderson, for all the devoted labor that you have put into our REUNIONS ... As you can see by the other enclosed newspapers clipping, we are blessed in the NE area by a number of visits from our resurrected and faithful B-24, accompanied by a revived B-17. These visits are well attended and appreciated by not only the "Vets" but even by the younger generations that had heard so many stories about them.

*(Editor ... Thanks for the mention of William C. "Andy" Anderson (725th Pilot and Author) 4 page article entitled "We Who Served Together FLOCK Together (September 1995)." I was wondering how I was going to sneak it into the Ad-Lib without being obtrusive. Andy sent me a copy of the Magazine (right off the press), and I am forever in his debt for having picked my brain (small as it is) for information. He certainly brought home the fun we had at the Irvine (1992) reunion, along with the M*A*S*H* Bash ... Regarding the various B-24/B-17 fly-ins you've been having in the northeast, I see that Collings has gone commercial in order to support flying that "Liberator" around. He now has the Schlitz Brewery Co helping him out, financially. The price he had to pay was to have the old logo of "All American" painted over with the new "Schlitz Golden Girl," at least on the copilot's side.)*

Richard Peterson, 726th [ARMAMENT] ... My wife Doris, and I are looking forward to our next reunion, wherever that may be. Here's another donation, as I mentioned in my last letter. I still believe you should collect "dues" from each member.

(Editor ... Again, Dick, you are a man of your word. Your donation was greatly appreciated, as are all those that are as generous as yourself. As to making this a "dues paying" organization; I've been against that type of operation since we started. I can't help but think that those that are less affluent will certainly drop out; leaving little inclination to contribute at some later time, or not wish to join at all. And even holding the "carrot" of joining without membership dues seems to leave some candidates, when first mailed to, still uninterested. The goal of the organization is to find all our living members, regardless of financial status. I know it falls upon those of us that can make the free-will offering, a certain amount of responsibility in order to keep the others on the roster, but without a sizeable roster there would be little, or a slim, chance to find a tentmate/crewmate when being sought. And I'll keep beating those that are reluctant to join us with this verbal 2" X 4" until they see the light. And pound lumps on those that can, but haven't as yet, contributed.)

Harland B. Little, 726th [GUNNER] ... Thanks for giving me the information on the 451st. I have been watching the retirement pages for reunions, must have missed the one on the 451st. ... I was only in Italy for a short time and didn't get to know many airmen in other crews. Please accept my check. Will be looking forward

to the newsletters.

(Editor ... There, didn't I just say to Dick Peterson that there are guys out there that feel the urge to join with a "Starter Donation?" You make me feel good, Harland that you feel as you do; regardless of the time spent in the organization. Perhaps the information contained in the Ad_Libs will bring you up to speed about the 451st; their past and now the present.)

Ellsworth P. Johnson, 727th [NAVIGATOR] ... Recently I read an article in one of the Ad-Lib issues by one of the enlisted men about the replacement crews not being as friendly or well trained as the original crews. The implication being that they did not relate to the ground personnel on a personal friendly basis. It is true that we did not have the association resulting from the formation of the Group from the beginning, and thus did not have the opportunity to meet and know the ground personnel. We did get to meet the ground crew chiefs of the various aircraft we flew, but had little occasion to meet the others. This was a matter of organization and squadron operation rather than individual desire of personality. As far as training was concerned, I can't comment except to say that our crew, Don Robinson's crew, flew Squadron Lead. Vince Cantelmo, Bombardier and I, Navigator flew Squadron Lead with Robbie and other Lead Crews. Thus I was associated with capable crews throughout my tour of duty.

(Editor ... Not meaning to jump into this skirmish without some knowledge of what both sides of this argument meant; BUT from what I gathered from the writings from some of the Ground Crews, after the original crews put in their time (rotated back to the US, became POW's, or, with the ultimate sacrifice, lost their lives), the ground members felt that the new crews just couldn't take their place. It certainly wasn't that they didn't like us. Some ground crews felt that they did not want to bond with the new men; if for no other reason, THAT these friendship could also be cut short dramatically. And regarding the capabilities of the new crews ... theirs was the feeling that no one was as good as the original crews were and if they wanted to be - prove it! There wasn't anyone, in their eyes, that could be that good. As to the new crews, they kinda stayed within themselves and related more to the crew than to drawing on ground crew friendships that were already long standing among themselves. In fact, they were a lonely and timid bunch, relying on each other for assurances and strength. In time, some broke the barrier back then, and are now relating to those revered moments by recalling the GOOD TIMES with spent on the hard-stand while taking part in our reunions. "Hey Buddy, what State are you from?")

Lauren Balzer, 726th [GUNNER] ... Fifty years ago I arrived back from "The War," to a base in South Carolina. Overseas I was re-assigned to the Bob Viau crew to replace their ball gunner, who was KIA. We flew back via Africa, South America, West Indies and finally "touch down" in the US. Since then I have experienced hard times, sadness, tears and loneliness. But about a year ago, out of the blue, my phone rang and it was Achi Kosakis, my "brother." I cannot put into

words, but it was a regrouping at it's best; despite losing 7 of our original 10 crew members to the grim reaper. Bob, I wish to send in this donation for expenses you have in editing and mailing the Ad-Lib. The Ad-Lib was God-sent and I look forward to the next publication ... and also the reunion. I missed a lot already, but I am very happy now since regrouping.

(Editor ... There is nothing better to hear that what you just said, Lauren. Aki, your "Brother," just followed through with a nice donation as well. Hearing that you two are back in contact will make the get together in Minneapolis all the more meaningful. With Bob Viau living in Duluth, MN, he won't have but about a 3 hour drive to join up with you.)

Max D. Johnson, 726th [CREW CHIEF] ... I had two airplanes named "Screamin Meemie;" #1 & 2. My third ship that blew a tire on take off had no name. Never lost a man in combat, bud did lose 3 men when they were flying on a test run. Word came back they hit a mountain. All I ever got back was a wing tip. As I remember, Lt Long and his crew got shot down in a plane other than mine when it was grounded for fuel pump failure. I know he got back with part of the crew as I went with the ship that picked him up from the underground partisans in the area.



(Editor ... Another memory recalled. The picture I resurrected shows the original officers that brought the aircraft overseas. The line-up is, at this moment, unclear. I know for sure that John Schneider (copilot) stands to the left; then I believe it's John Bodenchuk, then comes Richard Long, and I think David Spencer is at far right. Correct me if I'm wrong. ... Thanks for the meaningful "dues check," as well.)

Louis Sagi, 725th [BOMBARDIER] ... In the August issue of the Air Force Magazine, on page 56, is a picture of the "Extra Joker." It is not identified, but you can see the tail markings. The caption does not do justice to this tragedy.

(Editor ... You're right, Lou, about credit not being given credit "where credit is due." Regarding that article, did you notice that it was a story about the 8th Air Force. I was ready to scream when I read through the

the story and not only was no mention made of the 451st BG, but nothing even regarding the 15th AAF. I have, in the past, voiced my opinion on what I felt was unwarranted omissions by the Air Force Magazine, as to our photos, but found that my cries fell on deaf ears. [case in point - the "Ploesti Picture."] I offered chapter and verse as to it coming out of our photo lab, but to no avail. It took Colonel Frank Lather to get their attention. His condemnation letter was printed - mine scraped.

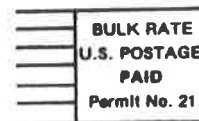
Peter Massare, 727th [PILOT] ... I heard a B-26, one of the last remaining flyable, had crashed in Texas. What's the word from your office?

(Editor ... Indeed we did lose one of the only flyable Marauders in the world. It crashed at Odessa, Texas, taking 5 men to their deaths; 2 British and 3 Americans. According to the story I read in the "Stars and Stripes" it was rehearsing for the Confederate Air Force Air Show to be held at the end of September 1995. They (the US government) are having a probe as to just how it all happened. It seems that both pilots were experienced Confederate Air Force (vintage aircraft) pilots, but we all know the history of the B-26; unstable at best ... Now it seems, due to the lack of a flyable B-26, extra effort is being made on Kermit Weeks, one of the world's foremost aircraft collectors, to restore his Marauder aircraft (formerly owned by Dave Tallechet, who once owned the B-24 called the "Delectable Doris"), to licensed flying status. Just when that will be; I haven't the foggiest, nor, at this time, does the "Stars and Stripes.")

Sedgefield Hill, 727th (MECHANIC) ... On our return home after 14,000 miles and three months, which

saw us all the way through Alaska, the Arctic Circle Western Canada and parts of the West Coast of the USA, we are still trying to get through the mountains of mail!! I found the enclosed letter and maybe by this time he has called you and you have taken care of his request. I gave him your number. ... We stopped and saw "Woody" Woodman and he is doing a whole lot better now that he is living with his son, but in his own house, there on his "acreage" in Ivanhoe, California. ... Enclosed letter from **JIM CUNNINGHAM** reads as follows: I am doing a family history on my Uncle, the late Sergeant James F. Curtin, radio operator with the 726th Bomb Squadron, 451st Bomb Group. My Uncle was killed in action in Italy in a B-24 Liberator on February 8, 1944. His plane's nickname was "Pistol Packing Mama." There were two survivors of the crash; Lt. Ed Niederkorn and Sergeant Meryll Frost. I am interested in finding out the address for the 451st Bomb Group Association, because I'm interested if there exist any pictures of my uncle with his crew and his plane. I would also be interested to find out if the two surviving crew members are still alive.

(Editor ... Yo, Red - I think I've taken care of Jim Cunningham's request. I sent him as much information as was in this computer; Missing Air Craft Reports (MACR), Killed In Action (KIA), CREWS, Etc. I have also alerted him to the fact that Meryll Frost has died and that Niederkorn is his only possibility to have contact with a living crew member. I have to assume that Ed and Jim got together, as I have heard nothing more from Jim on this matter. It may be that some other crews had developed a friendship with James Curtin, and the Hunt Crew, and have some snapshots of them together.



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