



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

Issue 30

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## ATLANTA 1998 REUNION REVIEW

What's it like to attend a 451st Bomb Group Reunion? Well, if you were part of the almost 400 that were in attendance, my telling you would be like ME preaching to the choir. You have already experienced it. (For those that didn't make it, let this stimulant you for our next reunion.) To those that did attend, it was camaraderie, moments of remembrances, and even joyful tears. To others it was finding new friends that had shared similar experiences during the "Big One." But to all it was being together in an atmosphere of pure nostalgia where we could reflect on our past accomplishments. Not as individuals, but as a unit that had served our country with courage, honor and devotion to duty. This was our moment to revel in those feats. And revel we did!

To me there was going to be a special get-together that I saw coming. Just a few short months prior to the reunion, I had been contacted by two new candidates for membership. Their wartime background showed them to be the gunners from the Lt. George Hopkins crew (727th). They were later to become the nucleus for the Lt. Peter Massare Crew when Lt. Hopkins was transferred to Wing. In all, three of the crew got together at the reunion. At our Banquet they all sat together, along with one of Lt. Massare's tentmates, Capt. Quincey Tucker (Sqn Navigator). But the 'frosting on the cake' came when John Massare (Lt. Massare's oldest son) asked if he could attend the banquet with his son. I made sure they all sat at the same table.

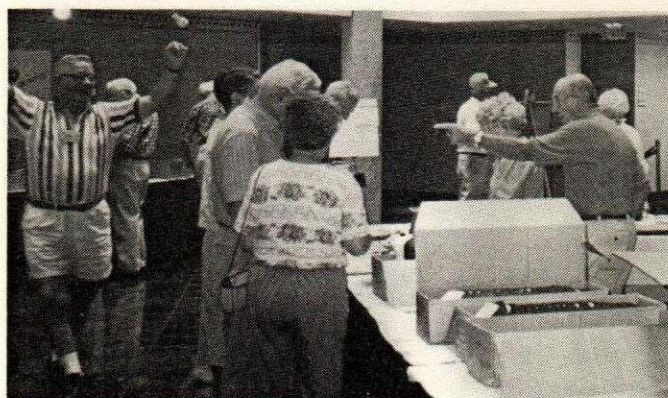
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WINSON JONES, JACK JONES & PAUL ANDERSON  
HOPKIINS' CREW - LATER MASSARE'S CREW

From the 9th of September to the 13th we basked in the feeling of being "together," once again. Wednesday, when we started our odyssey, many of our members came early to find that certain comrade, or to visit relatives or friends that lived in/or near Atlanta. There were a goodly number that registered in the Westin for that first night. The Westin was pleased that we came up to our promised count of occupying 200 rooms. In fact we had guests turned away (undocumented registrants) because of 'lack of rooms.'



GLEN SWEARINGEN (HANDS IN AIR) GIVES IN TO SALES  
PRESSURE BY ART MORIN (POINTING FINGER)

Thursday, 10th: Registration took place and our Memorabilia Sales Table (under the management of Art & Carol Morin and with the assistance of Jack & Marty



**"AD-LIB"**

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Thomas) did a brisk business. Tee Shirts, Caps, Wall Clocks, Wrist Watches, plus numerous smaller items gave the members a chance to select.



**WHAT'S YOUR GUESS:  
CLARK GABLE-??**

Throughout the afternoon we had the pleasure and privilege of having Captain Clark Gable mix and mingle with our crowd. (Of course it was not the original Captain Gable, but with his WW-2 vintage jeep, Captain's uniform and suave mannerisms, he could easily have been take for the real thing). Our Gable look-alike, David Spohn, later took on the role of Rhett Butler for our "Old South" Theme Party.



**DIXIELAND BAND  
ABETTED BY JOHN O'CONNOR ON THE TRUMPET AND BILL JACKSON ON THE CLARINET**



**BARB & GLEN SWEARINGEN  
"CUTTING A'RUG"**

And what about our "Old South" theme party? I deem it to have been a wow'ser of a kick-off party. A buffet of typically southern styled food was enjoyed; the mingling of the Scarlett O'Hara and Rhett Butler look-alikes to lend that bit of realism to the whole thing. Then to conclude the evening we had a Dixieland Band, supplemented by our own musicians; John O'Connor on the trumpet and Bill Jackson on the clarinet. As always, many with gimpy

legs and sore backs, came forward and did some of the most fantastic two steps and jitter-bugging, such as I remember from our youthful days of the 40's.

Friday morning came all too early for our loading of 8 buses to carry us to the Robins AFB, GA. There we partook in lunch; a brief talk by B/G Robert Scott, author of "God is My Copilot," who, later at the Museum, autographed copies of his book. At the Museum we viewed whole, parts and portions of the artifacts assembled from various eras of military air power. Much dedicated to WW-II.

Upon return to the Westin Hotel we engaged in an evening repast of "Wine and Cheese." Then we engaged in a more solemn theme of dedication to our nation's flag. Color Guards from Fort McPherson came to help us in a formal Flag Presentation. In conjunction we had our own Lt Colonel Charles Thomas, dressed in Revolutionary Uniform, present "A Toast to the Flag" and tribute in the form of an address: "Old Glory Speaks." Herewith offered to all;

*I am the flag of the United States of America. I was conceived in the dreams of liberty and the hopes of freedom. Though I was never an orphan, I was adopted by the Continental Congress on June 14, 1777 and proclaimed the national emblem of a nation newly born on this continent, fighting valiantly for survival and destined to bring to all mankind a new concept of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.*

*I have been many places and have witnessed many events in American history. I was there when they fired the shot heard round the world when General George Washington became Commander in Chief; I was at Fort McHenry in the dawn's early light and inspired Francis Scott Key to write the immortal, "Star Spangled Banner," now this nation's National Anthem.*

*I saw Molly Pitcher take the cannon swab from the hands of her dead husband and help carry on the fight for freedom. I felt the biting cold at Valley Forge and gave comfort to the tired and hungry Continental Army. I rode with Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain Boys and I saw the signal that started the midnight ride of*



*Paul Revere.*

*I was flown above the decks of "Old Ironsides" and from the masts of the "Yankee" and the "China Clippers;" I blazed the trail west with Lewis and Clark. I was carried through the Halls of Montezuma and to the shores of Tripoli. I fell to the ground at Custer's Last Stand and there were no friendly hands left to pick me up. I galloped up the slopes of San Juan hill with Teddy Roosevelt and the Rough Riders.*

*I was with American boys on the battlefields of the Marne and the Argonne Forest and stayed with them until it was over, over there. I saw many of the men and boys of this nation fall and lie still in death. They had given their last full measure of devotion. The war was over for them forever, but I kept my lonely vigil over their graves and have stayed to watch the poppies grow amid the crosses, row on row, in Flanders Fields.*

*I fly above the Arizona Memorial in solemn remembrance of the 2,388 Americans killed during the attack on Pearl Harbor, nearly half of them, 1,177, were shipmates on the Battleship Arizona, many of them remain entombed therein.*

*I was raised by six brave men during the hell of Iwo Jima and I waved farewell to the four immortal Chaplains who gave up their life jackets so those with none could survive; the Chaplains then joined hands and went down with their ship to honored glory.*

*I proudly waved over you boys of the 451st Bomb Group, as I have over all this nation's fighting units, and supporters in the field and at home. Your coordinated actions have successfully defeated all effort by those who would destroy this nation's cherished liberty and freedom.*

*For these events this nation has paid dearly. Throughout it's brief history, when danger has threatened, millions of Americans have left their homes and families to defend me and the nation for which I stand. Some never to return. Yet they are here embraced forever within my folds, for:*

*Their purity is remembered in my stripes of white; Their blood has given me stripes of red; Their souls are cradled in my stars; and their courage imbedded in my blue.*

*I am many things to many people. I am an inseparable link in the chain that binds men and women to God and Country. I am called "The Red White and Blue," "The Star Spangled Banner," "The Stars and Stripes," but I am most commonly known by a nickname given me by an old Sea Captain, who called me - "Old Glory."*

*Men and women in nations around the world are striving fervently to reach my shores, to touch and stand beside me:*

*A symbol of Liberty;*

*A standard of Justice;*

*A light of Humanity;*

*An emblem of Man's Faith;*

*A beacon shining into the darkness;*

*And here I will always be, for I am the Stars and Stripes Forever*

**- I AM OLD GLORY -**

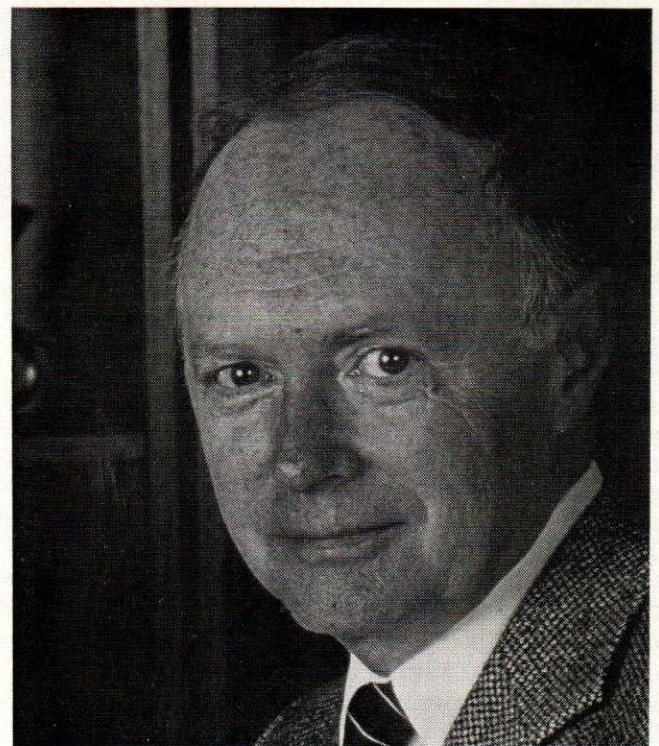
Thus ended the formal part of our Friday evening program. As had been the custom from previous

reunions, we have always been able to bring in a Military Band. But, it seems on this occasion, a Band was not to be. A year prior (and up until the last moment), I had worked diligently to procure a band from either, Dobbins ARB, Robins AFB, Fort McPherson AUS, Georgia Air National Guard and the Georgia Army National Guard. All to no avail. My fall-back would have been to gather a group of knowledgeable members who could field questions from the membership about the history of the 451st. But at the last minute I concluded that some of the answers, along with the questions, may be derisive, difficult or embarrassing to respond to. Instead I "threw myself upon the sword," and allowed the attendees to question me. It was fun on my part to attempt to respond, but later, as I left the floor, one wag told me, "Don't give up your day job, Bob." 'Nuff said.

Saturday was our "Tour Day." Those that had pre-paid, either took the tour called 'The Taste of the Peach' (a tour of downtown Atlanta). Or, the 'Covington's Mansions and Magnolias' tour (A visit to the old traditional Atlanta).

In the evening was the 'Cocktail Hour,' that always precedes our Gala Banquet. After seating we Posted the Colors, which was conducted by our own members, and did the reciting of the Pledge of Allegiance as led by LTC Robert Kacena USAF (Ret.), our Master of Ceremonies. With the Invocation by Reverend Paul Johnshoy, and a toast to our departed comrades, we proceeded to dine on either Prime Rib or Stuffed Chicken.

Colonel Kacena introduced the Head Table and with a few comments from the organizations President (me), introduced LTC Leland Younkin, the original Group's Operations Officer. Colonel Younkin had kindly agreed to fill-in as a representative of the 'higher command' - Group Headquarters.



**MAJOR GENERAL GEORGE B. HARRISON USAF (RETIRED)  
GUEST SPEAKER**



Colonel Kacena then introduced our Guest Speaker, Major General George B. Harrison USAF (Retired) (Director of Research - Georgia Tech). General Harrison's speech went right to the hearts of every 451st veteran there. He gave us a perspective of ourselves, that from the inside we may never have recognized, nor realized. His objective was to instill in us the honor we, as WW-II participants, should feel for what we had accomplished. He took us from a level of the 'Overall Picture,' as could be taken from history books, right down to the individual that endured the trauma of combat, and imprisonment as a POW. His research into the subject of our 451st Bomb Group went so far as to pinpoint individuals that had endured these adversities. Several of the men he spoke of were right there in the audience giving 'Amens' to his befitting tributes. He and his lovely wife, Penni, were a wonderful compliment to our reunion.

To those that made a request that I publish his speech in the Ad-Lib, sorry but no-can-do. General Harrison spoke from notes and would be hard pressed to recapture the essence of that moment. Nor did anyone have the presence of mind to record it.

Sunday saw the conclusion of our 4 day reunion. Church Services were conducted by Reverend Paul Johnshoy to a full house. A reading of our deceased members (since our last reunion two years ago) now has become part of our Church Program. The list grows longer!

Some members stayed over until Monday, or even longer, before heading home. Some took the opportunity to explore the area in more detail, while some visited relatives or friends. All in all, for the almost 400 attendees I believe it was a memorable experience. Nostalgic, rewarding and gratifying. See you all in the year 2000, hopefully somewhere's in the upper mid-west.



**BOB KARSTENSEN  
WITH HIS B-24 AT HEAD TABLE**

## 451st PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICE CONTINUES TO GRIND OUT FEATURE STORIES

Along with other functions of the Public Relations Office was the writing of the Group's narrative history by 1st Lt. Robert B.N. Peck, who was then Assistant Group S-2 officer. The written history of the Group started from its conception on May 1, 1943 until it disbanded April 1945 at Dow Field, Bangor, Maine. During the course of its overall writing they managed to work in small vignettes concerning the operation of the Public Relations Department. The following came from those writings:

July 1944:

Production in the PRO, under the able direction of Capt. Sands, hit its full stride in July. A steady four months climb brought the Group to the top of all Air Force Groups. 1006 articles, 70 feature stories, and 82 pictures were turned out during the month, but the emphasis from now on will shift to more and better feature stories, with production leveling off at between 1000 and 1500 stories a month. Clippings of stories sent out in earlier months began to drift back in July. They were still only a small percentage of the total output, since so many clippings were never sent back. The clippings quickly filled one bulletin board set up in the office. Home town stories sent out by PRO covered 45 of the 48 states. Each combat man received an average of one to two stories a month, from Air Medal to promotion, or in the feature line.

Again in August 1944:

During the month PRO turned out 1046 articles, 153

features, 87 pictures and two additional bulletin boards of clippings. Capt. Coe, Air Force Photo Officer, sent a letter of commendation on the consistent excellence of PRO mission photos. Ten Group pictures made "Front Page," a weekly layout put out by MAAF. These ten ranked with the best of thousands submitted each week by various Group PRO sections. The walls of the PRO office are literally papered with several hundred pictures of our own photo section has taken. The photo section continued to hold its record in being the first Group to report the results of the days mission and send the finished pictures to higher headquarters.

Another piece of prize writing, by the talented Lt. Peck, surfaced in the form of "covering" the invasion of Southern France (Operation Anvil/Dragoon), as seen by the 451st from the air. It reads as follows:

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION -- 15 August 1944

15th AAF in Italy--The allied invasion fleet was poised in blue waters 15,000 feet below as our B-24 Liberators came over. The invasion coast of Southern France, and specifically next to San Rafael, presented a panorama of ships, parachutes and land convoys.

Landings were under way to the left and right. Several waves were ashore. Our target was the road to Frejus, a supply line, a road possibly lined with ammunition stores. The ships off shore here were waiting.

Two long rows of large boats, evenly spaced, formed



a bowling alley in the sea. Smaller landing barges darted in and out. Almost invisible, PT boats left a zig-zag wake as they headed on their various missions.

A pair of German fighters started to fly over, far below our Liberator formation. All hell broke loose. That was the last we saw of the fighters.

We passed the convoy fast, then the shore, then bombs dropped. They started hitting on the road's terminus, almost on the beach, they walked like a hitchhiker straight toward Frejus.

The waiting landing craft and barges broke their quiet waiting formation as we headed inland. Looking back, we could see the white churn of landing barges moving shoreward.

Ten miles inland, beyond Frejus, beyond the Liberator target, hundreds of parachutes rested on what had

been quiet French farmland the morning before. They didn't move, because the men who had brought them there had long since left for more specific duty--though we could not see them. Four of these polka-dot parachute clusters dotted the hillsides.

In the distance, a German tank and truck convoy wound through mountains and towards the beach. Our bombs were gone, and we were getting the hell out. Back over the sea, more bombers passed us, but going toward the beach we had just left.

That was the invasion as seen from an open camera hatch at 15,000 ft.

We listened to invasion news most of the way back to home base. The Liberators were serviced and now they're ready for another trip tomorrow.

## A COUSIN'S SEARCH FOR ANSWERS -- FINDS THEM & SHARES THEM --

It was on that disastrous mission of 23 August 1944 when we lost 8 aircraft over Markersdorf A/D that this narrative is derived. Back when this mission was flown a young girl was awaiting the return of her cousin from the war. This young girl was living with her Grandmother, Lilly Mae Beard, in Oklahoma. The same Grandmother that had been caring for her older cousin as well. They were brought up almost as brother and sister. This cousin was George Leroy Hogan, copilot on the Fertile Myrtle (a/c #42-78471) that went down on that ominous Markersdorf mission. This 9 year old girl, Mary Jo Beard, was made aware of his being 'Missing in Action,' but nothing further than that. Through the following years the relatives seemed to evade any mention of the happening. Mary Jo was left to her own thoughts as to her cousin/brother final outcome. Some subtle hints that pervaded her thoughts were that George had somehow managed to escape and was still hiding out in Germany, since his ancestral roots were from Germany.

Mary Jo languished in these thoughts until just a few years back when one of her cousins finally told her. It was from the cousins death bed she related that Leroy (Mary Jo's favorite name for George Hogan) was buried in Santa Fe, New Mexico. They (the family) had tried to spare her from the true facts because of her dreams that Leroy was still alive. And in the interim, little thought was given to his demise.

As some of the facts started coming together, Mary Jo (now in her mid-60s and married to Clarence Potts) wrote to the cemetery custodians in Santa Fe requesting information. They sent a Polaroid photo of the grave



2nd Lt. GEORGE LEROY HOGAN  
(KIA 23 August 1944)

stone that again caused consternation to Mary Jo. It seems that 3 of the crew; Pilot Cornelius Donoghue, Copilot George Hogan and Bombardier Clarence Roettger, were all sharing the same grave site. Joyful that she now knew where Leroy was buried, but puzzled as to this mass grave, Mary Jo set up a trust fund that would place flowers on the grave site for the next decades to come.

It was at about that time that Mary Jo placed a query on the Internet and we made contact. I mailed her all the information and MACR pages that I had, pertaining to the last mission of Fertile Myrtle. Overjoyed, but still searching, she made contact with overseas historians and in every way continued to enlarge her scope of inquiry. Much of her last findings disputed what had been reported in the MACR from 1944. There were NO 7 parachutes seen leaving the a/c.

There was NO execution of the Officers because of having carried side arms with them. There was NO viewing of Donoghue's body in the German morgue. There were NO clandestine burials in Hungary, as reported. All these rumors were satisfied when Mary Jo received the "Report of Death," dated 10 January 1949. It gave detailed and graphic accounting of the removal of bodies from their initial grave site and the disposal of the bodies.

The reason that 3 bodies were placed within one casket and buried in Santa Fe now becomes obvious.

The following is that report:

**AG 704 DEAD 10 January 1949**

**MEMORANDUM FOR:** Officer in Charge,  
Casualty Section Personnel



Actions Branch, AGO

**SUBJECT: Reports of Death**

1. The following named Air Corps personnel were reported missing in action, over Austria, on 23 August 1944, in flying pay status.

1st Lt Donoghue, Cornelius E. 0555208  
2nd Lt Hogan, George L. 0555233  
2nd Lt Roettger, Clarence O. 0716765  
S Sgt Ranville, Raymond A. 36117086

2. Under the provisions of Section 5, Public Law 490, 7 March 1942, as amended, a Finding of Death was issued in each case (SP&D No. 3930), showing the presumed date of death as 24 August 1945.

3. Missing Air Crew Report No. 7966, dated 24 August 1944, reveals that the four persons listed above and six others, members of the 451st Bomb Group, 724th Bomb Squadron, constituted the complete crew of B-24G aircraft, serial number 42-78471, which departed Costelluccio Airdrome, Italy, 23 August 1944, on a bombing mission to Markersdorf Airdrome, St. Polten, Austria. The aircraft was last seen at 1215 hours, at a location shown as 48~ 10' N - 15~ 30' E (slightly southwest of the target) and was believed to have been lost as a result of an attack by enemy aircraft.

a. The names of the six other crew members who were subsequently reported as prisoners of war by the German Government through the International Red Cross, follows:

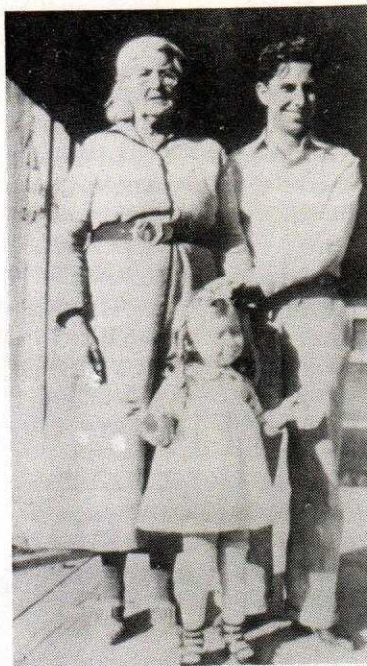
2nd Lt James W. Bitzinger 0718224  
S Sgt Carl R. Lottman 15195396  
S Sgt Wayne Johnson 37460088  
Sgt Claude C. Baker 38533061  
Sgt Stanley E. Black 36585795  
Cpl Alfonso B. Diaz 19176744

b. Attached to the "Crew Report" are three eyewitness statements, all dated 24 August 1944, furnished by Second Lieutenants Benjamin Mills III, 0715274, and Joseph V. O'Hara, 0716755, and Technical Sergeant Lorenzo E. Bloom, 32836572, indicating that Lieutenant Donoghue's plane was attacked by approximately 8 enemy fighter aircraft; that an engine caught on fire; that the plane then "peeled off"; and that 7 parachutes opened as the plane disappeared from view near the target area.

c. A sketch map, attached to Missing Air Crew Report reveals that the plane disappeared near Grafendorf, slightly southwest of St. Polten, Austria.

d. The AG 201 file of Lt. Donoghue contained a letter dated 28 June 1945, from his mother to this office, pertinent part of which is quoted below:

"A few nights ago we received a telephone call from Lt. Owen Sullivan, a former college classmate of Lieutenant Donoghue's. Lt. Sullivan was downed on one of his missions (or sorties (sic) but already knew that Neil was missing. So, while interned, he asked one and all about Neil Donoghue. Finally, in April, an English flyer rewarded his tireless efforts with the following in-



GRANDMOTHER BEARD - GEORGE HOGAN & MARY JO BEARD

formation."

"While hospitalized in Hungary for months, as the result of a crash landing, the English flyer noticed the name plate on the bed across the aisle ---- Reading Lt. Cornelius E. Donoghue, USAAC. Although Owen knew that, without a doubt, it was Neil, he asked for a description: and the description confirmed his convictions."

"Due to his taped condition, the English flyer could not turn his head at all, and was forced to stare at Neils' name plate ----(and feet)---- for weeks. So he was positive the name was spelled CORNELIUS DONOGHUE.

"Lt. Sullivan did not learn either the approximate time, or the locale of the hospital, other than its being somewhere in Hungary."

4. The "Narrative of Investigation" and enclosures submitted by Headquarters, ENNS Detachment, 612 Graves Registration Command, undated, reads as follows:

"The basic information in this case was supplied by Ltr. Hq. AGRC, file 293.9, subject, 'Isolated Burials', dated 13 August 1946 stating that the bodies of four American flyers were buried in the cemetery of Frankenfels, Austria. (0-48/W-75)

Acting on this information, the undersigned, together with an investigating and disinterring team consisting of Mr. Blumbergs, T/5 Vanlandingham, Pfc Fanning, Pfc Graham, Pfc Shook, Pfc Wood, left Enns, Austria at 0800 hours, 18 July 1947, and proceeded to St. Polten to meet Lt Col Clark and the Russian escort, and thence to Frankenfels, arriving at 1130 hours. The burgermeister was contacted first, and he led the way to the mass grave containing the four bodies. The disinterring team began work at 1200 hours.

The investigating team then went to Gendarmerie where the burgermeister, Josef Niederer, and the grave-diggers, Johann Preiser and Rudolf Neubauer, were interviewed. Their statements revealed the following: (See incls. 1, 2, and 3)

On 23 Aug 1944, a formation of American planes flew over the village of Frankenfels about noon. One plane, a four-engined bomber appeared burning and crashed on the estate, Lehengegend, Frankenfels. The following day, the grave-diggers, Johann Preiser and Rudolf Neubauer, went to the scene of crash and found the bodies of four men. No identification or personal effects were found and it is assumed that they were taken away by the German military. The bodies were taken to the cemetery at Frankenfels and buried in a single casket.

The plane wreckage was removed to the town of Kirchberg a few weeks after the crash. The investigating team went to this town and found the remnants of a bomber bearing the AAF serial number 42-52117. This may or may not be the plane which crashed at Frankenfels. No MACR listing this plane is on file at this headquarters.





**DONOGHUE'S CREW (PRIOR TO OVERSEAS DUTY)**

**STANDING - L - R: Lt JAMES BITZINGER (NAV.), Lt CLARENCE ROETTGER (BOMB), Lt. GEORGE HOGAN (COPILOT), 1st Lt. CORNELIUS DONOGHUE (PILOT)**

**KNEELING - L - R: SGT'S: WAYNE JOHNSON (GUNNER), CLAUDE BAKER (GUNNER), FRANK CANNON (GUNNER), CARL LOTTMAN (ROG), RAYMOND RANVILLE (GUNNER), JAMES SMITH (AEG)**

The disinterment was accomplished at 1600 hours. The four bodies were found in one casket. One of these was separated; and since no identification was found, it was labelled UNK-IF 7148. The remaining three bodies could not be separated and were placed in one box labelled IF 7149 A,B,C. Two sets of identification tags were found; one set belonging to George L. Hogan, 0555233, and the other to C.B. Donoghue, 0555208. These tags were also placed in the box, IF 7149, A,B,C.

This completed the day's work, and the disinterring team returned to Enns. The investigation team took the Russian escort back to St. Polten and then returned to Enns, arriving at 2030 hours."

(Signed)

JAMES R. NIXDORF

1st Lt, Inf Commanding.

**a. NARRATIVE OF DISINTERMENT**

"A mass grave containing the bodies of four American flyers was opened at 1200 hours, 18 July 1947, at Frankenfels, Austria (O-48/W-66). The four bodies were buried in one casket at a depth of five feet. This casket was opened at 1600 hours. Three of these bodies were in such advanced state of decomposition that it was impossible to separate them, and they were placed in one box labelled IF 7149 A,B,C. Two sets of identification tags were found among these remains; one set belonging to George L. Hogan, 0555233, and the other to C.B. Donoghue, 0555208. These tags were placed in the box with the bodies."

**b. STATEMENT OF JOSEF NIEDERER, now Burgomaster, Residence Frankenfels, 11 Rosenbuchelrotte.**

"On 23 August 1944 several formations of planes flew over FRANKENFELS. Already in the morning some formations of bombers, probably American arrived from South and went North. At noon of the same day the formations returned on their route to South and I noticed a single plane which came from SE. It was still very high flying, when I saw that the a/c was burning. First I assumed the plane would crash on my house; but when the plane lost height it disappeared and I heard a terrible explosion. Watching the smoke I stepped the slope of the mountain upwards and found out that the

plane had crashed on the estate of Johann Niederer, 9 Lehenggend, community-FRANKENFELS and was still burning. I did not visit the wreckage before 26 August 1944. Then the bodies had been already evacuated to FRANKENFELS, as I was told. But the parts of the plane were still lying there. As I had nothing to do with the removal I returned home when I had seen the scene.

During the Nazi occupation I was not allowed to act as burgomaster; Franz Labner from 1 TIEFGRABEN-ROTTE, community FRANKENFELS was appointed as burgomaster in this period."

**c. STATEMENT OF JOHANN PREISER**

"At 0900 hours, 24 August 1944 I received orders from former Burgomaster FRANZ LABNER, community FRANKENFELS to recover and bury the corpses from the crew of American plane which had crashed on 23 August 1944 on the FRANKFELSBERG - slope near the farmhouse of JOHANN NIEDERER, LEHENGEGEND #9, Comm. FRANKENFELS. I was assisted by RUDOLF NEUBAUER sen., FRANKENFELS, 4 Markt, Comm Frankenfels, and also by a Russian Labourer, who was engaged with the landlord JOSEF SCHAFHUBER, Frankenfels, 5 Markt. Four corpses were found at the scene of the crash. In spite of some wound one body was complete, of two other bodies the heads were torn off, but lying nearby, the fourth body was badly burned. When I searched on the bodies for identification tags and papers I was told, that the soldiers from the German Air forces who assisted the farmers to bring the crops to their homes, had already searched the bodies and that they had taken all the papers and effects. Together with the smaller parts of the corpses and with the ammunition the corpses were put in a wooden box and evacuated to FRANKENFELS. On order of the Burgomaster LAHNER the deceased were buried outside the cemetery close to the wall.

As I did not find any papers I can not state the identity of the bodies and I also can not describe the planes."

5. The subject persons were aboard a B-24 (Liberator) aircraft which departed Castelluccio Airdrome, Italy, 23 August 1944, on a bombing mission to Markersdorf Airdrome, St. Polten, Austria. They were attacked by eight enemy fighter aircraft and one of the engines caught on fire. The plane then "peeled off" and disappeared from view in the vicinity of Grafendord, Austria, slightly southwest of the target. Six members of the ten men crew were subsequently reported as prisoners of war. While an English flyer reported seeing Lt. Donoghue in a hospital in Austria, it was no doubt mistaken identity, in view of the fact that an isolated grave near the scene of the crash, revealed four bodies buried in one casket, and the identification tags of two of the men were found, one of them being Lt. Donoghue's. As there were two of them identified by identification tags, and there were four bodies buried together, and only four of the crew of ten were missing (the other six having bailed out - captured) it is only logical to conclude that all four members in the plane were killed in action, when their plane crashed and burned on 23 August 1944, in Frankenfels, Austria, due to enemy aircraft.

6. It is recommended, therefore, that pursuant to the provisions of Section 9, Missing Persons Act, the forgo-



ing information will be accepted as an official report of death, and that a casualty report be initiated stating that the officers and enlisted man named in paragraph 1 above, were killed in action, when their plane crashed near Frankenfels, Austria, on 23 August 1944, due to enemy aircraft, and that they were in flying pay status at time of their death. The statement will be processed in accordance with Paragraph 2b, Operations Bulletin 35, 1945. The casualty report and official report of death will include the following statement;

Finding of Death as been issued previously under Section 5, Public Law 490, 7 March 1942, as amended, showing presumed date of death as 24 August 1945. This "Report of Death" based on information received since that date, is issued in accordance with Section 9 of said Act and its effects on prior payments and settlements as provided in Section 9.

Place and station of death: European Area

(signed)

Hazel F. Flynn

Investigator

CONCUR:

(signed)

O. Paulsen

Captain, AGD

OIC, Determination Unit.

\*\*\*\*\*END OF REPORT\*\*\*\*\*

The two following letters, dated 7 October 1949 and 29 November 1950, were ferreted out of government hands by Mary Jo, only recently;

7 October 1949

(From) Group Burial

United States Military Cemetery

Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium

Mrs Mabel B. Haag (Mother to George Hogan [her remarried name])

The Department of the Army desires that you be given the most recent information concerning your son, the late Second Lieutenant George L. Hogen.

The American Graves Registration Service in their search for deceased American personnel recovered certain remains from the area in which your son and other of his comrades met their death. As identifications were assigned pending further investigation, and temporary interments were made in a United States Military Cemetery overseas.

The investigation is now complete, and it has been determined that, although the circumstances rendered individual identifications impossible, sufficient evidence was obtained to warrant a group identification of these remains. The remains are now casketed, and being held overseas, pending return to the United States for interment in Santa Fe National Cemetery, located at Santa Fe, New Mexico.

This plan for the burial in one of our country's shrines of all the known groups of men for whom individual identity can not be established, is based on the provisions of Public Law 383, 79th Congress, as amended by Section 3, Public Law 368, 80th Congress. Final interment in a National Cemetery in the United States where perpetual care will be given the graves, is fitting

and proper. This particular National Cemetery was selected in order that no undue burden of travel might be placed on any one family wishing to attend the service.

You and the next of kin of the other men will be informed of the date and time of final interment sufficiently in advance to permit you and any interested persons to attend the ceremonies. In order that you may receive information concerning these final rites, it is essential, in case you should change your address, that you promptly inform the Commanding General, San Francisco Fort Of Embarkation, Attention AGED, Fort Madison, California.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)

E.V. Fredan

Colonel, QMC

Memorial Division

(Second letter)

29 November 1950

Dear Mrs. Haag

Reference is made to the interment of your son, the late Second Lieutenant George L. Hogan, and two of his comrades, which was made in Grave Nos. 257, 258 and 259, Section N, Santa Fe National Cemetery, Santa Fe, New Mexico. It is regretted that because of the fact it was impossible individually to identify the remains of your son, you were deprived of the comfort and consolation which you might have been afforded by interring his remains at home.

It is felt that you might like to have the enclosed photograph of the grave and the headstone which had been erected.

You are assured that the grave will always be cared for in a manner fully commensurate with the sacrifice your son had made for his country. Any desired information concerning the grave or the cemetery will be furnished upon request.

Sincerely yours,

(signed)

F.A. Kirk

Major, QMC

Memorial Division

\*\*\*\*\*END OF DOCUMENTS\*\*\*\*\*

Still the quest for information plagues Mary Jo. Beyond setting her sights to visit the Leroy's grave in the near future, Mary Jo is trying to find information on the other two that are buried with her beloved "Leroy," and why Santa Fe, NM was chosen as their eternal resting place. I (your editor) had heard, years ago, about a multiple 451st burial that was performed "out west," (since then I have seen other similar cases in other cemeteries) but the scuttlebutt was that New Mexico was selected because of it's proximity to all the families; C.E. Donoghue from San Francisco, CA, G.L. Hogan from Drumright, OK, and C.O. Roettger from Southgate, KY. But that seems not to be the case, since, at that time, the Roettger family was far removed from Santa Fe. It had to be by mutual consent that all families agreed to this arrangement. Or, was this the cemetery that the U.S. government chose for multiple (unidentifiable) burials?



Leroy had married prior to his military service and had father a child, born while he was overseas. His wife, Mildred Geneva (nee Ballard) Hogan, has long since left the area, remarried to a man named Bryant. As far as Mary Jo knows, no family member has had contact with her since her departure. Mary Jo would like to find her, as well as other family members of the deceased; Donoghue, Roettger and Ranville. Any information you could pass along, Mary Jo would be grateful to accept. She can be reached by calling: 918.428-6133, or you can mail to me and I will forward your information.

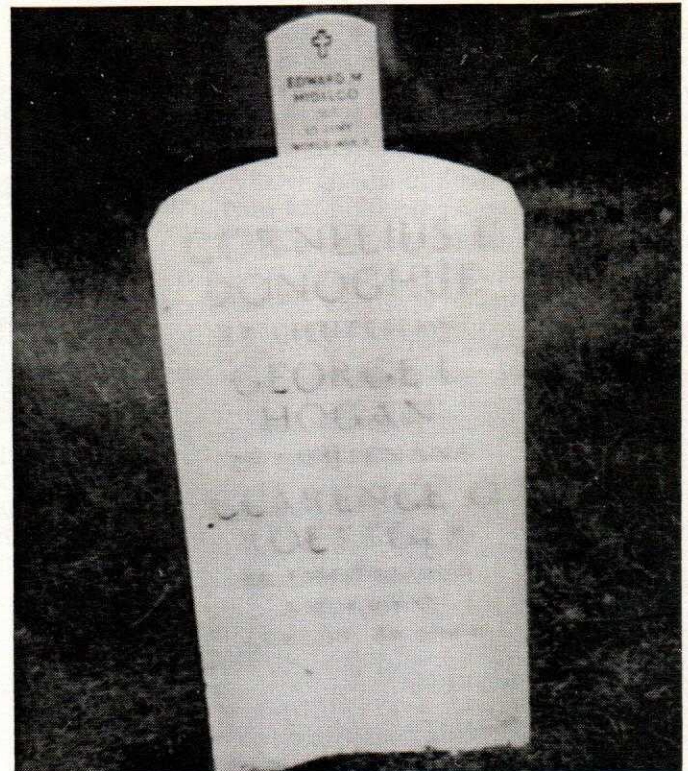
To further "flesh out" the happenings of 23 August 1944, let me relate that we lost (according to my



**S SGT RAYMOND A. RANVILLE GRAVE MARKER  
FAMILY PLOT IN FLINT, MICHIGAN**

records) 9 aircraft destroyed and more then 30 airmen as KIA.

From the **724th**: (listing by pilot's name) R.L. Beach - 2 KIA; J.H. Powers - 6 KIA; C.E. Donoghue - 4 KIA. From the **725th**: K.A. Whiting - 10 KIA; W.H. Makakowski - No KIAs; G.S. Panyity - 4 KIA. From the



**FINAL RESTING PLACE OF: DONOGHUE, HOGAN & ROETTGER  
SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY  
SANTE FE, NEW MEXICO**

**726th**: H.S. Clapp - All Evaded; A.R. Kozsuch - Unknown ... No MACR Filed. From the **727th**: R.J. Anderson - 4 KIA.

## FRIEND OF 451st SUCCUMBS

It was back in February 1995 that I first had contact with Marcel ERTEL, French Historian and Research Activist. His initial interest was to locate the living members of a crew that bailed-out near his home province, Loire. During our correspondence I got to know his family quite well. His wife, Mady, although not taking too active a part in his research, proved to be a staunch support for Marcel and all his efforts.

Now word had been received that Mady passed away on 24 November 1997. She was 65 years of age. She is survived by her husband, Marcel and children; Patrick, Guy and Anne Marie and several grandchildren. Now Mady lies forever in a spot that was one of the most beautiful places I've ever encountered; Saint Paul en Cornillon, (ancestral home of the ERTEL's). The village lies high up in the foothills of Massif Central mountain range. It was a spot that the first entourage of we Americans (Cappleman Crew & Guests) visited in 1995. (See Ad-Lib -Issue 26)



**MADY ERTEL  
d. NOVEMBER 1997**

Twice I have been fortunate to visit France in conjunction with Marcel's research. First time was to locate and encourage the George Cappleman Crew (727th) to visit France and join in on the placement of monuments to the events of the day they bailed out over France, 2 August 1944.

The second time proved more of a challenge as I had to "go Navy." This time Marcel asked me to find family members of Lieutenant Commander Brinkley Bass, killed in action during the invasion of Southern France. It was quite a challenge in locating cousins, but finally by locating one family member, it led to another and in time quite a few were found. Next came the "finding" of fellow pilots of his (Bass') Squadron aboard the aircraft carrier USS Kasaan Bay (CVE 69), as well as crewmen from that ship's cadre. As efforts along this line of research developed, I found that there was a Navy Destroyer named after the late Commander Bass; USS Brinkley Bass (DD-887). The search widened as an



association for this Destroyer was found and incorporated into plans for the commemorating ceremony and the placing of a monument to the late hero. In total close to 40 people journeyed to France for the ceremonies.

Throughout all these functions, Mady was always present. A quiet, unassuming woman that waited in the background while her husband received most of the recognition.

Mady was fortunate to see her husband, Marcel be appointed to the rank of Knight in



MARCEL ERTEL  
RECIPIENT OF: KNIGHT IN  
THE NATIONAL ORDER OF  
MERIT

the National Order of Merit by the French Air Force on 4 November 1997. A prestigious honor awarded to his benevolent research for aviators; missing and forgotten. But without Mady and his children, this would have been a hollow honor to all the effort that Marcel put forth.

To all who knew Mady, especially us visiting Americans; her warmth, her unassuming presence, her modest attitude will forever remain in our hearts.



MARCEL STANDING BESIDE  
MONUMENT HE ACHIEVED FOR  
CAPPLEMAN CREW  
(St. JULIAN - MOLHESABATE)



2nd MONUMENT PLACED FOR  
CAPPLEMAN CREW  
(LES VILLES DE RIOTORD)



VILLAGE OF SAINT PAUL EN CORNILLON

## LEVITY OF EDITORSHIP

*WOES OF AN EDITOR* - Getting out a newsletter is fun, but it's no picnic. If I print jokes, people say I am silly. If I don't, they say I am too serious. If I clip things from magazines, I am too lazy to write them myself. If I don't, then they say I am too proud of my own stuff. If I don't print contributions, I don't appreciate genius. If I do print them, the page is filled with junk. Now, very likely someone will say that I swiped this from someone else. I DID! Thanks to "The LAX Vanguard Retirees Newsletter."

*GRAMMATICAL/TYPOGRAPHICAL ERRORS* - There is much to be said for leaving bad enough alone. Especially when it comes to correcting typographical errors in the newsletter.

One that comes to mind is something like this: "Mike Morris, a defective on the police force ...." Mike demanded a retraction and correction. He got one. It read: "Mike Morris, a detective on the police farce ...." So, please excuse typo errors!



# OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

## SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Aho, Edwin J., 727th - 27 August 1997  
 Arnson, Sydney I., 726th - 17 September 1997  
 Babbitt, Edward S., 724th - 1998  
 Bear, Lester N., 727th - 3 November 1997  
 Bocker, Herbert M., 725th - 10 January 1994  
 Butts, Gordon K., 725th - 4 June 1998  
 Carlson, Robert E., 724th - August 1997  
 Carpenter, Harvey A., 724th - 15 July 1998  
 Chess, Edward S., 726th - 3 January 1997  
 Churchman, George F., 727th - 23 February 1998  
 Cindrich, Matthew A., 727th - 3 August 1998  
 Collins, Ward J., 725th - 14 July 1998  
 Derringer, Richard A., 725th - 18 May 1997  
 Deuble, Walter C., 726th - 12 January 1998  
 Dilella, Vincent J., 725th - 3 March 1998  
 Dobernic, Andrew J., 725th - 16 July 1998  
 Eckley, Harry C., 725th - 28 May 1994  
 Ennis, Chester H., 726th - 13 November 1997  
 Feyersen, Wilbur H., 727th - January 1987  
 Files, Edgar J., 727th - 6 December 1996  
 Fleming, Frank P., 727th - 17 August 1997  
 Friend, Chauncey M., 726th - 10 February 1995  
 Gallagher, Arthur L., 726th - 30 March 1998  
 Getz, Horton B., 724th - 10 September 1997  
 Gould, Francis L., 727th - 16 December 1991  
 Gunzburger, Werner J., 724th - March 1996  
 Hentrich, Leroy W., 727th - 11 April 1998  
 Howard, Frank A., 725th - Unknown  
 Kerres, Glenn A., 725th - 17 November 1997  
 Keyes, Karl E., 725th - 12 February 1998  
 Lehnert, John H., 726th - 30 January 1997  
 Marlatt, Fred, 727th - 16 May 1987  
 McConnell, George H., 724th - 20 May 1998  
 McCutchen, Charles W., 724th - 27 May 1997  
 Monti, Joseph L., 724th - March 1998  
 Mozley, Thomas N., 724th - 23 January 1995  
 Nelson, Barton E., 725th - 27 October 1998  
 Niederkorn, Edward S., 726th - 22 February 1998  
 Parten, Fernald H., 725th - 13 August 1994  
 Reeves, Earl J., 724th - 16 April 1998  
 Rhilinger, Robert T., 725th - 25 October 1997  
 Roemer, Donald P., 727th - Unknown  
 Santore, Salvatore A., 727th - 17 December 1996  
 Sears, Kearney R., 725th - 4 November 1997  
 Shehan, Harry A., 725th - 6 September 1997  
 Sheppard (aka Shapiro), Sherman, 725th - 22 January 1998  
 Shugarts, Clair A., 724th - 28 July 1993  
 Sniffen, Ted J., 724th - 24 April 1997  
 Sohn, John R., 726th - 9 January 1998  
 Sparby, Clifford M., 726th - 27 March 1997  
 Spencer, David M., 726th - 9 September 1998

Stack, Harold A., 726th - 25 August 1998  
 Stewart, Raymond B., 724th - 11 October 1997  
 Sydney, Abbott, 725th - 28 February 1998  
 Van Sickel, Wilburn F., 724th - 2 January 1997  
 Viau, Robert J., 726th - 6 April 1998  
 Wagner, Regis H., HDQ - 5 June 1997  
 Waite, Bruce C., 725th - 24 October 1997  
 Webb, Lloyd E., 725th - 4 October 1995  
 Westburg, Leslie J., 727th - 3 January 1997  
 Williams, Fred A., 727th - 19 May 1998

## MEMORIAL TRIBUTE

TO Harry Beegle - from wife, Mary  
 TO Robert Viau - from Harold Brinkmeier & Harold Ginsberg  
 TO Kearney Sears - from Thomas Bullock  
 TO Alfred Kalinka - from Robert Carringer  
 TO Howard Blum - from Paul Castoro  
 TO James Curtin - from James Cunningham  
 TO Crew of A.W. Johnson & W.C. Paddock - from Steve Cushner  
 TO All 451st Men (Then and Now) - from Keith Daudermann  
 TO John Doedyns - from wife, Marie  
 TO Wilbert Sunmann - from James Drumm  
 TO Allan Woodman & Frank Moreland - from Art Gallagher  
 TO Art Gallagher - from wife, Margie  
 TO Peter Massare - from Jack Jones & Edward Leahy  
 TO Stan Leiter - from wife, Florence  
 TO Barton E. Nelson - from Duane Maybay  
 TO Palmer Gums - from Dale Mayswinkle  
 TO Phil Zentz - from Harold McWilliams  
 TO Terrell Prewitt - from Art Morin  
 TO Murray Eskew - from Edward Nall  
 TO Jim Oravis - from wife, Doris  
 TO Bernard Clay & William Mitchell - from Ward Rathbone  
 TO Sal Santore - from wife, Marie  
 TO Fred Williams - from Harold Sellers  
 TO John Smelski - from wife, Audrey  
 TO Les Westberg - from George Tudor  
 TO Crew of Jolly Rogers - from Lewis Williams  
 TO Matt Cindrich - from sister, Anne Lesnieski  
 TO Irving Wallace - from A. Jay Woods

*REMEMBER: To place a Memorial Tribute to a buddy, friend or relative please submit a \$50 contribution in that persons name. Only one name, crew or section per donation, please.*



## COMMUNICATION BY LETTER & E.MAIL

Some special letters came into this office that I feel belong outside of the regular "Short Burst & Hang-fire" section. They are both revealing and poignant.

The first, written by Harold T. Bennett - 726th Radio Operator Gunner on William Slater's crew, gives an insight into something that many of us may be guilty of; incorrect data at the time of severe stress and personal anxiety. I know I found myself guilty, when I checked my personal journal against what I found out later in official records.

The second letter came from John W. Rutledge - Navigator on Walter E. Ross' crew, and is of a more personal nature. The death of Walter Ross has been eulogized now and again in the Ad-Lib. He was KIA on 14 February 1945. Now John Rutledge puts it into a more current feeling of remorse and respect. May we never forget!

And finally, via e-mail from Al Swierz - 727th Turret Specialist, came another touching and memorable contribution to what we're all about.

**\*\*\*From Harold Bennett\*\*\***

Attention: 451st Ad-Lib Editor

Hi,

I really enjoyed the publication and the comments. The Short Bursts and Hang-fires bring back a lot of memories.

I know of two 451st'ers who are no longer with us. One is Phillip Zentz. Phil lived in Thurmont, MD and I think attended every reunion. I went to the one in Dayton, OH and he was the only one there that I knew. Phil was in the ground support section of the 451st. He died in early 1997.

Another departee was Laverne C. Stout. Laverne was on William Slater's crew (which was also the crew that I was radio operator on). He was Belly Gunner and lived in St Louis, MO after the war. Laverne died in 1995. (Correction by Editor; According to Social Security Death Benefit Records, Laverne died 5 June 1993.)

In the Spring 1995 Issue of the Ad-Lib, on page 34, there are comments by Sid Winski regarding the crash of Lt. Hunt's plane. I disagree with all of the dates cited there, as to when the crash occurred. Enclosed is a portion of my write-up of my diary notes. I believe the date to be accurate as I kept my "little book" up to date.

[Harold Bennett's diary note ... February 15, 1944 ... Target was railroad marshalling yards at Piombino, Italy. The marshalling yards was destroyed by very good bombing. Flak was heavy to moderate and accurate. Winski's nose gunner was killed by flak. Weather was good. Time was 6 hours.

The early morning was frosty. Hunt's plane took off and was airborne until out of sight and then it crashed. Seven members of the ten man crew were killed. The reason for the crash was deemed to have been frost on the wing which interfered with the "lift" normally produced by the wingfoil. Thereafter, when there was any frost you can believe the wings were well swept.]

(Editor's comment; Sadly the dates that Harold had noted in his "little book" were incorrect (which, after

several exchanges of letters, he admits were in error, as was Al Roemer's date of 9 February (Issue 23, Page 32). The 451st flew NO combat mission on either the 9th or 15th of February 1944. The mission that Sid Winski referenced (8th February) is by all accounts right.)

In the same issue of the Ad-Lib, Page 22, you commented that on March 11th Lt Slater's crew, in Three Feathers was on the mission to Toulon, France. This is the way it went. About the time we sighted the French coast, one engine started throwing oil. Not wanting to go over the target with such a happening, we turned back and then a second engine started acting up. So the decision was made to go into Bastia, Corsica.

We landed there and the diagnosis was that one engine would have to be replaced. Since the B-24 was not their normal aircraft of expertise, they had to do it "by the book," and thus it took more time.

Meanwhile, they did not have housing for us on the base so we had to stay in Bastia. Just how the housing was arranged, I do not recall.

We did not have anything to do by way of duty while waiting for the (I believe) 10 days to pass while Three Feathers was being readied, so we found amusement by way of visiting with the guys at the US Navy PT Base there. The PT Base was maintained to pick up downed fighter pilots and bomber crews that went down in the sea nearby. The island of Elba was in sight of Bastia. If we had been there a little longer, I believe they would have taken us out on one of their missions. (They said that after about six months of pounding that you get in a high speed PT boat, your kidneys finally give up.

Another pastime was patronizing a small bar down close to the harbor. The only money we had was the \$50 each of us had in the escape pack of our parachutes. We converted most of it to Cognac with Creme de Menthe chasers. We fully expected to have to make good the used money at a later date, but "got home free," so to speak.

I do remember that Lt. Slater went wild boar hunting in the mountains. How he manage that, I do not recall - perhaps never knew.

Anyway, they finally had Three Feathers ready and we took off and headed to Italy. This was right around the time that the Group moved from Gioia del Colle to San Pancrazio.

When Slater called the tower for landing instructions, the operator was amazed as it had been assumed that we went into the sea. The base at Bastia was supposed to have let our base in Italy know where we were and why - but did not do so.

Notice of Missing in Action had been sent to our respective families in the States by the War Department. (I was back in the States on rehabilitation leave before the War Department finally let my family know that we were not MIA.

When we landed and went back to our old tent, we found another crew was living there, plus another crew had adopted our little dog, Vino (so named because when we bought her from a small Arab boy in Constantine, North Africa, she started to cry. Someone poured a



little wine into a metal coaster and she drank it and quieted down; so we named her VINO.) Incidentally, we brought her back to the States with us in the old desert tan B-24D. She got pregnant fooling around with those large Italian country dogs, and later, back in the State of Missouri, she birthed 5 huge puppies. The bloodline is probably still going around in the mid-west.

Slater's crew flew most of its missions in Three Feathers. I suppose we got her when Lt Winski got another plane.

Do you know what finally happened to Three Feathers? Did she make it back to the States? (*Editor's comment: Three Feathers was condemned on 20 September 1944, never to see the U.S. again.*)

When I started to write you, the purpose was to see if I am correct in that the next reunion is to be in Atlanta, GA in 1998. Is that so? And what would the dates be? There is a possibility that our Pilot, Lt Slater; our Copilot, Willard E. Green; Bombardier, Leon Stone; Nose Gunner, Ed Tormey; Tail Gunner, Eugene Stevens and me, Harold Bennett, Radio Operator, may be there. That would be six out of ten still around after over 50 years. Also, our Crew Chief Al Haggerty lives in Northern Florida and most likely would show too.

Hopefully the enclosed check will keep me on the mailing list.

Sincerely; (signed) Harold T. Bennett

**\*\*\*From John Rutledge\*\*\***

Attn: Bob Karstensen

Thank you so much for putting a picture of the grave site of Walter E. Ross in the Spring/Summer edition (Issue 28) of the "Ad-Lib." I was a navigator on his crew and liked and respected him very much. He was like a big brother to me, since I was 19 and he was an "Old Man" of 26. He could really fly that B-24. When he landed you didn't feel any rough spot, just the squeal of the tires.

He really loved his wife and children. We were delayed at Mitchell Field near New York City in early January 1945 by weather on our way overseas. His wife, Audrey, brought his son and their new baby to visit. I was asleep in my bunk when he returned and he woke me to tell me how great it was to see all of them and to hold their new baby. Five or six weeks later he was killed on our first combat mission.

Our crew was split up for that first mission. He flew as copilot with our gunners and an experienced pilot and bombardier on the first wave to attack Moosebierbaum, Austria. I flew with an experienced crew as navigator in the second wave. When WE returned safely, I couldn't wait to talk to Ross and our other crew members about the experience, but they were no where to be found. They WERE my new friends and fellow crewmembers and still no one could tell me anything. Finally they said Ross had been killed. A couple days later our copilot, Joe Wozniak, and I flew over to Bari, Italy to a Military Cemetery near there and attended his funeral. We had to identify his body and stood at attention and saluted while they played taps and lowered him into his grave. It's been fifty three years but I can still see the grey cloudy sky, the rows of white crosses, and hear the bugler playing "Taps."

Through the Ad-Lib printing one of her letters, I

spoke with Mrs Ross (now Audrey Wood) and thru her was able to contact five of our crew members: Sid Taub, Pete Pfohl, Chuck Sciuillo, John Hulser and Danny Marchi. Starting in 1992 we held annual reunions and continued them for four or five years and they were great. We hadn't seen each other since 1945, but it was like he had seen each other the week before .. except for the arthritis, etc that goes with being in our late sixties. We have since lost Sid Taub and we are all a little older so we may not get together this year. I missed a couple of those reunions but enjoyed everyone I attended.

I have always wanted to see Ross's grave and may never make it now, but thanks to you I have seen a picture of it. We could never locate our copilot, Joseph C. Wozniak, or our radioman, Edward J. Picciano. I'm hoping they may contact you. If you could help locate them it would be appreciated.

I'm proud of serving my country with the fine young men on our crew and serving with the 451st Bomb Group.

Thanks again for the picture of Ross's grave. It really moved me ... along with the picture of him with his son.

Sincerely, (signed) John W. Rutledge

**\*\*\*From Al Swierz\*\*\***

Subj: Ad Libs

From: allezoop@juno.com

To: bobk451@aol.com

Dear Bob:

I got all the Ad-libs you sent and it was absolutely amazing that after all these years, all of your documents have lifted veils of mystery about the 451st which I have been wondering about for over fifty years.

My old military indoctrination is such that I feel as though I am reading information which I should not be privy to. It is as looking into someone else's window at their private lives.

I am getting more of a feel about what it was to be a member of an air crew in combat. The letter from Audrey Ross Wood left me with a huge lump in my throat and a long-closed tear duct releasing their flows.

Dammit, Bob, what can we do to get across to the children and young parents of today the value of our knowledge of what can happen to young loving people when the world is allowed to go in the wrong direction and thus bring about the heartaches which so many endured during that war, For the living, their lives are changed forever. For the dead, their dreams remained unfulfilled.

I will be forever grateful to you for your extraordinary effort to mold the pieces of the 451st Bomb Group history and make them available to all of us who were part of the Group. I am really, truly, proud to have been a part of the 451st. It is not dead, it has been brought back to life by you; a dedicated soldier.

The story about Paul Currier dying aboard the USS Thresher hit me hard, also. I had thought that most of the memories of the people of the 451st were gone forever, but I recognized Paul from his picture and for the first time in over fifty years, I recalled the many moments we mingled with each other and shared a war. He was one of the most likeable people I ever knew, and through your columns, I at least shared the knowledge of



what happened to him. There must be hundreds and hundreds of stories unsaid and unwritten. We cannot share a war and then walk away from it COLD, without wondering, and wondering some more.

One lives with a couple hundred people and only gets to really know a few of them, but the few we



AL SWIERZ, ELMER SCRAFFORD, JOHN COPLEY, 2 Unknowns  
"It's Over Over Here"

remember made some kind of difference in our lives. Without a bonding there would be no reason to remember, no one to share a sense of achievement with when the war was finally brought to a close - and then to scattered all of us without us having a chance to savor the victory as a unit ... until now.

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

*Con't from Issue 29*  
27 April 1944

Dear Mabel: borrowed this paper so now I can get off a newsletter, as distinguished from a love letter, to the one I love. First about me, then about the interesting news you wrote in the letters I got yesterday. April showers, and I mean REAL rain! As luck would have it, the tent drips right over my cot, so for today, or while it is raining at least, I had to shift the bed over to a dry spot.

Last evening I pulled guard, and didn't have time to write, but the shift I had was the early one and all I had to look after was our Club and Day Room, both of which were occupied until a half hour before I was relieved. After closing time the liquor stock has to be watched with an eagle eye, and the new furniture in our Day Room. The drinks we can buy are O.K. with quite a selection to choose from - ordinary red wine or "vino bianco," vermouth (Ernie's favorite, 'cause it's sweet) and cherry brandy, cognac, gin, rum, and an Italian whiskey that is not very good. There is also something called Mandanorie, which I have never tasted.

The Day Room is a tent next to the Club with a huge table in the center and a dozen chairs made in our welding shop. Plus, we have five upholstered chairs, brand new. The Squadron bought a big combination radio and record player, but we need two tubes before it will work.

This morning we bought our rations; four candy bars and a bottle of Coke, besides the usual smokes, gun, etc.. The rain isn't so uncomfortable at this campsite due to the grass, and also being up on a

hill it drains rapidly. As long as we keep the heavy trucks off the campgrounds we won't have ruts and mud to wade through. I believe the good weather will be permanent soon anyway, they we may be cussing the dust, HI.

Excerpt from 1 May 1944

Was paid yesterday and boy was the wind whistling around here! A real gale, between thirty and forty miles per hour. Blew a few tents down, including our eating shelter and the N.C.O. Club, but the liquor stock wasn't broken and the place is open for land office business again tonight.

4 May 1944

Dear Mabel: Hi there sweetheart, here 'tis seven o'clock after a busy day, including two special items on our menu. 1) Ice cream at noon. 2) Genuine hot dogs for supper! Both of these delicacies for the first time in our overseas history. Pretty good food, EH, baby?

Have lots of your letters in front of me, nice long ones full of news. Gee how I love to read about what you and the family are doing. And how all the fellows at work do nice things for my cute wife. Those verses and jokes are the life of the party.

It's gotten so when a guy hands me my mail he says, "Let me read the jokes when you are through." They all kid me about the naughty girl I married, hi. And of course I kid right back saying how worried I was over where you obtained the "material" for the stories. Keep 'em coming, honey.

Some of your letters are still on the way so there are a few blank spaces - such as the reference to the Ridgeway kids and our hammock. But it will





be clear when the mail finally comes.

The Wallior boys are no longer here, so if you did succeed in contacting their wives, it will be similar to Mrs. Adams, as you and they are the better halves of fellows who USED to be together, hi.

The new tentmates are so much different than the quiet Wallior twins - one is an Italian from New York, just full of stories about his civilian life as a big hotel chef, as well as Army experiences at his various stations back in the States. Us old-timers sure fill him up with tall tales of our desert camps, as he didn't leave the U.S. until this March and is new to his work here.

The other guy is a little slim Gent with a slick mustache. He's been overseas longer than any of us, most of his time in England. His pet hobby seems to be drinking, but when he gets "happy" his talk is a riot to listen to - facial expressions and hand movements emphasize his horror, amazement, embarrassment, etc.. Quite a nice man to have around. These two (Joe the ex-chef and Bob the veteran), are joined by John Keefer (the Pennsylvania guy who lived with Gabe and me back in Egypt) and "Hollywood" Kistler to make up the members of Ernie's exclusive fraternity. Cpl Kistler is one of the laziest men alive, be we occasionally get him to carry water or light the fire, etc..

Laxalt and Tanner were wondering around town on pass a few days ago, and although they were trying to reach our camp, they would not have found it had not one of our drivers not spotted them and brought 'me out. Both look fine, and I had a chance to talk to them during the noon hour. In the P.M. I had a trip to make. Larry Kuney took a snapshot of me, Mabel, but hasn't had the films processed bet - You will get a look soon, you bet.

\*\*\*\*COMMENT -- Date Unknown \*\*\*\*

The first crash of the 451st Bomb Group at Castelluccio was during a takeoff, when the loaded ship got off the ground, retracted it's landing gear and then bounced it's belly on the very end of the metal planking, sliding down a slight hill. It narrowly missed an anti-aircraft gun emplacement, and carried away a tent that was home to the gun crew, then churned to a halt about a hundred yards from the 60th hardstand where some mechanics were working on other planes being repaired. One of our welders, Sgt Brochini, ran towards the wreck, which disgorged the flight personnel from all exits not buried in the dirt. A man jumped from the top of the wing, and in doing so, broke his leg and couldn't join his mates in running away from the fire that was just starting. Brochini sprinted in and carried the guy to safety.

*(Editor's Plea ... Does this match the Lt's Hunt/Neiderkorn [726th] crash on 8 February 1944?)*

NOTE ... The above was written in 1978 from memory and should be corrected in two respects. Two "c's" in the man's name and the actual rescue was by jeep, not afoot. Albert Brochini was visited in 1981 and his wife Riva got out the Soldier's Medal Al was awarded for risking his life to save another. Armed Forces Radio operated a station in Foggia and one of their announcers interviewed Sgt Brochini, sending the

recording to his hometown of Manteca, Calif. for broadcast.

(Postdated Comments from 19 February 1945 - Ten months later)

Yesterday, Sunday, we held a dress formation in camp. All the boys dressed in O.D.s and shined shoes to have a "Brass Hat" decorate four of our gang. Lucky Ernie was on duty and didn't have to attend, so his shoes are still dull, hi. Two fellows got the Soldier's Medal for risking their lives to save other men; one of the "incidents" took place way back in Egypt early in 1943. The other was here in camp. The other two received Bronze Stars for exceeding, or excelling, normal performance in their work and duty - also back in Africa.

11 May 1944

Darling Mabel: Well Peanut, two or three days have passed without my writing, busy days with various jobs to do, plus a U.S.O. Show and a compulsory training film to attend on Malaria control. And some night work, too! With a shift of guard duty thrown in.

I reckon summer is officially here as sun tan uniforms are in order. We turned in our fur-lined clothes, hi. The medics have supplied me with a bottle of eye drops to combat the hay fever, and the stuff seems to work very well. Still sneeze and weep at times, but am just accepting that as natural, even back in San Anselmo Ernie would feel the same, hi.

Yesterday your letter of the 25th of April came, telling of receiving the last money order. This month I didn't send any - loaned out twice what I was paid and then lost the little bit I had left. Reuben spent so much on pass, you would think him a rich soul, but I can never do that. The single guys have fun, bit I have to have my Mrs. besides me ... or nearby, hi.

24 May 1944

Dear Mabel: At last! Time to write a letter to my best girl. I intended to spend an evening at home last night to catch up on this here stuff, but this is what happened.

After a dull morning's work, at noon chow I found none other than Gabe and Steve, visiting on pass. It rained during the afternoon and that meant playing pinochle with our old friends. One time I was called out to work and got soaked to the skin, but after changing into dry clothes, we went on with the card game.

Supper over we sat around and exchanged rumors, then as they were hitching rides back to their camps, and the rain had stopped, I took a jeep to deliver them out on the highway. Well, it wound up by me driving all the way to their "front doors," so to speak, and the evening was long gone when I did return to my happy home. Gabe looks find and is still loafing around the office, while Steve was recently upped to Sergeant, when his schooling was completed. (That's the same course I'm trying to take, hi.)

Our camp is improving daily with several stone buildings being constructed and some outfits are lucky enough to rate prefabricated wooden jobs. By the way, I had the dubious honor of hauling those knocked-down affairs out here from the depot, which presented a few

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



clearance problems, but with a little luck we managed to deliver, hi. Tightest spot was squeezing under the power cable on an electric railroad, which was one wire even your demon Corporal didn't dare to rip down!

Had me quite a few meals with an Engineering outfit. I'm always borrowing a spoon and pie tin, or any old tools to eat with. Good guys, all hard workers, and when they are building or doing maintenance, you see them hard at it night and day. However, the supply point is run on regular office hours and if a load isn't ready at eleven o'clock, we have to wait until one o'clock to finish it. What the heck? I've learned lots about waiting in this Army! Got me one letter today, Aunt Mae's, and right now Keefer is busy reading Ernie Pyle while three of us are writing. And Hollywood Kistler snoozes, his usual pastime. The hours we sleep never seem to be enough for him. I wonder what will happen in the morning when we have to roust him out at 5:30? Turning in blankets for cleaning and we have to get 'em all collected by six o'clock.

Auntie Mae asked when the sketches would arrive, the ones copied from our photos. I guess I'll just have to bring them home myself. Sorry to disappoint Dede and the rest, but the regulations don't allow names of cities to be mailed. The artist put the name of the place under his signature. I erased as hard as I could, but it still can be read; darn it!

27 May 1944

Dear Mabel: Hi there Peanut, how are you getting along? Here I sit drowning my sorrows in Coca Cola while our mosquito abatement man sprays the tent with some evil smelling gas. Keeps the insects on the run, anyway. Last night we were entertained by a U.S.O. show, all the performers, except the M.C., were Italians; musicians, dancers and acrobats, included. Some of the girls looked like they belonged on the stage of that Kearney Street burlesque "flea house." (The one with peanut shells on the floor and jugs of wine being passed around in the audience, hi!) Speaking of wine, our Club was named Vino Villa after a contest for suitable names. The winner was a lad who never drinks, even coffee is too much for his tummy. Well, he won \$10.00 for thinking that up and the club is busy every night. Prices have come down because there was too much profit, hi.

This show business is sure coming fast and often with movies or stage shows almost every night somewhere around the area. If not in the 60th camp, then in some other. A couple of nights a week there is a ball game to watch, or some guys inveigle Ernie into a pinochle game, so the letter writing is slowing down. But I think about you every day, Peanut, and you should blush if you knew what thoughts! Just to look at your pictures makes me want to swim home, no foolin'.

\*\*\*\*\*COMMENT\*\*\*\*\*

The refueling crew in the 60th consisted of seven men. The equipment included one oil truck, four 2,000 gallon trailers (each with a cab-over Autocar tractor), and two 4,000 gallon trailers hauled by a bigger Biederman tractor. As there were four Bomb Squadrons on the field, one of the small gas trucks was assigned to work with each flying outfit - answering calls from their Crew Chiefs, or Engineering Officer.

In May of 1944 a decision was made to transfer this

equipment to the individual Squadrons, to be operated by their personnel. The 60th kept the large tankers and oil truck and we had other Autocars used for hauling shop trailers and flatbeds. Being the oldest, the tractors lost in this swap were the ones from Hamilton Field days - enclosed steel top cabs, full doors and roll up windows, spotlights in roof, etc.. Newer trucks had canvas tops, side curtain, etc., but more powerful engines.

I was switched to full time crash crew work, using the two C-2 wrecking trucks, a Roustabout crane tractor and a Cletrack rubber tread tow tractor; plus flatbed trailers for hauling. In my letters to Mabel, restrictions on details led to some hard ways to describe events; "clearing up a mess," for example.

30 May 1944

Dear Mabel: Those little Brownie cards are sure cute, Peanut, all those little gals resemble my Mabel running around doing things, hi. We just finished supper and there is a ball game next on the program. Had a busy day working as usual. Sorry honey, I can't give details of my job, but anyway the duties vary, some around the base, some on the road and occasionally we are even loaned out to other outfits. Wherever there is any excitement, that's where Dickson and Cummins show up, hi.

I dug up my sun glasses and am wearing them now to help a bit with my hay fever. Quite a few flies are showing up, but the mosquitoes simply don't have a chance with so many fellows after 'em, hi. I'm off to see our ball team win another game - more later.

Later is right! June 2nd now. Instead of watching that game, as I expected, the boss rounded me up and we worked until two A.M. clearing up a little mess. The next morning more of the same, and pay call came about 4:30 - also mail. No letters, but two swell boxes. One of soup and the other of drawing materials. This new work of mine is liable to come up at any hour, so I sleep whenever I can, sometimes even in the afternoon. This morning it was a four o'clock "roll out," Ah me!

Boy is it hot here today! Sitting in my undershirt, tent sides tied up and thinking about taking a shower, hi. John Keefer got drunk last night and it was quite a job getting him to bed - had a laughing jag on. He thought everything was comical as hell! However he wasn't sick and didn't have any hangover today, lucky guy, huh?

Last night I took a couple of Second Louies into town where they caught a ride back to their base. They had been visiting one of our Corporals. They all came from San Francisco. The fun was watching the two of them in chow line with mess kits, borrowed from other doggies. Something unknown in an Officer's Mess. In fact it was the first time in their Army life that they had to assemble the grub all in one pan and lid. They worked hard to keep the various foods separated, hi.





# "LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49TH FIGHTER SQUADRON

## (Continued - 6th Installment By Dr. Royal C. Gilkey

August 5, 1944 witnessed a change of command in the Squadron. Appointed to be the new C.O. Was Capt. Louis W. Kundraht\*, succeeding Maj. Nathan M. Abbott, relieved. A former bomber pilot was assigned to the 49th Fighter. He was 1st Lt. Ernie D. Latham from Forth Worth, Tex.

\*\*Capt Kundraht was from San Pedro, Cal. By virtue of his appointment, he became the 14th Commanding Officer of the 49th Fighter Squadron.\*\*

Squadron pilots were sent on a long mission to France on August 6, 1944. Their assignment was to dive-bomb the airdrome at Valence, a city along the Rhone River (Fleuve Rhone) between Lyon to the north and Marseille to the south (on the Mediterranean coast). The P-38s were armed with clusters of 20 single-pound bombs. Sixteen Squadron "Lightnings" took off at 0700 hrs. As many reached the target at 1045 hrs. Ten got back to base at 1340 hrs. Five others returned at 1700 hrs. One landed at a friendly airfield in north Corsica.

The 49th Fighter Squadron led the other P-38s on the mission. Because of an accident on the 1st Fighter Group's runway, rendezvous could not be effected as planned. Contact was made later, however, with the 1st Fighter Group along Italy's west coast (without diverging from the original route). Upon arriving at the Valence A/D, the P-38s launched their bombs, which landed on the northeast and southeast sections and struck a dispersal zone in the west. The enemy was caught napping with five planes (three of which were transports, plus a couple of JU-88s) in the southeast area. Additional aircraft may have been around, too. Two flights of P-38s led by Lt. Moses J. Long (exact rank & hometown not indicated) and 2nd Lt. Wayne R. Woody (Tacoma, Wash.) zeroed in on this area and destroyed three enemy planes for sure (& very likely more), while badly damaging two others. Another flight leader, Oliver Bryant (Wilmar, Cal.) effectively destroyed one of them and probably destroyed the other. Flying in Lt. Bryant's flight was Lt. Paul J. Ragusa (East Elmhurst, N.Y.) who destroyed a JU-88. Col. Daniel S. Campbell (San Antonio, Tex.) was the leader of another flight that did a job on the enemy. He and the other pilots with him found a quartet of JU-88s dispersed in the northeast sector and proceeded to shoot them up, destroying one in the process. One transport was believed by a pilot to be a C-47, but the general consensus was that it really was a German craft. As many as 3 1/2 tons of explosives were dumped on the fields' areas for aircraft dispersal. From an altitude of 6,000 feet on the average, the "Lightnings" initiated their dive-bombing, releasing their loads at about 2,000 feet. Dust and

debris caused by exploding fragmentation-bomb clusters dropped by the P-38s rendered evaluating the results of strafing out of the question. The airdrome was thoroughly sprayed by the "Lightnings'" nose-guns, however. Fortunately, the attackers encountered no hindering ack-ack fire, although flak arose from another airdrome at Plan de Dieu. All told, it was a good day from the standpoint of victories achieved. A half-dozen enemy planes were caught and destroyed on Valence airdrome before any of them could get into the air. Also, one enemy plane was probably destroyed and five others badly damaged on the ground. The ground-"kills" were impressive. Credit must go to Colonel Campbell for leading a very successful mission.

.... (Editor: From Briefing & Operational orders regarding the August 6th mission; 1.) The importance of today's mission is emphasized by the fact that General Eaker had directed that EVERY bomber of the Air Force capable of participation in this attack will be airborne. A logical conclusion is the possibility of imminent invasion thru Southern France.

2.) A successful attack on the MIRAMAS M/Y by the 49th Wing in combination with the attacks by other Wings on the TARASCOM, ARIES, GIVORS and ST. RAMBERT RR bridges and the AVIGNON west bridge, should interdict almost all travel on the E-W RR lines south of Lyons. The importance of this mission is emphasized by the fact that maximum effort is being employed by all Wings.

Only specified alternates are to be bombed. NO targets of opportunity to be attacked. No bombs will be jettisoned over French territory. Bombing to be visual only. Do not bomb unless target is positively identified.

(Ed ... The 451st losses, on this mission were zero. Warnings of possible German single engine fighters were issued, but very limited in number. 47 flak guns were reported to be in range of our aircraft over target.)

Note should be taken that August 6, 1944 marked the second anniversary of the 49th Fighter Squadron overseas. Of course, there had to be some kind of celebration. Refreshments (including the liquid variety) were enjoyed by Squadron personnel. Even Betty, the Red Cross girl was on hand with coffee and doughnuts. In fact, her organization staged a show in front of the "Castle" at the base. It really amounted to a gala occasion, enabling officers and men to throw off some of the heaviness of war. As a kind of extension, the next day (Aug. 7, 1944) saw a delegation of Squadron personnel (including Lts. Royal C. Gilkey from S-2 & Frank Cupo from S-4 [Supply]) going off to rest camp in Rome. While in Italy's "Eternal City," the rest-





campers went their several ways, enjoying themselves in a veritable Roman holiday while they could. All too soon, they would be having to return to wartime duties on the other side of the peninsula, if not in the skies. Of course, the tales of their adventures would be swapped.

An escort mission was launched August 7, 1944. Rendezvous with bombers from the 5th and 55th Wings was set at Strani in Germany. Target for the day was the synthetic petroleum refineries in the German city of Blechhammer. Fourteen Squadron "Lightnings" took off at 0924 hours, but three of them returned early (one as an escort). Actual rendezvous with the 55th Wing took place at 48~15' N. 17~35' E., which was south of Strani. That happened to be the farthest the bombers penetrated. The time was 1145 hrs (which was five minutes before schedule), and the altitude, 24,000 feet. Thereafter, the P-38s escorted their "Big Brothers" southward to Italy's Adriatic coast seaward of Termoli. Departure was then made at 10,000 feet, the time being 1405 hrs. No aerial resistance was offered to the main formation, but two pilots of the early returns told of seeing "bogies," five in number, east of the Croatian capital of Zagreb in north-central Yugoslavia. A couple of enemy planes gave chase to two of the early returns just east of Drevnic. Anti-aircraft fire was seen over Gyor located south of the Danube River border of Hungary. Haze covered the Adriatic Sea. It was solid overcast (with thunder showers) from Yugoslavia's Adriatic coast to Hungary's Lake Balaton. Rarely encountered 8,000-foot high thunderhead tops reached to 25-30,000 feet. It was clear, however, over the farthest point of penetration at rendezvous. Eleven Squadron P-38s touched down on Triolo Landing Ground at 1420 hours. They had flown third position in the Group, their total mileage being 1025 miles. The long mission was marked by a change in Squadron - and Flight-leadership during its course.

..... Editor: Normal effort B-24s each 451st BG, 461st BG and 484th BG will attack BLECHHAMMER SOUTH SYNTHETIC OIL PLANT on 7 August 1944. This is Plan "B."

**BOMBER RENDEZVOUS:** 484th and 461st BG will line rendezvous behind the 451st BG when 451st BG flies over BOVINO on TC of 331~ at 0741B Lead Gp will depart via CASALNUOVO. Rendezvous altitudes 7,000, 8,000, 9,000 feet.

**ESCORT:** Seven Gps fighters will provide penetration to target, and withdrawal cover for bombers going to BLECHHAMMER Area. Fighters will also provide chaff dispensing A/C for 49th Wg. Fighters will employ maximum effort.

Ed ... we recorded no losses on this mission.

The next day, 8 August 1944, saw no operational flying. Base personnel carried on their usual duties. There were comings and goings in connection with rest camp and furlough assignments to Capri and Viesta.

Editor ... So was the case with the 451st BG; no mission was flown.

August 9, 1944 produced a fighter-escort mission to Hungary, the target being Tokol airdrome at Budapest, the capital of the country. Takeoff for 15 of the Squadron's "Lightnings" occurred at 0842 hrs., the pilots flying in the second position within the 14th Fighter Group.

They made rendezvous a little south of the Danube River at 23,000 feet, the time being 1021 hours. The coordinates for rendezvous were 45~10' N. 19~30' E. In disregard to the planned I.P., the bombers flew northeast of the target and then had to turn back on it at an angle of 210 degrees. Such an axis of attack was a curious variation from what had been briefed. Whatever the reason, our pilots reached the target area and remained over it for half an hour (from 1100-1130 hours). The bombers unloaded their bombs at 1115 hours, pot-holing the airdrome and setting some four or five planes on fire. No aerial resistance was encountered. The pilots reported a lot of flak over the target. It was both accurate and intense. Flak was also seen over Mostar in Bosnia, Yugoslavia. Sizable fires from burning oil, rising to 20,000 feet, were seen at Gyor in Hungary. As many as seven river barges were observed lining Danube River banks (45~14' N. 19~25' E.) at 1025 hours, looking like small rectangular boxes from 24,000 ft. A 5/10 middle cumulus coverage of Yugoslavia's mountains and sea haze over the Adriatic contrasted with CAVU (clear & visibility unlimited) at the target. All 15 P-38s got back safely to base at 1:30 p.m. One pilot experiencing mechanical trouble was obliged to land powered by only one engine at the end of the thousand-mile mission. Sortie credit went to each pilot.

Editor ... The 49th Wing, that day, bombed the Almasfuzito Oil Refinery in Hungary. The Wing was led by the 461st, with the 451st and the 484th trailing. Although we were briefed for some 75 to 100 enemy fighters enroute, no encounters were recorded, and with no known flak emplacements at target area, we returned to base unscathed. No losses.

An even longer mission was flown to Ploesti, Rumania on August 10, 1944, the 47th Wing being accorded close-escort support by accompanying P-38s. Petroleum refineries there were the main target. Also, oil facilities were struck at Speranza and Unirea. These places were all part of the Ploesti (Ploiesti) petroleum-producing complex. Flak was thrown up at the attacking bombers. Enemy planes were spotted north of the target area but offered no challenge.



STANDING L-R: KACENA (R. NAV), UNKNOWN, BYERS (NAV), HUGHES (BOMB), TUNEY (PILOT), EATON (COMMAND PILOT) KNEELING: UNKNOWN, PETROVIC (GUNNER), REST UNKNOWN

Editor ... This mission was to be the 100th mission for the 451st. Order of flight over the Zenia Oil



*Refinery: 484th, 461st and 451st. No losses were reported, although some 60 enemy aircraft were known to be in the area. Flak was, of course: heavy, accurate and intense. Some 113 guns at the primary and perhaps some 17 enroute. The returning planes were greeted by a large turnout of base personnel. Colonel Eaton, with an elite crew, led the mission in A/C #13.*

Change was in the air at Triolo Landing Ground on August 11, 1944. Something was afoot and people were a'buzz. Echelon personnel were occupied with making arrangements enabling missions to be flown with little notice. A new setting awaited pilots and their ground support.

## LLOYD C. NELSON'S COMBAT JOURNAL

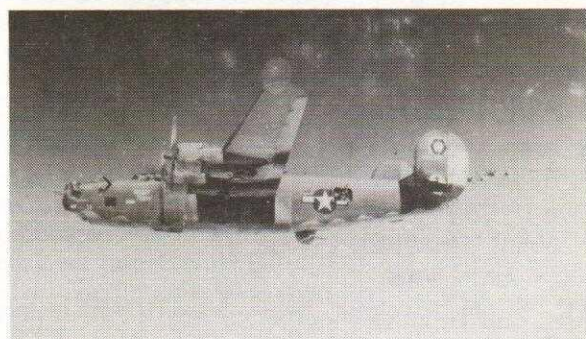
### (S/SGT RADIO OPERATOR GUNNER - 726th)

#### Crew Make-up

Wesley L. Lindley; Pilot  
 Richard B. Varnum; Copilot  
 Robert C. Pfeilsticker; Navigator  
 Louis E. Sugarman; Bombardier  
 Wilbert J. Kasper; AEG  
 Lloyd C. Nelson; ROMG  
 Howard S. Holten; Lower Turret  
 Frank B. Allen; Nose Turret  
 Martin A. Aschenbrenner; Upper Turret  
 Carless C. Spencer; Tail Turret

MISSION TIME - 7:30 hours

COMMENTS - First mission 2 days after arrival in Italy; also fired at enemy fighters.



REDDY TEDDY IN FLIGHT  
 (NOTE TAIL MARKINGS FOR 47th WING)



FIRST MISSION AS CREW (20 APR 44)  
 STANDING L to R: VARNUM, LINDLEY, SUGARMAN,  
 PFEILSTICKER, KASPAR  
 KNEELING: ASHENBRENNER, SPENCER, ALLEN, HOLTOM,  
 NELSON

#### MISSION #1

DATE - April 13, 1944  
 TARGET - Budapest, Hungary (Tokol A/D)  
 A/C - 35 B-24s  
 ESCORT - None  
 TONNAGE DROPPED - 89.5 Tons, 500# Bombs  
 ENEMY A/C - 10 ME-109s, 5 FW-190s, 5 JU-88s in target area.  
 FLAK - Moderate to intense, heavy barrage type (76 guns).  
 RESULTS - Target well covered by bomb hits; unable to assess full damage due to smoke.  
 SHIP - Ready Teddy .. 087  
 SORTIES - 2; total 2

#### MISSION #2

DATE - April 16, 1944  
 TARGET - Brasov Airdrome, Rumania  
 A/C - 32 B-24s  
 ESCORT - 10 P-38s  
 TONNAGE DROPPED - 27.75 tons, Frag clusters  
 ENEMY A/C - 1 JU-88, 4 ME-109s  
 FLAK - Moderate to intense, very accurate and heavy (24 to 48 guns).  
 RESULTS - Reported/rumored that hydraulic fluid covered lead bombardiers bombsight at target.  
 SHIP - Ice Cold Katie II .. 541  
 SORTIES - 1; total 3  
 MISSION TIME - 6 hours .. Total 13:30 Hrs.

#### MISSION #3

DATE - April 17, 1944  
 TARGET - Belgrade, Yugoslavia (Zemun A/D)  
 A/C - 37 B-24s  
 ESCORT - 50 P-38s  
 TONNAGE DROPPED - 79.25 Tons, Frags  
 ENEMY A/C - 2 ME-109s  
 FLAK - Moderate to intense, very accurate at target and enroute (24 guns).  
 RESULTS - A/D well covered with frags, hanger line hit, barracks burning, 4 A/C destroyed including 1 six engine ME-323, many other A/C believed damaged.  
 SHIP - Flabbergasted Fanny .. 242



**SORTIES - 1; total 4**

**MISSION TIME - 6:00 Hours .. Total 19:30**

**COMMENTS -** Rough flak at 12,000 ft enroute back over coast, 25 to 30 holes in ship & some plenty close, such as near waist window.



**MISSION #4**

**DATE - April 20, 1944**

**TARGET - Ferrara M/Y, Italy**

**A/C - 37 B-24s**

**ESCORT - 25 P-47s**

**TONNAGE DROPPED - None**

**ENEMY A/C - None**

**FLAK -** Slight Inaccurate, heavy from vicinity of target (36 guns).

**RESULTS -** No bombs dropped, cloud cover 10/10 at 10,000 ft.

**SHIP -** Old Taylor .. 111

**SORTIES - 1; total 5**

**MISSION TIME - 5:10 .. Total 24:40**

**COMMENTS -** First mission as a complete crew.

**MISSION #5**

**DATE - April 23, 1944**

**TARGET - Bad Voslau A/D, Austria**

**A/C - 39 B-24s**

**ESCORT - 40 P-38s**

**TONNAGE DROPPED - 79.5 Tons, Frags**

**ENEMY A/C - 7 ME-109s, 3 FW-190s in target area. Very aggressive.**

**FLAK -** Moderate, Inaccurate & Heavy (46 guns)

**RESULTS -** Target area well covered. Aiming point covered with bombs & also entire field.

**SHIP -** Small Fry .. 429

**SORTIES - 2; total 7**

**MISSION TIME - 7:20 .. Total 32:00**

**MISSION #6**

**DATE - April 24, 1944**

**TARGET - Bucharest M/Y Rumania**

**A/C - 38 B-24s**

**ESCORT - 40 P-38s**

**TONNAGE DROPPED - 89 Tons, 500# bombs**

**ENEMY A/C - 25 ME-109s & FW-190s. Very aggressive in target area.**

**FLAK -** Intense, inaccurate heavy barrage type. Disrupted by "window" as to accuracy (108 guns).

**RESULTS -** Aiming point hit directly with string of bombs. Center of M/Y hit well. Much damage to rolling stock.

**SHIP -** Old Tub .. 229

**SORTIES - 2; total 9**

**MISSION TIME - 8:00 .. Total 40:00**

**MISSION #7**

**DATE - April 28, 1944**

**TARGET - Orbetello Lake, Seaplane Base**

**A/C - 39 B-24s**

**ESCORT - 40 P-38s**

**TONNAGE DROPPED - 88.75 Tons, 500# Bombs**

**ENEMY A/C - None**

**FLAK -** Slight, inaccurate, heavy (16 guns).

**RESULTS -** Some bombs in target area, may short of aiming point, visual observations & photos unable to plot accurate results due to cloud coverage.

**SHIP -** Old Tub .. 229

**SORTIES 1; total 10**

**MISSION TIME - 6:00 .. total 46:00**

**MISSION #8**

**DATE - April 29, 1944**

**TARGET - Toulon Sub Pens, France**

**A/C - 36 B-24s**

**ESCORT - 100 P-38s & P-51s**

**TONNAGE DROPPED - 92 tons, 1,000# Bombs**

**ENEMY A/C - None**

**FLAK -** Intense, Accurate, Heavy in target area.

**RESULTS -** Photos show hits on munition factory, adjacent buildings & nearby M/Y. Smoke & smudge pots obscured aiming point towards which 2nd attack unit were to bomb.

**SHIP -** Old Tub .. 229

**SORTIES - 1; total 11**

**MISSION TIME - 8:00 .. Total 54:35**

**MISSION #9**

**DATE - April 30, 1944**

**TARGET - Alessandria M/Y, Italy**

**A/C - 39 B-24s**

**ESCORT - 18 P-38s**

**TONNAGE DROPPED - 89.75, 500# Bombs**

**ENEMY A/C - None**

**FLAK -** Enroute, slight, inaccurate at Remini, Parma & Genoa

**RESULTS -** Many hits on center of M/Y. Munitions factory next to M/Y has direct hit. M/Y covered with debris on withdrawal of this Group.

**SHIP -** Old Tub .. 229

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



**SORTIES** - 1; total 12

**MISSION TIME** - 6:50 hours .. Total 61:25

**COMMENTS** - Practice mission flown in Thunder Mug (#475) on May 4, 1944.



**THE FAMOUS 451st PICTURE "OVER PLOESTI"**

### MISSION #10

**DATE** - May 5, 1944

**TARGET** - Ploesti O/R

**A/C** - 39 B-24s

**ESCORT** - Unknown

**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 92 Tons, 500# bombs

**ENEMY A/C** - 15 FW-190s, 5 ME-109s; Firing rockets, also.

**FLAK** - Intense, Accurate at Altitude. (194 guns) Fair for deflection, heavy, also white rocket flak. Busted our pilots windshield.

**RESULTS** - Visual reports, hits on oil refinery. Smoke obscured photos & most of visual.

**SHIP** - Big Mogul .. 078

**SORTIES** - 2; total 13

**MISSION TIME** - 7:30 hours .. Total 68:55

**COMMENTS** - Always rough, longest length of time in flak. Smoke rose 18,000 feet from target and could be seen for over 200 miles away. A5 went out on ship and nearly turned us over (no harnesses on either .. WHEW).

### MISSION #11

**DATE** - May 6, 1944

**TARGET** - Pitesti MY, Rumania

**A/C** - 37 B-24s

**ESCORT** - 2 Groups P-38s

**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 37.5 tons, 500# bombs

**ENEMY A/C** - 6

**FLAK** - None at target, some enroute

**RESULTS** - M/Y completely covered and line leading northwest out of yard is out. Roundhouse hit. Oil cars in M/Y probably hit.

**SHIP** - Screamin Meemie 1 .. 082

**SORTIES** - 2; total 16

**MISSION TIME** - 7:15 hours.. Total 76:10

**COMMENTS** - Guinness' Crew loses 2 engines over target and made home field only after throwing out everything possible.

### MISSION #12

**DATE** - May 10, 1944

**TARGET** - Weiner Neustadt Airdrome, Austria

**A/C** - 40 B-24s

**ESCORT** - 40 P-38s

**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 86.50 tons, Frags

**ENEMY A/C** - 20/30 ME-109s, some ME-210s, Rockets used.

**FLAK** - Intense, accurate, heavy. Aimed type at target. Saw Red flak (86 guns).

**RESULTS** - Visual reports show hanger line well covered. Center of field well hit with string carrying over to Wellersdorf A/D.

**SHIP** - Small Fry .. 429

**SORTIES** - 2; total 18

**MISSION TIME** - 7:00 hours .. Total 83:10

**COMMENTS** - Rough MISSION. Was airsick to start with. Weather was stinko and we lost formation in cloud bank. Fell in with another Group (a new one) and went over target. New Group became frightened at flak and dropped their bombs too soon. As well as losing their formation. Our #2 engine was hit by flak and couldn't be feathered so we dropped behind the formation and were on our own. Our pilot got ten P-38s on radio and they agreed to escort us back. Were hit by flak at Zagreb and then attacked by 20 ME-109s. Top turret got one fighter and there were two probables. P-38 got a ME-109 and vice versa. Every gun on our ship practically, except ball, was firing at once. Some fireworks! We finally dove into some clouds where we lost our escort, but got rid of the ME-109s and finally arrived safely at home base.

### MISSION #13

**DATE** - May 13, 1944

**TARGET** - Faenza M/Y, Italy

**A/C** - 39 B-24s

**ESCORT** - 31 P-38s

**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 94.75 tons, 500# Bombs

**ENEMY A/C** - None

**FLAK** - None

**RESULTS** - Hit on west choke point. Direct hit on train moving out. Made hits on factory at Imala. Balance hit residential area.

**SHIP** - Red Ryder .. 460

**SORTIES** - 1; total 19

**MISSION TIME** - 5:30 hours.. Total 88:40

### MISSION #14

**DATE** - May 14, 1944

**TARGET** - Padua South M/Y,





**TARGET** - Rimini R.R. Bridge, Italy  
**A/C** - 40 B-24s  
**ESCORT** - 20 P-38s  
**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 120 Tons, 1,000# Bombs  
**ENEMY A/C** - None  
**FLAK** - Scant, inaccurate & heavy (5 guns)  
**RESULTS** - Approximately 3 direct hits and several near misses on north R.R. bridge. At least 2 direct hits on south R.R. bridge near last abutment. Highway bridge cut by several direct hits.  
**SHIP** - Cannon Fodder .. 102  
**SORTIES** - 1; Total 34  
**MISSION TIME** - 4:20 hours .. Total 164:05

**MISSION #26**

**DATE** - June 6, 1944  
**TARGET** - Ploesti Xenia Oil Refinery, Rumania  
**A/C** - 38 B-24s  
**ESCORT** - 20 P-38s, 30 P-51s  
**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 84 Tons, 500# Bombs  
**ENEMY A/C** - 35 enemy attacked on signal of white flak bursts which signalled ceasing of all flak from target defenders. Came in from all around the clock, mainly from 3 and 9 o'clock high and out of sun. Escort finally drove them off.  
**FLAK** - Intense, accurate, heavy. Red rocket flak with tails (194 guns)  
**RESULTS** - Accurate assessment impossible due to smoke.  
**SHIP** - Thunder Mug II .. 153  
**SORTIES** - 2; Total 36  
**MISSION TIME** - 8:10 Hours .. Total 172:15

**COMMENTS** - Rough as usual. Hit by enemy fighters after leaving target. Took a couple of shots at them, but they didn't bother us much. Got 25 to 30 flak holes, one going through my waist window shattering my face with glass and lodging in Kasper's flak suit. Luckily I had left the window and sat down a few minutes before that. Harris' crew (724th) went down with buddies R/O Clell Card and AEG Richard Gilson on-board.

**MISSION #27**

**DATE** - June 7, 1944  
**TARGET** - Antheor Viaduct, France  
**A/C** - 40 B-24s  
**ESCORT** - None  
**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 111 Tons, 1,000# Bombs  
**ENEMY A/C** - None  
**FLAK** - Moderate to intense, very accurate and heavy (16 guns)  
**RESULTS** - Coastal R.R. cut east and west of target. Most bombs in drink off the viaduct. A few hits near the target.  
**SHIP** - Cannon Fodder .. 102  
**SORTIES** - 1; Total 37  
**MISSION TIME** - 6:45 Hours .. Total 179:00

**COMMENTS** - Buddy, Glen Nelson (725th), missing on raid. Landed at Corsica for 2 days and is okay. He finished his 50.

**MISSION #28**

**DATE** - June 9, 1944  
**TARGET** - Porto Marghero Oil Storage & Refinery, Italy (Primary - Munich, Germany)  
**A/C** - 43 B-24s  
**ESCORT** - 40 P-51s, 60 P-38s & 20 P-47s  
**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 69.5 Tons, 100# incendiaries on main oil storage and half on primary.  
**ENEMY A/C** - 8 to 12 ME-109s and FW-190s attacked right after bomb release. Hit stragglers and low flight from 3 and 9 o'clock level. Three claims.  
**FLAK** - From intense, inaccurate at I.P. to moderate and accurate at target.  
**RESULTS** - Target well covered with incendiaries with little damage done.  
**SHIP** - Cannon Fodder .. 102  
**SORTIES** - 2; Total 39  
**MISSION TIME** - 6:45 Hours; Total 185:45

**COMMENTS** - Flew up to primary target of Munich but due to 10/10 cloud coverage did not drop our bombs. Did not bomb by pathfinder, either. Went back to Northern Italy and bombed last resort target. Had to feather #2 engine on way back due to flak hit.

**MISSION #29**

**DATE** - June 10, 1944  
**TARGET** - Porto Marghero Oil Storage & Refinery, Italy  
**A/C** - 40 B-24s  
**ESCORT** - 48 P-38s and P-51s  
**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 99 Tons, 500# Bombs  
**ENEMY A/C** - I.T.E.F. seen with single tail  
**FLAK** - Moderate to intense, accurate. Continuous pointed heavy fire (20 guns)  
**RESULTS** - Bomb bursts in target area. Believed target entirely destroyed.  
**SHIP** - Cannon Fodder .. 102  
**SORTIES** - 1; Total 40  
**MISSION TIME** - 5:10 Hours .. Total 190:55

**COMMENTS** - Flak especially rough on our low flight. We picked up at least 16 holes. Guinness Crew, #6 position on our left in Lonesome Polecat, hit by 4 direct bursts along fuselage, doing considerable damage to ship and resulting in them having to ditch. Everyone on crew suffered some injury and Flint Gardner and Robert Anderson were lost. The loss was the first in our Squadron in 53 missions, or since Regensburg raid. Best all-time record for any squadron in war, thus far.  
*(Editors Comment: Gardner and Anderson were the only two lost while ditching in Adriatic. Pilot Lt. H. Guinness)*

**MISSION #30**

**DATE** - June 13, 1944  
**TARGET** - Munich Area, Germany (Bombed M/Oberpfaffenhoten)  
**A/C** - 38 B-24s  
**ESCORT** - 16 P-38s and P-51s  
**TONNAGE DROPPED** - 71 Tons, 100# Incendiaries  
**ENEMY A/C** - 95 of all types. 30 encountered. Attacked 6 abreast. Came in high from 12 o'clock, dove under



formation, split into 3's, then attacked from 3 and 9 o'clock level.

FLAK - Intense, inaccurate for first attack unit, to intense and accurate for second unit (284 guns).

RESULTS - Impossible to assess damage due to smoke. A few direct hits on parked A/C on field.

SHIP - Cannon Fodder .. 102

SORTIES - 2; Total 42

MISSION TIME - 7:30 Hours .. Total 198:25

COMMENTS - Attacked by fighters while on bomb-run, mostly at tail. Took a few bursts at them but they didn't come in close. Ship in formation ahead of us hit by fighters, exploding its incendiary bombs and sending it down in a mass of flames with parts scattered all over the sky. Area was full of enemy fighters. Was in flak area for about longest time to-date, but luckily got about 3 hits. Flak was bursting from 15,000 to 30,000 feet. *(Editors Comment: Apparently the a/c indicated in journal was from another Group. The 451st had no losses on that mission.)*

#### MISSION #31

DATE - June 22, 1944

TARGET - Rimini R.R. Bridge, Italy

A/C - 38 B-24s

ESCORT - 20 P-38s, 30 P-51s

TONNAGE DROPPED - 89.75 Tons, 250# & 300# bombs

ENEMY A/C - 6 ME-202s, 4 ME-109s

FLAK - Some enroute

RESULTS - Direct hits on bridge. One string in M/Y. Many hits in town.

SHIP - Cannon Fodder .. 102

SORTIES - 1; Total 43

MISSION TIME - 5:30 .. Total 203:55

COMMENTS - Bombed alternate target as primary, (Triesti, Italy) was overcast and couldn't be seen to bomb.

#### MISSION #32

DATE - June 23, 1944

TARGET - Giurgiu Oil Storage, Rumania

A/C - 40 B-24s

ESCORT - 50 P-38s

TONNAGE DROPPED - 94 Tons, 500# incendiaries

ENEMY A/C - None

FLAK - Moderate, accurate and heavy (36 guns)

RESULTS - Hits on tanks. Four of them on-fire. Many hits in and around target area.

SHIP - Cannon Fodder .. 102

SORTIES - 2; Total 45

MISSION TIME - 7:20; Total 211:15

#### MISSION #33



SGT NELSON AT WAIST GUN

DATE - June 25, 1944

TARGET - Le Pontet/Arignon Telephone Exchange, France

A/C - 38 B-24s

ESCORT - 40 P-38s, 15 P-51s

TONNAGE DROPPED - 61.5 Tons, 500# Bombs

ENEMY A/C - 10 ME-109s (1 shot down by escort at target)

FLAK - Scant, inaccurate, heavy at target from Avignon (16 guns)

RESULTS - Repeater station destroyed, or probably destroyed. Telephone exchange covered by hits, probably destroyed.

SHIP - Cannon Fodder .. 102

SORTIES - 1; Total 46

MISSION TIME - 8:25 .. Total 219:40

#### MISSION #34

DATE - June 26, 1944

TARGET - Korneuberg Mineral Oil Refinery (Vienna), Austria

A/C - 39 B-24s

ESCORT - 40 P-38s, 15 P-51s

TONNAGE DROPPED - 90.5 Tons, 500# Bombs

ENEMY A/C - 30 encountered (Mainly 109s & 190s). Many attacked out of the sun, singly and at 12 o'clock high. 109s hit stragglers.

FLAK - Intense, accurate, heavy (339 guns)

RESULTS - All bombs fell short and east of target hitting open fields and Danube River.

SHIP - Cannon Fodder .. 102

SORTIES - 2; Total 48

MISSION TIME - 7:08 Hours .. Total 226:48

COMMENTS - Really rough. Never saw as many planes fall in one mission before. We were practically bombing Vienna with B-24s. Saw flying wedge of 20 to 30 enemy fighters go directly through formation of B-24s over Vienna, directly on our left. The sky was ablaze with firing guns, as well as falling bombers and fighters. With the enemy fighters coming in our direction I thought, "Here's where we get it." Fortunately for us they didn't bother us. Friendly and enemy fighters (reported as being a total of 300), as well as bombers were falling everywhere. Saw at least 19 chutes over target. Many planes fell and NO chutes came out. On leaving target pyres of smoke from burning planes were rising from the ground everywhere. On our way back were attacked by 109s at Zagreb where they got a stragging B-24. Six chutes were seen. "Hoddie (Howard Holten)" finished his 50 on this one.



SGT HOLTEN  
AT WAIST GUN

#### MISSION #35

DATE - June 28, 1944

TARGET - Chitila M/Y (Bucharest Area), Rumania

A/C - 37 B-24s

ESCORT - 80 P-38s, 35 P-51s



TONNAGE DROPPED - 80.5 Tons, 500# Bombs  
ENEMY A/C - 2 ME-109s, 1 FW-190 (Made passes but no claims)

FLAK - Moderate, inaccurate to accurate. Heavy at target (139 guns)

RESULTS - Main M/Y and choke point hit. Many goods and wagons destroyed. Primary target missed.

SHIP - Cannon Fodder .. 103

SORTIES - 2; Total 50

MISSION TIME - 7:40 Hours .. Total 234:28

COMMENTS - FINITO for myself and "Snapper."  
Not an extra rough one, but sweated it out more than usual being my last mission. Sure glad that's over.

#### ADDENDUM

DATE - July 7, 1944

TARGET - Blechhammer Oil Refinery, Germany

A/C - 24 B-24s

ESCORT - 40 P-38s, 20 P-51s

TONNAGE DROPPED - 59 Tons, 500# Bombs

ENEMY A/C \_ 75 encountered. FW-190s, JU-88s, ME-110s, ME-109s, ME-210s attacked.

FLAK - Intense, inaccurate, heavy at target

RESULTS - Smoke covered the target area. Some bombs dropped on M/Y in Kosel area.

COMMENTS - Vandy (Paul Vanderpool, 724th) and crew went down over Yugoslavia on this raid. Nine chutes were seen before plane blew up. It was believed that pilot was the only one who didn't get out. Regular

pilot, Steinberg, was in hospital so did not fly on raid. Aschenberner and Varnum finished on this one; which completed our full crew.

*(Editors comment .. The previous paragraph indicates that Lloyd Nelson thinks that the A/C "Jesse James" (42-94808) must have suffered at least one lost life, according to parachute count. Such was not the case. Lt Francis Russell (pilot) and 3 others evaded capture, but 6 became POWs; as was the case with Paul Vanderpool. No lives were lost from that A/C)*

#### CONCLUSION - - - - TOTALS & FACTS

Missions - 35

Sorties - 50

Mission Times - 234 hours 28 minutes (Combat Hours)

Total Tons dropped on our missions by our Group - 2845.40

Days since arriving into Squadron - 78

Days since first mission - 76

Full crew finished by July 7, 1944

Completed 50 sorties without an abortion

No malfunctions with left waist gun position

Left States - 2 April 1944

Arrived Italy - 11 April 1944

First Mission - 13 April 1944

Last mission 28 June 1944

Left Italy - 23 July 1944

Arrived States - 4 August 1944

## THE CUTTING EDGE: E.MAIL

### LIST OF E.MAIL MEMBERS

Several of the following e.mail addresses are listed under an offsprings, or close relatives name, but I have been assured that any messages sent to THAT address will reach the proper party. If you wish to list your new, changed, or deleted address ... Please contact this office.

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# CREW CHIEF'S ACCOUNT OF "THREE FEATHERS"

By: Al Haggerty (726th)

I think it about time that I, Albert L. Haggerty, Crew Chief of THREE FEATHERS, ... from the day she came into the 451st Bomb Group - 726th Squadron, at Fairmont, Nebraska, until she was taken from me ... tells her story.

When 636 came to us at Fairmont, Sid Winski and his crew were assigned to it. Lt. Morfit was copilot and Lt. McSpadden was the navigator. Sgt Walks was engineer gunner, Sgt Doring was nose gunner and Sgt Ahern was radio operator, or that was the way I understood it. I'm not sure of the rest of the crew. I was assigned to 636 as Crew Chief and Marvin Marburger as my assistant. I'm not sure just where Simon Zunamon came on board, but these two men were the best there was. I never worried about them not doing their job right, but I had a policy that each of us checked the other's work.

The prop governor problem started at Fairmont when a different crew flew 636 and wrote up on the flight report that there was excessively high oil pressure on ALL four engines. Anyone with even a small bit of knowledge of an aircraft with multiple engines knows that this cannot happen. Tom Peploe called me into his office after the second write-up by the same pilot. I called his attention to the fact that Winski had flown several days with all write-ups as "FLIGHT OK." Peploe said to lower the pressure, so I did.

The first flight after that was to Lincoln, Nebraska and Winski had to fall out and land ahead of the other planes due to a runaway prop. (That was the story I was told) When we left Lincoln, I was on board and so was Captain Kremers (Flight Surgeon), Captain Haltom (Squadron Commander) and Tom Peploe (Line Chief). We had to land in Memphis, Tennessee. Runaway prop. Everyone else went to a hotel but I stayed with the plane and installed a new prop governor. (This resulted in my luggage being at the bottom of the heap when we started off again, which turned out to be fortuitous) From Memphis to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida there was no trouble. But when we left Morrison Field for the first leg of the overseas journey, about seven and a half hours out, everything seemed to go wrong. I was sitting back in the waist section, with my



Lt SID WINSKI (ORIGINAL PILOT) WITH 'THREE FEATHERS'

ears tuned to the hum of the engines, when I heard one engine rev-up above the others and I was up as if I'd been shot with a high voltage charge. I went to the right waist window and saw number three prop as it was coming to a full feathered position. As I was watching number 3, number four did the same. While I was watching these two engines that were dead, someone yelled, "And there goes number 2!!" I rushed to that side of the plane, looking

at the third feathered prop and then kept my eyes glued to the number one engine praying that it would carry us safely to the ground somewhere. (Theoretically, B-24's cannot fly on one engine.) Orders came from up front; "Put on your chutes and prepare to bail out," followed almost immediately by orders to go into ditching procedure instead. Almost everything was thrown overboard in an attempt to lighten the plane, including luggage and two 50 caliber waist guns. For some reason there was an extra man on board, and I lost my assigned position for ditching and sat instead on the emergency raft. Number one engine held, although Winski later told me that it was also trying to run-away. There was an airfield on the island to our left which I had not noticed before, and we headed for it. When we landed there was one bag left in the baggage rack and it belonged to me.

The island was St. Lucia, and we spent the night there. Peploe and I worked all night checking all prop circuits and found nothing that I thought would cause that kind of trouble. We then took off for Trinidad. We were at Trinidad for about a week and while there changed all four prop governors. After Trinidad our next stop was Belem in Brazil, and it was there that I figured out where the trouble was and what was causing it. I told Peploe what was wrong and what we had to do to

fix it. Peploe got into the cockpit and started the engines. I adjusted the oil pressure back to its original 90 number at 2,000 RPM, and did the same to all four engines. We never had another runaway prop for the life of 636 (as she was known at this time). I do not remember how long we stayed at Belem, but I think it was only overnight, then we went to Natal, then to Dakar, North Africa.

It was at Dakar that I had the heebie-geebies scared out



TOM PEPLOE  
726TH LINE CHIEF



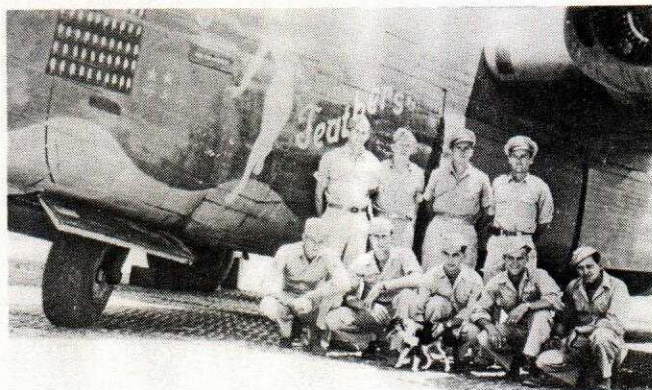
of me. It was raining cats and dogs and extraordinarily dark. It was Peplow's time to pull guard duty and about one or two in the morning he came in, woke me up and told me to take over because he was sick. I got into the waiting jeep and went out to the area where the planes were parked. The jeep driver put me just inside the entrance. When we had left the field earlier, I had counted what row we were in and how many over from the entrance. I had counted down to the right row, then started going down the rows of planes, counting as I went. When I got to where 636 was parked I started to veer to my left under the right wing. It was then when I heard a noise in front and to my left. When I brought my light up, I almost had a heart attack. There in front of me was the biggest, blackest man I had ever seen, pointing a rifle with the longest bayonet I had ever seen, right at me. All I could see of his face were his teeth and they looked like pearls. He was wearing no shoes and could move without a sound. I finally got the message to him that I was the relief guy and that I had come out to guard the plane ... then he let me pass. Needless to say, I had no trouble staying awake for the rest of the night.

When we left Dakar, Marrakech, North Africa was our next stop. I think we were there overnight and went on to Telergma the next day and remained for several days. It was here that a young man painted a curvaceous, auburn haired lady, wearing only THREE FEATHERS in the most necessary areas, on 636. You might say that it was then that THREE FEATHERS, the RED-HEAD was born. But she had picked her own name on that first overseas flight. She was a beauty.

We left North Africa and went into Italy. The first base we operated from was Gioia del Colle. We operated from this field until the mesh runway decided to 'go south.' It was while here that Sgt Leo Doring, the nose gunner, was killed by shrapnel. He was our first Group casualty.

I do not remember how many missions Winski flew with THREE FEATHERS, but he was pilot of the 'Red-head' until we moved from Gioia del Colle to a base south of Gioia called San Pancrazio, way down on the heel of Italy. It was here that a new plane was assigned to Sid Winski. It was the first plane that had the electrically operated superchargers and was later named RED RIDER. I believed that most of the original crew were killed in a crash of a different plane at our base.

While we were waiting for a new crew to be assign-



Lt WILLIAM SLATER & CREW

ned to THREE FEATHERS, we decided to give her a bath. We got buckets and brushes and went to work. We scrubbed all the mud, oil and grease off, and had her looking like she had just rolled off the assembly line. Our new crew consisted of Lt. William Slater, Pilot; Lt. Willard Green, Copilot; Richard Harren, Navigator; Lt. Leon Stone, Bombardier; Sgt's Joe Krepelka and Harold Bennett, AEG & ROMG respectively; and Gunners: Eugene Stevens, Laverne Stout, Edward Tormey and James Clynes.

I think that Slater and his crew were impressed with the way she looked, or at least I think Slater was.



THREE FEATHERS  
(PERSON UNKNOWN)

This was the beginning of our long and very pleasant association as ground crew and flight crew. The ground crew did everything we could to make sure that when the 'Redhead' left on a mission that she would return with the whole crew safe and sound. I never once thought about the short life span that some crews had together. I just assumed everyone else was having the same kind of luck we were having with Slater and the 'Redhead.' Slater and his crew put in most of their 50 missions in THREE FEATHERS.

I do not remember how many missions Slater had flown (probably less than ten) when they left on a mission one day and did not return. They were assumed to be casualties, their belongings were turned in and a new crew was assigned to their tent. I was assigned to helping other ground crew with their planes. One morning, about ten days later, I was helping a crew change out a leaking gas tank when the Crew Chief asked me when I was going to get another plane. I told him that I didn't want another plane, because THREE FEATHERS was coming back. He just looked at me as if I had lost it. (I had said this to others before and had generally gotten a response which might be charitably translated as, "Let's give this nut-case some room.")

Later, when I was sitting on my bunk after lunch on the day of that conversation, catching a few minutes rest before going back on the line, someone came flying through the front of the tent and almost out the back before he could stop. It was Simon Zunamon, white as a sheet and pointing up. I had heard planes and thought it was one that was up for slow-timing, but when Simon got his voice back he said, "THREE FEATHERS!!" I ran out of the tent and looked up just as she was circling overhead. Words cannot describe the feeling that I had at that moment. I had always known that they were coming back. It turned out that they had developed



engine trouble and had to turn back, landing on Corsica. Slater said he immediately called 15th Air Force Headquarters to let them know where they were and that they were OK. But we never got the message at the 726th Squadron Operations, nor at Engineering.

When they finished their 50, Slater remained over for a while trying to get permission to bring **THREE FEATHERS** back to the U.S., and I never understood why he was not allowed to.

The war was as good as over and the new crews were afraid to fly **THREE FEATHERS** because she was one of the original planes that had left the States with the Group. I was told that **THREE FEATHERS** was the only one of the original planes that lasted through the war, but they would not let Slater bring back our 'Red-head.' They gave Slater one of the old desert rats to fly back. Lt. Slater came to my tent the night before they were to depart and asked me if I would check the plane over for him on the morning they were to leave. I'm sure Lt. Slater never gave it a thought, or maybe he did, but one thing was clear to me, he had confidence in my ability and I was gratified that he trusted my judgement.

I was told that **THREE FEATHERS** was classed "war weary," and taken out of operation and flown back to Gioia del Colle. I was then given one of the new silver jobs. It didn't last long enough for me to learn anything about the plane or crew that flew it.

After **THREE FEATHERS** was taken from me, and the other new plane crashed, I was sent to a base south



**STRAWBERRY BITCH AS IT SETS AT AIR FORCE MUSEUM, DAYTON, OHIO**

of Foggia to bring back a plane that looked like it should have been classed war weary. I don't think I had ever seen a dirtier ship. My crew and I spent days getting it in shape to fly. This plane was named **BUBBLE TROUBLE**, and we had this plane until the end of the war in Europe.

It was about five years after the war when I heard of **THREE FEATHERS'** fate. My wife and I were at her father's house visiting with a neighbor of his, Robert Hunt.

It turned out that Robert had also been in Italy during the war and had been stationed at the Service Depot located on the base at Gioia, our original base in Italy. He said that at the end of the war, the base was stacked wing tip to wing tip with planes. Robert told me that their job was to turn all the planes into scrap metal. When the name **THREE FEATHERS** came up, he perked up and asked if I was aware of what had happened to her. I told him all that I knew as to her time in my care, until the time she was taken from me ... and that was the last I had seen of her. He told me that he and others had cut up hundreds of planes with cutting torches, and **THREE FEATHERS** was one of them.

What a hell of a way for a lady to die.

(Editors addendum) Pilot Bill Slater was not to be denied recognition as to what aircraft he brought back to the Zone of Interior. Bill brought back the "**STRAWBERRY BITCH**," once the property of the 376th BG, which is now housed in the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio.



### **CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK**

Bob Karstensen

#### **THE YOUNGER GENERATION**

I believe this bit of editorializing should be directed more towards the younger folks; our sons, daughters, grandchildren and our nieces and nephews. It seems that since I've become an online computer-junkie, I've been challenged by this younger generation to tell them more about their immediate ancestor - the ones that served in our 451st.

Why should that be? I guess it's because us guys aren't telling them much about our war experiences. And the kids aren't pushing us too much, either. It's not until we've passed on that some of the kids are getting the 'bug' to find out. By that time most of our old orders, award certificates and writings have been lost or misplaced. Now the kids are reaching out, some via the internet, to find people that can offer some information

relevant to their dad or grandfather.

Why aren't we telling them? That is indeed the question. Surely, most of us are proud of our time spent in the service. We were involved in one of the greatest conflicts of the century. All the rest, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, have their place in history, but our involvement was world wide; from the Pacific and Alaska to Africa and into Europe. Our Armies and Air Forces covered all fronts. Perhaps that's the problem. Our personal contribution in that conflict was so miniscule that we feel dwarfed by it's enormity. Of course we have our stories, but do we feel their importance when viewed from the prospective of the total picture.

What's the solution? First we have to judge the interest that our offsprings have in what we did. If they walk away when **YOU** (dad or grandpa) starts your stories, then they aren't ready yet! Then it's time to collect and catalog your papers for the time when they are ready and you may not be around. But, if they show an interest, don't drown them in your self-heroism, but put it in the context of how we, as a crew or unit, accomplished our task. Eventually they will get around to asking you about your personal achievements.



Best thing yet ... and something that's worked in the past ... bring that progeny to one of our Group Reunions.

### BOOK SHORTAGE

A dilemma that has been encountered by this office is, "How can I get a copy of the 'Fight'n 451st Bomb Group (H)' book? This plea has come from newly enrolled members who picked up on this fact from reading past issues of the Ad-Lib that were sent upon being recruited. I've also had requests from war historians that feel that their library wouldn't be complete without a copy.

The sad story is that NONE are available through this office, nor via Turner Publishing Company. The last one was sent out in September of 1994. The book was published for distribution at the Omaha/Fairmont Reunion in 1990. With only 1,000 books being printed, the supply was soon absorbed by our 1,800 plus members.

What can we do to alleviate this situation for our history-hungry new members? Nothing much; except to solicit the membership for any extra copies they may have bought. Put out a plea to the families of deceased members (many are mailed to, as complimentary members) so's the book is not relegated to some Garage Sale.

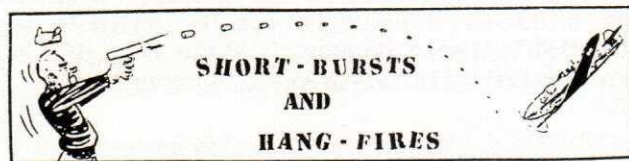
The book now has a value that surpasses it's original \$50 cost. If any extra copies are offered and sent to this office, I can either pass them on to wanting members, or put them on the internet (I have connections with a nearby dealer in 'rare books'). Any monies garnered from their sale would certainly help the 451st treasury. I look forward to any suggestions you may have on this

subject.

**WHAT'S YOUR PHONE NUMBER?** With the advent of cellular phones, internet and the need for a separate line, plus moving and such, many of the phone numbers I have in my database have turned obsolete. Area Codes are changing by the hundreds. Now when a member asks for a buddies phone number from this office I have to condition it with, "This is the last phone number I had from him!" It would behoove you to update your phone number with me so your buddies can get a direct connection and not have to go through the operator for your new number.

Almost as elusive as your phone number, is the e.mail address some of you have offered me. Although the changes aren't mandated by any 'big brother', they are nevertheless changing all the time. Some members have found less expensive e.mail carriers, while others have taken advantage of 'perks' that are available with other on-line programs. Elsewhere in the newsletter I will give you a list of what I have. Hopefully most of them are still current and active. Active - to the point that the member is still caught-up in the technology (and novelty) of this electronic age.

**DONATIONS/CONTRIBUTIONS** We're still operating with the monies that you members volunteer. Each newsletter draws down on the treasury significantly. If you enjoy reading the Ad-Lib and being kept posted as to what's going on with your buddies, then perhaps this is the time to recognize it with a donation to the cause. Checks should be made out to "451st Bomb Group." THANKS in advance!



**Don TenHagen, 726th [PILOT]** ... Please accept my apologies for being remiss in sending you some "Kitty Kash" for so long a time. Sorry to hear that Pascoe and Atterholt are no longer with us. They did a good job of keeping our Squadron going when we lost our C.O. and some others, until they could be replaced. They, as well as many of the others, will be missed.

*(Editor ... Thanks for your expression of confidence by way of your generous donation. And thanks, too, for the old shipping orders that you sent. I've gleaned some names from them that I did not have in the computer .. Plus, fleshed-out names that were already in, but I had no Serial Numbers to go with them.)*

**Edwin Russell, 725th [GUNNER: DALE THOMPSON'S CREW]** ... Received your packet of Ad Libs and sure enjoyed reading them very much. I was on most of the missions between April 4 and August 3, 1944. I don't have any heroic stories to tell. I just completed 50 and came home.

Your #27 Ad-Lib, page 9, was about Gordon Butts' plane being shot down over the town of Mostar, Yugoslavia. His plane was on our left wing. From my position in the tail I saw their tail get hit. As he said, they then got hit in the bomb bay. We saw three (3) parachutes come out. I'd often wondered what happened to them.

In your Fall of 1995 Ad-Lib, page 16, you told about your novelist, William C. 'Andy' Anderson, 725th pilot. I was wondering if he could be Dave Thompson's copilot? His name was 'Andy' Anderson. I can't remember his first name.

*(Editor ... Thanks for your brief synopsis of your days spent with the 451st. I'm sure Gordon Butts would [note, past tense] have been pleased to read that his experience was realized by someone apart from himself. As to that illusive copilot, 'Andy' Anderson. NO, it is not our 'William C.' Yours bears the name Carsten E. Anderson. He has been located in Anacortes, WA, but seems to be reluctant to join us.)*

**John Zavacky, 725th [COMMUNICATIONS]** ... I haven't been to the last four reunions as I lost my hearing. If you can't hear what's going on, it's a waste to take part since you can't understand. I would like to contribute more, but I am only on S.S. Where I worked in Florida there was no pension plan. I am alone now and live in the north.

*(Editor .. What do you think the matter is, John? Could it be that we're getting older? This "Short Burst" column is being besieged by the infirmities of those suffering from some form of old age. I'm hoping I can muster enough guys and gals so the next reunion won't be a total embarrassment to me when I call it to order. Nevertheless, thanks for your generous donation.)*

**Bill Phifer, 726th [GUNNER: GRANT STURMAN'S CREW]** ... I was pleased to receive the previous Issue 28 Ad-Lib, and quite surprised to see our old



crew pictured by "Old Tub #1." To the best of my memory, our crew was grounded that day as we'd just returned from a very rough mission, possibly Regensburg; and all four engines had to be replaced. Flak had knocked us out of formation and fighters almost finished us off, but due to clouds we did escape. We were given a new plane (Old Tub #2) after the accident of Lt Hunts' crew. We had only completed 41 of our missions at that time. I wasn't familiar with Lt Hunts' crew, but our crew thought only 2 survived, so that's news that I was unaware of.

Too, I must mention Pete Massare. I first knew him after I'd returned from combat. He was stationed in Charleston as assistant personal equipment officer and I was teaching gun camera to the crews getting ready to go overseas. Pete was an Officer and a gentleman, like all good men should be.

**Robert Rhilinger, 725th [BOMBARDIER: WIL-LIS MALAKOWSKI'S CREW]** ... I do not have any stories or anecdotes that I can contribute. I was only with the Group for a short while and didn't get to really know many of my fellow fly-boys. I was a Bombardier with the 725th on that famous raid on August 23rd 1944 to Markersdorf Airdrome, flying in our PLANE FOR THE DAY; "Seldom Available." You know the history of that mission as well as I. We were outclassed, or just unlucky when the 109s and 190s gave us a going over. We all jumped and were captured and remained POWs. Even though the plane was pretty well beat up, the only wounded of the crew were the tail gunner; elbow shot up - and I; left leg shot up. I wound up in Stalag Luft III with the other officers and did not see any of the gunners until after the war and we returned home.

*(Editor ... Thanks for re-telling that heroic part of your tenure with the 451st. As to your CREW; and where they are now. I have all crewmembers, except Clyde Phillips enrolled. We know that Willis Malakowski, Pilot; Howard Brown, Navigator; and Louis Anthony, Gunner are deceased. I'd like to locate this "Phillips," so as to round out the full crew.)*

**Harvey Brown, 725th [PILOT: CHARLES TRUMPER'S CREW]** ... Received Ad-Lib and once again you are to be congratulated on its excellence. I don't know where you find the time and energy it requires to be manager, editor and Group psychologist.

In an earlier letter I mentioned that I had corresponded with Audrey Wood and although I didn't know Walter Ross, I was especially touched by the picture of you at his gravesite at the Fort Snelling National Cemetery. We pass the cemetery quite often on our way to visit our sons who live over that way. I have instructed my family, that's where to deposit me when I pass on.

*(Editor ... I do not have a fascination or fixation towards Veterans Cemeteries, per se. I have visited many of them, from Arlington National Cemetery in Washington, DC to the Rhone Military Cemetery in France. All of them are worthy of a visit by all of us, the living. Its just that I have a total respect for the men, and women, that lie there. Walter's grave is flanked by a Marine on one side and Air Borne soldier on the other. Both were KIA in the same war as Lt Ross. In silence, I pay my respects to them all.)*

**James Clopton, 725th [GUNNER: ROY CONNOR'S CREW]** ... Thanks for the Ad Libs. It was a

great pleasure when I saw my old pilot, Roy L. Connor's letter. And then to see the short letter from my old AEG, Edward Shirk. John Howe and I went to gunners school in Fort Meyers, FL; from gunnery school to Salt Lake City, UT for training on turrets. From there we went to Mountain Home, ID, where we were assigned to Roy Connor's crew.

The last part of July 1944 we got on the USS General M.C Meigs and returned to the States on it's maiden voyage. The enlisted were assigned to the 3rd deck down. On the voyage from Naples the motor for the ventilation fan for our deck burned out and we had no fresh air. What a hot time!

*(Editor ... Glad to get your input as to your career with the Connor's crew and your voyage home. I know for a fact the Connor Crew shows up quite often in the computer. Those that we still have contact with are; Connor (Pilot), Brock (Copilot), Blandino (Bombardier), Shirk (AEG), Causey (T Gunner), and yourself. Elston (W Gunner), Howe (B Gunner), and Bickett (Navigator) have departed for a higher calling. Hugh Snuffer (ROMG) is still waiting to be found.)*

**Andrew Matala, 727th [CREW CHIEF]** ... I was inducted on April 17, 1943 in Rockford, IL (Camp Grant). After many moves I ended up in the 451st Bomb Group, 727th Squadron on October 25, 1943. On November 27th I left for Newport News, VA, boarding the SS John Harvard on December the 3rd and arrived in Naples Italy on December 28th. I helped set-up tents in Gioia del Colle. While in Italy I was crew chief on a B-24, and was classified as not fit for combat. I left Italy on August 25th for the States. I worked on B-29s until discharged on October 7, 1945.

*(Editor ... Your career synopsis was short and sweet. Your donation was generous and rewarding - THANKS.)*

**C.L. (Larry) March, 724th [PILOT]** ... This is to extend my compliments on the remarkable job you did with Issue 28 of the Ad-Lib. I was taken especially with your tribute regarding the first commander of the 451st, as excerpted from The American Legion Magazine. I had not seen this publication previously and was pleased to obtain further information with which to fill in the blanks of the best Bomb Group in the 15th Air Force.

Thanks for including it.

With the passing of Leo Stoutsenberger; this brings to mind the sad saga of the Dwyer family's action regarding the work of the 451st aerial photographers. I appreciate that you put forth a valiant effort to right this wrong and I share your frustration that the situation has ended the way it has.

I hope the enclosed check will help advance the mission of promoting the 451st Bomb Group, of which you are the prime mover!

Finally, Bob, the several photos of you reflect that exquisite level of distinction engendered by the snow



Lt MARCH



white growth above your upper lip. I think it looks great and so does Eddie, but she's prejudiced, because she lives with one sporting a similar appurtenance!

*(Editor ... Again, Larry and Eddie, I thank you both for the generous praise you heap on this bewhiskered old head. And your donation ain't bad either.)*

**James F. Thompson, 725th [COPILOT: JOE YOUNGER'S CREW]** ... I joined the group in Lincoln, Nebraska at the staging area. My crew (part of the 446th) was broken up because my first pilot got grounded from high altitude flying. As a replacement copilot I waited through the processing of the 446th and the 445th for a slot when Joe Younger's crew, from the 725th, showed up lacking a copilot and I joined up. Flew "Hoppy" with the Squadron C.O. (John P. Davis) and the Squadron medical officer (Ward McFarland) to Borinquen, Trinidad, Belem, Natal, Dakar, Marrakech, Oran and to Telergma. Then on January 19, 1944, on to Gioia del Colle. I was in the packing crate barracks when the B-24 from the 726th crashed on February 8, just after take-off. It made a racket that shook the barracks and we knew someone had had it. "Hoppy" made several trips (Toulon, Vienna, Regensburg. The February 25th trip to Regensburg was the one where my windshield was knocked out and the Engineer, Sgt Davenport, got shot up. Fighters put 200 holes in the airplane and when we limped back to Foggia that was the last we saw of "Hoppy."

Then on the Group's 19th mission, March 29th to Bolzano we got a brand new B-24 J and got shot-up over the target in the Brenner Pass. One prop ran away, another engine losing oil pressure and then we headed for Switzerland, but losing altitude fast had to all bail-out just before the plane hit the side of a mountain in a big red ball. The entire crew made it to the ground and eventually all made it to Stalag Luft 1 in Barth on the Baltic.

I had landed (hard) on a high hill away from the rest of the crew, and using my language skills hid out during the German search of the area. I abandoned my leather jacket in favor of Italian civilian clothes and undersized shoes and headed for the Swiss border on foot, finally being stopped by border guards a few days later. The remains of my crew still get together at the reunions: Bill Briggs, John Hollis, Joe Younger, Philip Zaunbrecher and Floyd Hamm. Ed Bliss is in bad shape and Jack Patterson died a couple years ago. We had two brand new replacement gunners, Daniel J. Kenny and John R. Sherbert who we have not seen since Stalag Luft 1 was liberated.

*(Editor ... If you HAD made it into Switzerland, Jim, you would have been the only 451st man to have done it. Nowhere in any of my research have I found anyone, other than the Johnson/Kester crew that became INTERNEES by making it into the neutral country of Turkey.)*

**Robert Zimmerman, 726th [PILOT]** ... I enjoyed the Ad-Libs, and in reference to Issue 28, especially with the letter from Harold Ginsberg, my Navigator. Sorry to hear about Bill Sullwold, our nose gunner.

I had a heart attack last September but am doing real well now. Still go to cardiac rehab three times a week.

This fall I hope to go thru my air force pictures, etc. and my send you anything I find interesting.

*(Editor ... Your remembrance of Wm. Sullwold must be equal to what Harold Ginsberg felt when he notified us about Bill's death. I would look forward to whatever you can find in the form of pictures to add to our library.)*

**John O'Connor, 724th [PILOT]** ... Received the latest edition of Ad-Lib and read it cover-to-cover without stopping. Especially interesting to me was your research and narration of the Kester-Johnson internee story. In reference to the SUMMARY account, beginning with the last paragraph, bottom of page 24 and continuing on page 25 .. Quote: "At about 0945 GMT formation difficulty was experienced when the flight leader suddenly reduced power causing the rear element leader (NOTE: this was myself in WOLF WAGON) to dive under him while Nos. 5 & 6 (Note: #6 was Johnson-Kester) were forced out of position to either side and down. About five minutes were required to reestablish the proper formation: (End of quote)." During our approach to the IP and final to target, our flight formation retarded erratically three times. I don't recall who was leading the flight or exactly what his problem was; I clearly remember however, in all three incidences Nos. 2 & 3 of the lead element and 4, 5 and 6 (Kester) of our low element suffered the effects of "Tail-End Charlyism!" Also, as the whole flight struggled to reform following our bomb-run turn from the IP, we were heavily attacked by 109s and 190s, especially our element. My last recollection of Kester-Johnson's predicament was, just before bombs away, when #6 was on fire, about 50 feet below our right wing and trailing us at 4 o'clock; Johnson hand-signaled us (Co-pilot Fran Russell and I) that they were leaving the formation and diving down for cloud cover. Shortly thereafter we dropped our bombs on signal from the flight leader-bombardier. Our crew always wondered what happened to the Johnson-Kester crew (#6) ... Now we know.

**Lewis Henslee, 726th [NAVIGATOR: BILL BIAS CREW]** ... Appreciate receiving the winter 1997 Ad-Lib, and especially liked the "Stanley Perlman Overseas Journal" -- a masterpiece.

The article by Sgt Ray J. Schrick (Special to the Stars and Stripes), "Someday, Somewhere, The Colonel May Write His Wonderful Diary," brought back memories.

I remember the day the Colonel's nose gunner was killed - after that our nose gunner dreaded having to fly as nose gunner, but he flew anyway. You must have felt the same way, up there in the nose turret.

As Stanley Perlman reports, on 3/30/44 (Sofia) our nose gunner was killed, (Lonesome Polecat) by a 20mm shell from a ME-109 diving straight down on us out of the sun. Sgt Andrew Wirtzberger was very brave indeed.

*(Editor ... Lew, you lavish too much praise on us nose gunners. I can't say THAT that position is any more prone to making "Gold Star Mother/Widows" than any others up there. Hell, I was only hit once by flak, but came back from missions with as many as 5 entry holes, and about as many exit holes in my turret. The biggest one fit my fist, the rest were just itty-bitty finger sizes.*

*As to the date, 8 February 1944, when the Colonel's nose gunner bought the farm; that was a mission to Piombino, Italy and the gunner was Sgt Leo Doring*



from Sid Winski's crew. Sid was Aircraft Commander on that mission, while the Colonel flew right seat as Mission Commander.

*Digging further into the files as to what happened during that month of February, I found that we lost 32 souls, either in combat or by way of accidents. 32 Gold Stars hung in windows back home.)*

**Hobart Wyant, 727th [GUNNER: LOUIS CAMERON'S CREW]** ... Something that has been on my mind for a long time. An Engineer from another crew, going on a mission, gave me his billfold to buy some things that day. I bought what he told me to, and I heard later that he didn't come back from the mission. I gave his billfold to someone in the office to send back home. I believe this happened after April 5, 1945. I have felt so much sorrow about this. But worse yet, I don't even remember his name, nor the crew he was with. Do you have any information about this crew and what happened?

*(Editor ... I can understand your plight, Hobart. Here is what I find .. if the date you gave is basically correct. We lost two ships in April, the last two the Group lost in the war (The mission was to Linz, Austria). One was from the 724th Squadron and was flown by Lt. Fred Ade. All crewmembers evaded safely. Without a doubt, not the one your looking for.*

*The second a/c (44-48776) was from your Squadron and piloted by Lt. Ed Stresky. This could be the one you have reference to. Of that incident only two survived; Nav/Bombardier Lt. James Gore and the Engineer, T/Sgt Ora Arnold. Casualties were: Lt's E.H. Stresky and A.L. Miskend; Sgt's G.D. Meyran, P. Hendrix, D.W. Peterson, Q.H. Thorvig and A.J. Barker.*

*Ora Arnold is a well ensconced member of our organization; bearing the Membership Number of 1011. I've already sent you his address. Maybe you will find out if he, if it was he, eventually got his billfold back. .... Addendum: A follow-up letter from Hobart tells that Ora Arnold was not the man in question.)*

**Dale Miller, 726th [PILOT]** ... I hope you can continue your good work for years to come. Your dedication to the 451st has enriched many of our lives, reminding us about an important part of our young lives.

**Peter Hirschburg, 726th [NAVIGATOR; PILOT UNKNOWN]** ... Enclosed find a contribution to assist you in the fine work you do in preparing information about the history of the group and it's members.

If questioned, I am sure that all the other participants in the group who are beneficiaries of your work, would join me in thanking you sincerely for all the effort and time you devote.

**John Stout, 727th [ROMG; PROUTY'S CREW]** ... Thanks for your latest issue of "Ad-Lib." The pictures and information are well worth any contribution I can make to your cash fund.

**John Hoppock, 727th [SQUADRON COMMANDER]** ... Happy to get your, upbeat as usual, card regarding my 'ASN.' Had to check my files and happily found my ASN. I am, as always, amazed and grateful for the great job you are doing. September 9, 10, 11 & 12 are all entered in my 'log.' Stef, I'm certain, will make Atlanta, as will Kay and I.

**Jim Dougherty, 724th [OPERATIONS CLERK]** ...

I received the pack of 451st Ad-Libs you sent. Going through them sure brought back memories. I was sorry to read about Royal Denton being killed in a car accident. We were pretty good friends in the service. I only recognized a few other names from the 724th, but then again the memory isn't quite what it use to be.

**Theodore McKnight, 451 SMW [SITE COMMANDER]** ... Enclosed please find check. - Keep the Ad-Libs coming. Even though I was not part of your Group (instead the 451st Missile Wing, Lowry AFB, CO) I still enjoy your production.

**Frank Lather, 727th [SQUADRON COMMANDER]** ... Here's a small contribution for all the effort and goodwill you give to the 451st. I must gather some of my vintage snapshots you may want to use in the Ad-Lib. By the way; Great winter issue. See you in Atlanta. Hope to being along son and daughter-in-law.

**Walter Cutchin, 724th [CREW CHIEF & AEG; HEATH'S CREW]** ... Thanks again for the good work putting out the Ad-Lib. I am enjoying going over Perlman's Journal. Even though he was in another squadron, some of the things he mentions relate to some of the same things that happened in the 724th.

**Stanley Perlman, 726th [FLIGHT CHIEF]** ... I never expected to see the publication of my days in the service, leaving the U.S. from Lincoln, Nebraska (December 5, 1943) until the end of the war (May 8, 1945) in Europe.

I sent you my memoirs of the 726th, and pictures of B-24s that encompassed our Squadron. I was happy to be involved with the "guys that kept them flying;" M/Sgt's Epperson and Zepf, Line Chief Peploe and his assistant M/Sgt Chase, along with the Crew Chiefs of my flight; Haggerty, Hanson, Clayton, Paulzine, McGee and Hall. And too, with special recognition to Electrical Specialist, Asp. I hope that the coverage will help those that served. I remember it as if it was yesterday.

**Frank Skilton, 724th [RADAR MECHANIC]** ... I've talked to 3 of my old bunk mates; Joe Palumbo, Fred Decker and Johnny LaCaze. All thanks to your/our organization. Keep up the good work.

**Lewis Williams, 727th [PILOT]** ... The #29 Issue (Dec 97) was one of your best. The Stan Perlman saga brought back many memories. We "Fairmont Oldies" all made the same route, experiencing the same ups and downs. Since I left the Group on 5 April 44 over Ploesti (POW), I can't relate to Foggia and subsequent activities. Consequently I do not know the majority of the 451st members.

I remained in the Air Force and went thru two more wars. I ran into quite a few of the old Group in my travels. Col. (Maj.) Don Jones [Hqs] in Panama, Col. Eaton and Younkin in the Pentagon and M/General (Capt.) Ken Young [727th Ops O - he was Pete Massare's boss]

Your story on the Turkey internees caused a chuckle. Bob Wade and George Nixon (from the Johnson/Kester crew) came to our POW camp in Bucharest. They were lamenting that they were the only survivors of their crew. A month later another 451st crew joined us. They told Wade and Nixon, "Hell, your crew and aircraft pulled out of the dive and went to Turkey where they are living it up!"

**Leo Pachter, HDQ [PHOTO SECTION]** ... The



arrival of your newsletter, is one impatiently awaited and read with joy. Keep 'em coming.

**Vic Melnick, 726th [AEG; LEW MORSE'S CREW]** ... The article by Stan Perlman was excellent. I'm glad someone had the presence of mind to keep a daily log.

**Harry Taylor, 725th [BOMBARDIER; BALLIET'S CREW]** ... The last Ad-Lib had a journal written by Stanley Perlman. Boy, did it bring back memories. I was in the 725th and our Commander was John Davis. We got in on all the missions Perlman covers in his journal.

All of us owe you a debt of gratitude for keeping us all together with publications of the Ad-Lib and organizing the reunions. I have never attended one and want to be at this one just to see you and Younkin.

**Thomas Sullivan, 727th [CREW CHIEF]** ... Thanks for the latest Issue of 'Ad-Lib.' I enjoy them very much and envy you old timers who can still walk and get out to the reunions. I hope to be able to read of your adventures for many years to come.

**William Brogadir, 724th [ARMAMENT SECTION]** ... I'll be looking forward to this reunion with great anticipation. By the way, I still fit into my Air Force uniform, so if you decide to 'do it again,' no problem.

It seems as the years go by, more of our 451st buddies have fallen victim to father time. We should cherish the thought of getting together while we can.

**Robert Gilberts, 724th [PILOT]** ... It's been some time since you first 'pricked' my conscience about accepting your handiwork and not resounding in any way. I'd like you to know I think your contribution as the editor and publisher of the 451 Ad-Lib is not only a great publication, but a real contribution to the history of WW-II from the 451st perspective.

I think I told you that I was transferred to the 885th Bomb Squadron out of Rosignano, Italy in December of January '45. I do know and appreciate hearing about some of my friends in the 451st (i.e. Lt. Col Maybay and Col. March, among others. I knew such as Col Stefanowicz, Major Sanford, etc.

I am saving every copy of your publication and will have them bound in the future for historical purposes as well as my own pleasure.

After the war I flew with the Wisconsin National Guard for 20 years before I retired. It was all a great life and one I wouldn't trade for anything.

**Charles Fishbaugh, 726th [ARMAMENT]** ... As usual, a good Ad-Lib. I liked Stan Perlman's journal. Here's why: I wrote my folks almost every day to let them know I was okay. Due to some censors, afraid I was giving out "top secret" information, I couldn't tell my folks much of anything. "It rained today - I loaded ships last night until midnight - went swimming down to the river, etc. Looking at Perlman's journal I can learn where the missions went, the bomb load, when my assigned ship went down, etc. A great piece! Thanks for printing it.

**Harold R. Clements, 727th [NAVIGATOR; ROACH'S CREW]** ... God willing, I have every intention of going to Atlanta to renew old acquaintances and to make new ones. Since I joined the group I have con-

tacted two of my old crew: Jim Ivey and Bill Rudolph. I fully realize the dedication and financial responsibility of what you are doing. Please accept my small contribution at this time. I intend to do whatever I can. Keep up the good work.

**Bob Wolcott, 727th [GUNNER; FEYERSEN'S CREW]** ... Enclosed a donation to help keep up your good work. I appreciate all you have done for our Group. Although I know very few guys, I enjoy reliving some of our harrowing experiences. Keep up the good work.

*(Editor ... It seems, Bob, that the older we grow the harder it is to recall some of the guys that shared our lives back then. But to recall some of the incidents we endured, that comes a lot easier. I become somewhat discouraged to hear from guys that get turned off because the names they encounter in the Ad-Lib, or for that matter, even at the reunions, aren't guys that come immediately to mind. We've got to accept the fact that the aging process is taking a toll on our memory, our health, our vitality, not to mention our lost members.)*

**James Cunningham [COMPLIMENTARY MEMBER]** ... Thanks for the article that you wrote on my uncle, SGT Jim Curtin of Lt. James Hunt's crew. I wish that I could have met my uncle, but reading information about the 451st brings me closer to knowing him. Just a few month's ago, SGT Merryl Frost's son came to San Francisco and visited my family. I found out how the pilot, Lt James Hunt, was regarded as a fine and well liked person.

I would like to request any copies of letters and pictures that you may have received about the crash or the crew. Even if the pictures are sensitive in nature, I would like to see them for my own knowledge and I would not show any of them to my family members if I thought that they might upset them.

*(Editor ... Rather than be the middle man in your quest, I'll include your address herewith: James Cunningham, 2507 29th Ave., San Francisco, CA 94116. As to photos that may be sensitive in nature, I have never encountered anything gory, or sensitive to the eye, that our Group Photographers took. Whether it was an unwritten code of ethics that they thought would later cause concern with the families, should they happen upon them, I don't know. Maybe someone out there has the answer.)*

**Harper Keebaugh, 724th [ORDNANCE]** ... Spending the Christmas Holidays in Denver with our family, we read in the Denver Post that there was a B-24 Museum down in Pueblo, CO, so we drove down to see it. The director is a retired B-24 navigator who flew from England and was shot down and held in a POW camp in Poland. He was delighted that I had been in the 451st Bomb Group that had B-24s. We're wondering if there are any unsold copies of the 'Fight'n 451st' book. It would be great for one to be there, along with any artifacts that people might want to donate to this Museum.

*(Editor ... Sorry, the book has long ago been sold out. It may be that someone out there is willing to part with theirs, but I seriously doubt it. Each book is now worth it's weight in gold. But who knows, someday in the far distant millennium it may show up in a rare book store or at a garage sale and some lucky soul will be*



reminded once again about the legendary Fight'n 451st. Keep an eye peeled on the internet for AMAZON BOOKS. They would be a prime source for rare books.)

**Edward Nall, 726th [PILOT]** ... I'm enclosing a small contribution, which I would like to give in memory of my Navigator, Murray F. Eskew, the only member of my original crew that did not make it home. On the day we bombed Oswiecim, Poland (26 December 1944) Murray was pulled from my ship and flew as lead Navigator for the Squadron. The rest of my crew and I bailed out over Hungary on the way home, having taken a direct hit in the left wing over Gyor, Austria. Murray was later selected to become the Squadron Navigator and papers were submitted for promotion to Captain; however, he was killed in the plane flown by Lt. Gerald Naylor and Major Jack Reichenbach when they were forced to bail out and were captured. I think all this happened while I and the rest of my crew were walking across Hungary and Romania to Bucharest.

*(Editor ... Your Memorial Contribution is gratefully accepted. Your letter gave me cause to delve into some of the history concerning both incidents. On the day that Murray Eskew lost his life aboard the lead ship, they were heavy laden with personnel; Lt. Stewart Hayden (Radar Operator), Lt. John Robertson (Nose Navigator), plus the normal compliment of regulars that made a total of 11. All were POWed, with the exception of Eskew and Lt. Robertson who were both KIAed. Seems that this was a bad day for the nose section. Both Navigators were killed and the Bombardier, Lt. Ray Barrett, was blown clear and can't remember just how he reached the ground. All this happened on 7 February 1945, while bombing Korneauburg, Austria. Your adventure, after 'bombs away' at Oswiecim, was no stroll-through-the-park, either.)*

**Karl Eichhorn, 726th [ARMAMENT SECTION]** ... Ad-Lib arrived today; 40 pages - WOW - you really outdid yourself this time! Obviously, I have not read it cover-to-cover yet (as I always do), but for some reason my eyes are always drawn to any item with the numbers 726 attached. A case in point is the letter from Richard Coleman, first pilot of one of our original crews. Of course, he is correct about his original "fly-away" plane being painted OD as were all the original planes -- he ought to know, he drove it! This bit of confusion illustrates that there are numerous mistakes in the identification of A/C in our Group book, "The Fight'n 451st Bomb Group." Coleman's plane (#42-07738) is not even listed with the other 726th planes (Pages 200 to 205). You will find it on Page 196, mixed in with the 725th Squadron. For some reason Coleman is erroneously listed as "LAST" pilot, rather than "ORIGINAL" pilot. I have no idea who Starman was. The plane photo you published in Issue 28 was "Hard-To-Get II," a replacement A/C in unfinished aluminum skin. I know because I have a very good photo I took of it in one of our revetments. It is the plane shown at top right on Page 193, in the 724th section, with Coleman erroneously listed as original pilot. I agree that this is all very confusing.

*(Editor ... Again, Karl, in your inimitable way of finding out the facts/truth, you have pulled me out of a quandary once again. It does seem that "Hard To Get" is all over the pages of "The Fight'n 451st" book; and*

*all in different Squadrons.)*

**Walter McKay, 727th [MECHANIC]** ... Glad to hear all board members approved my membership application, even though, because of the long time period involved, and a less than super memory, I put myself in the wrong Squadron. I'm happy someone is alert enough to get me in the right place. 727th does have a more familiar ring.

*(Editor ... I was grateful that you took my "tongue in cheek" acceptance of your questionnaire with total understanding. As your membership card shows; you are our 1,833rd member. Hopefully that number will be surpassed in the coming months.)*

**Sallie (Eaton) Elliott, [COMPLIMENTARY MEMBER]** ... Your "Ad-Lib" is truly a wonderful publication. We have learned so much just by reading it since Dad never spoke much about his war experiences. It is truly a great insight into the war years and we always read it with great fascination! As I've said before, Dad would be so pleased with all you do to enhance the preservation and heritage of the "451st." Keep up the good work!

**Wes Nelson, 451st SMW [via e.mail]** ... Could you run a short blurb asking if anyone has a copy of "The Fight'n 451st" they'd like to sell? I'm not having any luck at Amazon.com or QM Dabney. They are dealers in old books and I put "The Fight'n 451st" on order in both places. No copies found yet. I sure would love to have a copy for my library.

*(Editor ... as an addendum to Wes Nelson's plea ... he finally got a copy of the book from Amazon.com, but for quite a hefty price. I won't say how much as the price can vary, "As time goes by.")*

**Tom Rotello, 724th [MECHANIC]** ... Sorry I didn't get this to you sooner, but I'm having trouble with my eyes; matter of fact I'm going blind. I have other problems as well, so this may be the last time you'll hear from me. I'm enclosing a check because I'd like somebody to enjoy what I'll be missing. So thanks for everything and the reunions I did make. Hope you'll have hundreds more.

**Jarvis Anderson, 725th [PROPELLER SECTION]** ... In reading through all the Ad-Libs you sent, one article in Issue 20 really caught my eye and I would like to comment on it -- this being the one about Jess Dobernic, fire-balling right hander.

After being at Dyersburg for about a month we had a 3-day weekend for some reason and the base was practically abandoned. I was lying on my bunk snoozing when this big guy strolled through the barracks looking for someone to play catch with him. I was glad to oblige (I thought) and we went outside in the bright sunshine and we took our positions. He gave me a glove and the ball and I mumbled something about, "Let's just lob a few to each other and get the kinks out ...," when WHACK! The ball hit my glove and nearly tore my arm off. My hand was numb the rest of that day and I didn't volunteer to "play catch" with Jess, ever again.

*(Editor ... You won't have that opportunity "ever again," Jarvis. Jess passed away on 16 July 1998. His later baseball career was as relief pitcher on both the Chicago teams. He retired into the St. Louis area after baseball.)*

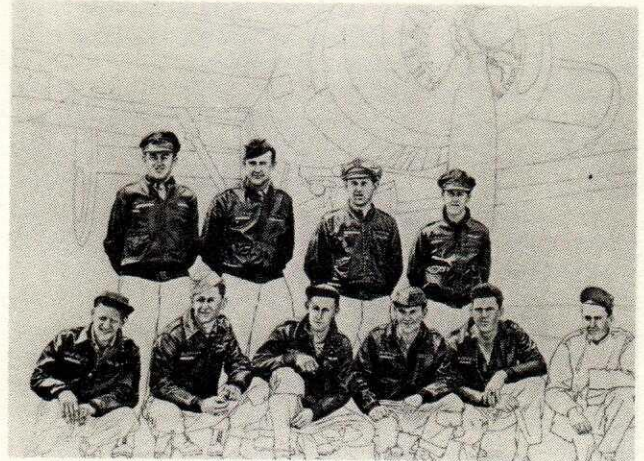
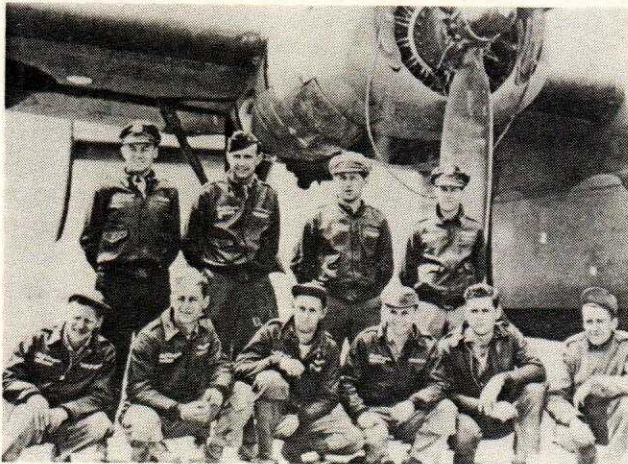


Herbert Kausch, 727th [BOMBARDIER: J. PEARSON'S CREW] ... First I want to thank you for all the time and effort you have expended in maintaining the history and organization of the 451st BG. The Atlanta reunion was the first I ever attended and I really

enjoyed being able to talk to old acquaintances and others who were there. I was reluctant to attend because none of my crew were there, but I am happy to say it was the best reunion I have ever attended. I met some of the nicest people in the world.

## FRANCIS RUSSELL (GRAPHIC ARTIST) DISPLAYS SKILLS

Former Copilot on the John O'Connor Crew, 724th (later A/C Comander on 7 July Blechhammer mission - shot down and evaded) puts his talents to work in producing the below results. His devotion to his crewmates, and dedication to the 451st is noted.



CREW 11 - 724th BOMB SQUADRON  
STANDING: L-R: JOHN O'CONNOR [PILOT], WILLIAM HUTTON [NAV.],  
WAYNE OWENS [BOMB], FRANCIS RUSSELL [COPILOT]  
KNEELING: FRED CLAMSER [GUNNER], HARVEY CARPENTER [AEG],  
WILLIAM RUNKLE [GUNNER], RICHARD HANCOCK [GUNNER],  
ROBERT BAIRD [CREW CHIEF],  
MISSING FROM PHOTO - LEM PHILLIPS [ROG]



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