

★ 451 ★ AD-LIB

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

Issue 34

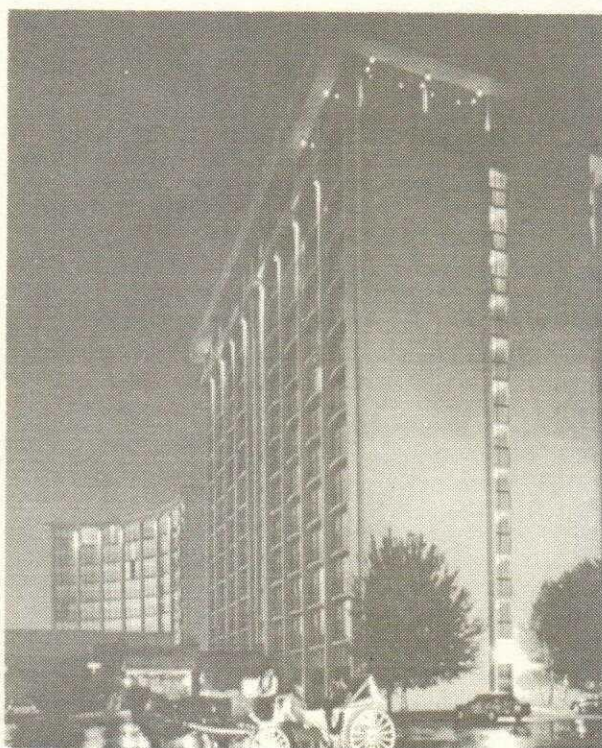
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Fall 2001

THIS IS THE PLACE (SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH)

These words were spoken by Mormon leader, Brigham Young, in July 1847 as he looked down into the valley what would soon be known as Salt Lake City.

This same feeling overtook this reunion planner when he saw the potential of what Salt Lake City (SLC) had to offer. I had, as had many of our members, tramped these same streets back in 43' and/or 44'. In my case it was my "repple depple" station, enroute to Gowen Field, ID for crew training, then to my wartime destination in Italy with the 451st. But along with the downtown SLC and Camp Kernes---there was Wendover AFB to consider. In total it seemed like "This is The Place" for our 2002 Reunion. And the city would be ready for us .. since the Winter Olympic would just prior to our convention.



Site inspections of quality hotels and contract talks with the various Director of Sales, the selection came down to one hotel of merit: WestCoast Salt Lake Hotel, located at West 600 South. With all the amenities expected, we arrived at a room rate of \$69.00, Single/Double. The date chosen, so's not to conflict with celebration of the Jewish Holidays, was 25 (Wednesday - arrival) to 29 (Sunday - hotel checkout) 2002. These dates, according to members living in the area, could be considered 'prime time' with the area colors reaching their peak.

Only very rudimentary plans have been formulated for the reunion (i.e., tours, entertainment, programs etc.), these plans will be finalized as we draw nearer to September 2002. Be assured that Wendover AFB will be part of our program.

But there are some things that you may wish to consider on your own. To those that are into genealogy, there is no better place to pursue your search. The Mormons have made Salt Lake City the genealogical capitol of the world. But, take it from me, you have to spend more than a couple hours to do any good. I spent most of an

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NOTICE

At the time of assembling this Ad-Lib, our Nation had been stuck by a terrorist element, both in New York City and in Washington, D.C. At this moment we still don't know how this will play out and are leaving the options open as to holding, or to cancel, our 2002 Reunion. If such be the case that we have to cancel, and you have declared your intent to attend, I'll make every effort to contact you. If a national emergency is NOT declared, then we shall proceed as planned. **GOD BLESS AMERICA**

"AD-LIB"

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

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afternoon, and even with competent assistance, couldn't even dent my 'Family Tree.' [I did a lot of chopping, but no chips were flying] You should plan to spend several days there. And bring along whatever basic information you have already located about your family.

If you drive in, or rent a car at the airport, then there are numerous scenic spots that will satisfy your wish to 'see something different.'

So ... As the old saying goes, "Stay Tuned."

MEMORIES OF WENDOVER

In the desert of old Utah,
Wendover is the spot,
Fighting a terrific heat wave,
In the land that God forgot.

We're up at five each morning,
To go digging in the sand.
No, we're not convicted convicts,
We're defenders of our land.

We spend some leisure hours,
Writing to our girls and friends,
And hoping they won't be married,
When we come home again.

We have washed ten thousand dishes,
And peeled as many spuds.
We have our hands all blistered,
From washing dirty duds.

All the inspections we have stood,
Is more than we can tell.
We hope it's nice in heaven,
For we know what it's like in hell.

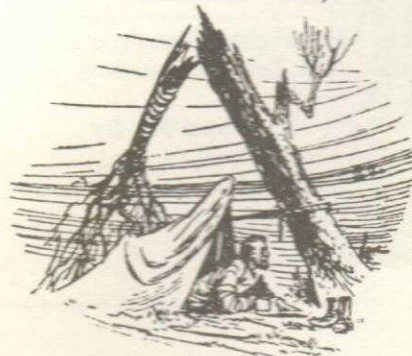
When this old life is over,
And we shall toil no more.
We'll do our final Dress Parade,
On that Bright and Golden Shore.

Then St. Peter will surely greet us,
And I know that he will yell,
"Come in boys from Wendover,
You've served you time in hell."

So, young boys take this warning,
And enjoy the things we've missed.
Don't ever get caught in the draft,
And never, NEVER try to enlist.



WENDOVER'S TENT CITY
(Identification on back of photo gives names as 'Jacobs & Hotchkiss' - 726th)



MAJOR GENERAL KNAPP: HIS LIFE AND TIMES

For some time I have been seeking information on the career of our second Group Commander, Lt. Colonel James B. Knapp [later Major General]. From personal contact with Major General Knapp (Retired), dating back, even before our Omaha Reunion, I knew that he had a distinguished and dedicated career with the Air Force. But since his death on February 18, 1999, I haven't found very much detailed information on his military life. So, recently I set some time aside and delved into researching his career.

Initially I knew that Lt. Colonel Knapp came into the 451st Bomb Group, by way of the 461st. While with the 461st he was the Commander of the 767th Squadron. He, along with Lt. Colonel Robert Applegate, joined the 451st in September 1944. Lt. Colonel Knapp as Group Commander and Lt. Colonel Applegate as Deputy Commander. Colonel Knapp concluded his duties with the 451st during the last week of December 1944, when Lt. Colonel Leroy Stefonowicz assumed command.

Going into special Web Sites on the Internet, I was surprised at what was/is available. Not only was his official United States Air Force Biography on-line, but other items on his life were uncovered.

But first let me start off with this official Air Force Biography;

MAJOR GENERAL JAMES B. KNAPP

Retired Aug. 1, 1972, Died
Feb. 18, 1999

General Knapp was born in 1915 [13 August], in Macomb, IL. He graduated from Blandinsville High School in 1932 and entered Transylvania University, Lexington, KY, where he studied one year. He returned to Illinois for two years where he attended Western Illinois State Teachers College, majoring in chemistry. He was appointed to the U.S. Military Academy, West



MAJOR GENERAL JAMES B. KNAPP, USAF (Retired)
1915 – 1999

Point, N.Y., in 1935 and graduated in June 1939 with a commission as second lieutenant and bachelor of science degree in engineering. He completed flying training at Kelly Field, Texas, in 1940.

The next two years he served as commander of a flying training detachment at the Army Air Corps Primary Flying School in Stamford, Texas. During World War II, General Knapp served in Italy with the Fifteenth Air Force as squadron commander, group deputy commander, and then commander. He completed 43 combat missions with a total of 303 flying hours. In 1944 he was assigned as chief of operations, Mediterranean Allied Air Forces, to coordinate and plan air actions of the Atomic Energy Commission.

In September 1945 he returned to the United States and was assigned to Head-

quarters Army Air Forces in Washington, D.C., where he served as staff planning officer and later as chief, Strategy Branch of war plans Division, Office of the Assistant Chief of Air Staff for Plans. From July 1947 to July 1948 he was assistant to chief of Plans Division, Deputy Chief of Staff of Operations, Headquarters U.S. Air Force. He next was executive secretary, Military Liaison Committee to the Atomic Energy Commission.

In June 1949, General Knapp went to Chatham Air Force Base, Ga., as deputy commander and then commander, 2d Bombardment Group. In June 1951 he was assigned to Second Air Force, Barksdale Air Force Base, La., as staff officer and then director of operations. He entered the Air War College, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., in August 1952.

General Knapp went to Goose Air Base, Labrador, in August 1953, as base commander in April 1957 assumed command of the 4082d Strategic Wing.

He returned to the United States in June 1957 and was appointed director



LT. COLONEL KNAPP: 451st GROUP COMMANDER
SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1944

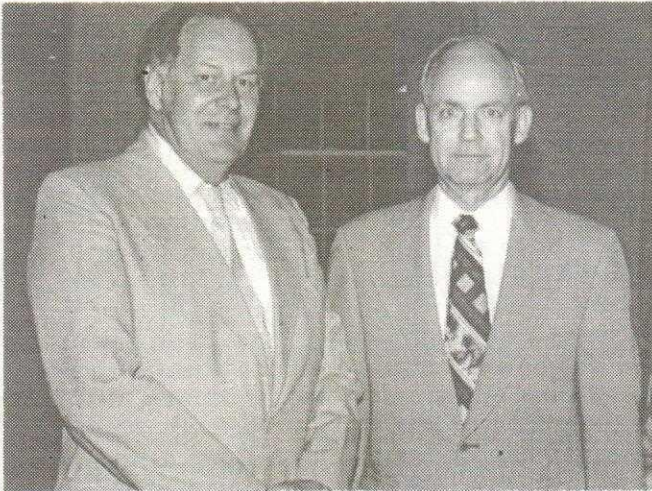
of civil engineering for Strategic Air Command Headquarters, Offutt Air Force Base, Neb. In July 1963 he assumed command of Sixteenth Air Force with headquarters at Torrejon, Spain. He returned to Headquarters Strategic Air Command, in October 1964, as director of personnel in July 1966 became chief of staff. From January 1969 to August 1969 he served as senior member, Military Armistice Commission, United Nations Command, at Seoul, Korea.

General Knapp assumed command, in August 1969, of Chanute Technical Training Center, Chanute Air Force Base, Ill.

His military decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Legion of Merit with two oak leaf clusters, Distinguished Flying Cross with oak leaf cluster, Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Presidential Unit Citation Emblem, and French Croix de Guerre.

He is a registered professional engineer in the states of Nebraska and Colorado, and received an honorary doctor of science degree from Parsons College, Iowa, in 1959.

He was promoted to temporary grade of major general effective March 7, 1961, with date of rank July 1, 1956.



BOB KARSTENSEN & GENERAL KNAPP
(Chance Meeting At Chanute AF Association Meeting)

Next my research led me to an Internet site that was part of a newsletter put out by the Johns Hopkins University (March 30, 2000). It reads in part:

KNAPP DEANSHIP DEDICATED

By Michelle Fenster, Editor

The dedication of the James Barclay Knapp Deanship of the Zanvyl Kreiger School of Arts and Sciences was held Monday afternoon in Schafler Auditorium. It was sponsored by Michael Bloomberg, Chairman of the Board of Trustee and University President William Brody.

Speakers included F. Whitten Peters, Secretary of the United States Air Force and Richard McCarty, the first James Barclay Knapp Dean to the School of Arts and Sciences.

The endowment, donated by J. Barclay Knapp of the Class of 1979, was made in honor and memory of his father, Major General James Barclay Knapp. It not only provides the funding for the Dean's position in the School of Arts and Sciences, but also funds such programs as the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.

The ceremony began with the presentation of colors by the Johns Hopkins Reserve Officer Training Corps. Sharon Kugler, University Chaplain, then led everyone in the invocation, stressing the importance of education.

Bloomberg proceeded to welcome everyone and thanked Knapp for his generous donation. Bloomberg explained that it not only honors J.B. Knapp, but also celebrates the United States Army and the freedom that it provides, especially in the university setting.

Brody agreed, saying "We are deeply grateful. By creating an endowed chair for the dean, Barclay is ensuring leadership [at Johns Hopkins University]."

He gave a brief history on the history of endowments and made a promise that "this gift will be honored and maintained now and in the future."

Barclay then took the opportunity to say a few words.

He spoke of his father and of his experiences with the university. Knapp received his MBA from Hopkins in 1979. He is a member of the Krieger School of Arts and Science's Advisory Council, as well as a founding member of the former national chair of the School's Second Decade Society.

"To endow the Deanship is to honor both of the major institutions in my life: Hopkins and my father," Knapp said.

He expressed his hope that the donation would "provide seed money for new ideas."

Peters spoke last. He talked of Major General Knapp's service.

General Knapp was a 1939 graduate of West Point and, during his career in the US Air Force, was awarded the Silver Star, two Distinguished Service Medals and the French Croix de Guerre.

He flew 59 combat missions during World War II and led the Military Armistice Commission at the United Nations Command in Seoul, South Korea in 1969.

He also served as the Director of Civil Engineering, personnel director and Chief of Staff with the Strategic Air Command.

Delving even deeper into the facts that surrounded General Knapp and his involvement in the ongoing Armistice Settlement between United Nations Command and North Korea, I found the following. Keep on mind that the Korean Action started in 1950 and the fighting was suspended in 1953, but the negotiations continued until sometime in 1998. There were, in that interim, some sixty (60) senior ranking officers from all branches of service, including the last four (4) negotiators from the Republic of South Korean Army, working towards that goal. General Knapp was the thirty second (32) to take part. This extraordinary file reads in part:

Panmunjom, Korea - (UPI) - The American general and the North Korean general glared at each other across the table and the only sound was the wind howling across the barren hills outside their hut. Maj. Gen. James B. Knapp, negotiator for the United Nations Command (UNC), was waiting for Maj. Gen. RiChosun of the

Democratic People's Republic of North Korea to propose a recess. They sat there, arms folded, for 4 1/2 hours. Not a word. Finally, Gen. Ri got up, walked out and drove away. - Evening Bulletin, Philadelphia (11 April 1969)

[Continuing] Their charter is limited to military matters, so the fact that open war has been prevented for four decades can not be viewed as a vain accomplishment. No one envisioned that the truce in Korea would be extended to become the longest in modern military history; even fewer would have believed that an agreement reached with such difficulty on the very battle field it was trying to silence could prove so enduring.

By now I was really getting into the task of seeking out information on our General James B. Knapp. Checking through various documents I had on hand, I located the youngest son of General Knapp, Mr. Barclay Knapp, who had financially given so magnanimously to the memory of his dad through the Johns Hopkins University. Contacting him by regular mail, and later through e.mail, he passed along his reflections on what he remembered about his dad's dedicated military career and his being a good father.



COL. KNAPP PRESENTING DFC's TO MAJOR ANDERSON (724th CO) & 1LT MASSARE (PILOT, 727th)

Reflections on my father, MG James B. Knapp

By Barclay Knapp.

I was the last of five children, born after my father had already become Brigadier General while serving as commander of Goose Bay Air Base in Labrador Canada. My earliest memories, however, are from Offut Air Force Base after my dad was transferred there shortly after my birth. Growing up on "General's Row" at Offut, I was surrounded by the most famous names of the early Strategic Air Command - LeMay, Power, Ryan, Compton, Nazzaro, et al. In my lifetime, my father's persona was definitely shaped by two very strong and important forces: those early days of SAC and the ongoing cold war.

My father was a very "silent" warrior. Although I knew vaguely about his efforts in WWII and could see the medals, he almost never talked about any of his experiences of the war when I was growing up. Of more importance at the dinner table were the Soviet Union, China, East Germany and the general communist threat. He didn't really talk about Vietnam, either. I think he, like most of the military at the time, was quietly very frustrated about our strategy there, i.e., we weren't doing what we had to do to win.

He jumped at the chance to be UN Negotiator in Korea, and I think it capped his career. It came just after

he had spent more than a year battling colon cancer -- which almost killed him. He arrived just after the sailors from the Pueblo were returned and so tensions were very high.

The North Koreans shot down a transport plane shortly after, and that caused a series of high-profile meetings. The first was a "walk-out" meeting where my father delivered an ultimatum and then walked out of the meeting -- the shortest ever. The last was the "longest day" meeting where he and the North Korean general stared at each other without a word for four hours. The North Korean lost face by having to leave -- against the protocol -- which gave the US a significant diplomatic victory. As a kid, it was a thrill to see one's father on the front page of every newspaper, Time and Newsweek.

Little did anyone know his secret to success at that meeting. He had made sure to wear a relief tube that day, while evidently the North Korean forgot his! Must have been all those long B-24 flights that gave him the idea.

I got to know my father so much better after his retirement from the Air Force in 1972. It was then I discovered his true feelings about his involvement in WWII. Although he surely believed in the cause, he hated the death and destruction that went along with it. I accompanied him to one Bomb Group reunion in 1979, and saw how he was genuinely interested in the men, their families and the camaraderie. I also saw that he was virtually uninterested in talking about actual combat in any way.

He was an extraordinarily compassionate man wrapped by a steel cage: he could weep when confronted by a bird with a broken wing or a small boy with a scuffed knee (me), and then absolutely rivet a young airman whose uniform was disheveled or who didn't salute crisply enough. The West Point in him survived till his last days: he would insist on a shave and a "new uniform" (pajamas actually) every day during his last days on earth, no matter how much pain he was in from the stomach cancer which finally got him.

My father really wanted to be a doctor when he was growing up. He was actually accepted to The Johns Hopkins University medical school, but did not have the money to attend. Instead, he got an appointment to West Point. He wanted me to be a doctor, too -- A wish of his I didn't fulfill. I did, however, go to John Hopkins and have had some success in my life too. When it came time to give something back to my Alma mater, it was easy to decide on the gift. I endowed a division in my father's name -- both for his role in shaping my life, and because although neither of us followed the earlier paths set out for us (which revolved around Johns Hopkins), we were both better off as a result.

In every way, my father was both human and super-human at the same time -- a perfect role model for me that I continue to follow every day.

Another snippet I uncovered on the Internet:

When he (Knapp) retired from the Air Force in 1972, he became director of planning at the Metropolitan Utilities District of Omaha, Nebraska, where the younger J.B. Knapp spent his early years. Sadly, this February (1999), a month after his son made his magnificent commitment to the Krieger School, General

Knapp died in San Antonio, Texas. His son was able to tell him of the extraordinary gift made in his name shortly before his death.

General Knapp was survived by his wife, Mary

Emma, and daughters: Gail Greene, Meta Fouts, Mary Beth Susman, Barbara Bremer and son: J. Barclay Knapp.



COLONEL KNAPP IN COMBAT FLIGHT GEAR



COLONEL KNAPP AT GROUP HEADQUARTERS

SOLDIER'S RESTING PLACE

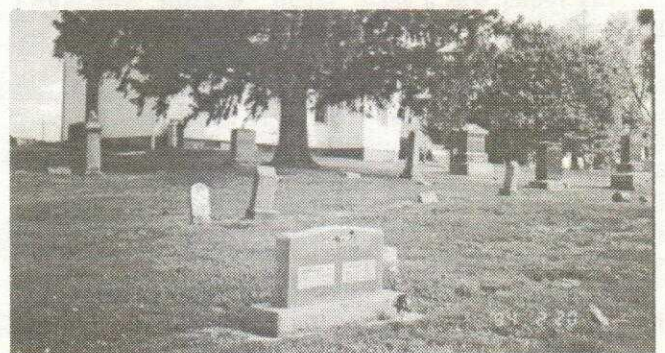
Nestled in the rolling hills of mid-lower Wisconsin lies an old country cemetery. A small but stately white Church lies atop the highest knoll. It has probably been abandoned in favor of a more prominent edifice in the neighboring town of Richland Center. This cemetery, not unlike many that we've seen in the past, has its share of hero soldiers and commoners. You can wander through National Cemeteries and share memories with many of the soldiers that lie there. But to come upon a small country cemetery, in the middle of Wisconsin's rich lush farmland and find where one of your buddies lies at rest, has more meaning than you can imagine.

I took that trip, early this past summer. I went to visit the grave of 724th Pilot, Verne G. Johnson. It was a nostalgic and private visit. From the earliest days of our 451st organization, Verne would occasionally drop by my house and we'd go over old shipping orders and review them as to which Squadron, and at which time that person served. He had a keen memory as to who belonged where. V.G., as he liked to be called, served in the 724th as one of the original pilots, going overseas with the original cadre.

V.G. finished his tour, took his separation from the military and settled in to being a family man (father to Donald, Carolyn Kay and Judith) and a respected dairy farmer. V.G. enjoyed life, as could be seen when he made his appearance at our reunions. The last one he attended was in Atlanta, GA, along with his son, Don.

For whatever reason, I felt compelled to pay my res-

pects since I could not attend his funeral. I was not sorry I came. To experience the serenity and solace of the resting place of "my friend and wartime comrade" gave me comfort. I'd like to share these photo's so you can understand some of my feelings.



ITALY & YUGOSLAVIA

(Continued Saga by Pilot John A. Foster - 725th)

(Continued from Ad-Lib, Issue 33)

We saw our first shots fired at us in anger, i.e. flak, as we approached our first target near Sofia, capital of Bulgaria. On March 30 we had climbed out of Italian airspace and crossed the Adriatic Sea, and were flying at twenty four thousand feet. It was cold; all of us wore electric underwear under our flight suits, leather jackets and flak jackets. By the time we began to see the black bursts in front of us, we were all wearing out "tin hats." The temperature up here was minus 55 degrees Fahrenheit, and it was cold. While those of us up front shivered, the men in the waist window area were getting the worst of it. On This first trip at high altitude no one had thought to bring face protection. As a result two of the gunners caught some frostbite. Starting with the next mission they wore ski masks.

Flak happens when shells from 88mm (or larger) anti-aircraft guns explode and scatter steel shrapnel up to 25 or 30 feet from the burst. The guns that fire them are aimed visually or by radar and fire clips of five shells automatically. These guns are set up on batteries of from five to twenty-five. The more important the target, the more guns are in place and the more steel fragments are in the air. We saw enough of this stuff to give us the "willies," but on this mission we were not hit.

But we did see, and exchange fire with our first German fighters; ME 109's. At last we knew why we'd spent all those training hours looking at slides of enemy aircraft and learning to identify them. First word of the fighters came from Lieran in the tail turret. By inter-com he reported two 109's tracking our course and about a thousand feet above us. Everyone was watching as they passed over and suddenly flipped into a "split-S" maneuver and headed directly at us. At once, the nose and top turret, manned by Martin and Campbell, started firing; they were taking their first shots at a live target. I figured that the fighters were shooting at us, but I couldn't prove it. What I was most aware of was the vibrations from our pairs of fifty caliber guns and the acrid smell of the cordite, one of the ingredients in our ammunition. All of this was more exciting than scary, but I do remember trying to recall the words to the Twenty-Third Psalm. This confrontation ended quickly as the enemy planes dove under us and kept going.

We got to the target, Schmitt dropped our twelve 500 lb. bombs, we made a steep turn away from the heavy flak and headed for home. Our B-24 was intact and running smoothly and all aboard were none the worse for our first bombing mission against Nazi Germany.

On April 5th the expected 4

a.m. wake up call did not come. At breakfast I learned that another crew was assigned to our plane for a major mission against the oil refineries at Ploesti. Most of our crew went down to an area near the runway to watch the 7 a.m. takeoff. It was exciting to watch the fully loaded 24's lumber down the strip and lift-off at intervals of a couple of minutes. This morning we watched more action than we had bargained for. We saw our beautiful B-24J (the ship we'd brought overseas), today piloted by Lt. Cotton, come roaring down the runway. We noticed that he had not pulled his nosewheel off soon enough and, as that thought penetrated, the nosewheel collapsed. The nose went down and slid momentarily until the starboard wing went down. As that happened there was a terrible explosion as the twenty-seven hundred gallons of aviation fuel blew up, blasting parts of airplane and it's contents, "from hell to breakfast." As the wreck settled down partially on and off the runway a monstrous ball of flame rose to several hundred feet and began to float in our direction. A couple of us dove under a truck, but fortunately the gas burned out and only black smoke floated on the breeze.

Now the bombs began to explode, so it was time to clear out of the area. Later, large bomb fragments were found one half mile from the crash site. At the scene we had to assume that all ten fine young men had perished. We later learned that one man had survived. He was badly burned but alive a able to return home. We saw him on the ship en-route to the U.S.A.

[Editor: Records show that the crew consisted of:

Lt Robert E. Quisenberry as A/C Commander

Lt Willard L. Cotton, Copilot

Lt Ernest G. Graf, Navigator

Lt Robert E. McGaffic, Bombardier

T/Sgt Joseph A. Esposito, AEG;

S/Sgt Charles H. Trimmer, ROG

Sgt Sol Marcus, AG

S/Sgt James L. Crowe, AG

S/Sgt James D. White, AG

My records do not show who was the surviving Gunner.]



BELIEVED TO BE CRASH SCENE - 5 APRIL 1944

After most of the bombs had been accounted for, the takeoffs continued and our Group became part of the first high altitude mission to Ploesti with seven hundred fifty aircraft. Their reception over the target area resulted in the loss of eight aircraft and crews from our Group. One of those that returned to base had to belly land without flaps due to hydraulic system damage. Good landing; they all walked away from it, that is all but the two waist gunners who had left by parachute over the target. We were told that flak fragment had



**TAKE-OFF CONTINUES REGARDLESS OF CRASH
BELIEVED TO BE 5 APRIL 1944 MISSION**

come in and hit an oxygen bottle which started a fire. With that going on they decided it was time to leave. They were caught and interned by the Germans. They gained their release in November, 1944, when the Russians came through Romania.

The next day was April 6th and it was our turn to fly. Our mission was to the town of Pitesti, a rail center about fifty miles west of Ploesti. Here was where all the oil shipments from the big refineries in Ploesti were assembled before moving to destinations in Germany. They must not have expected us to return to that area so soon, because for us this was a "milk run." We flattened the marshalling yards and most of the train loads of gasoline, but was no fighters and very little flak.

On return to our base at Manduria, we learned that we were to move to a new base at Castelluccio, a few miles south of Foggia. A few days later our crew, plus all our belongings, were loaded on a G.I. truck and treated to a four hour ride over some very crummy Italian roads.

Our arrival at the new base we concluded that the new setup justified the uncomfortable truck ride. Castelluccio had an east-west runway surfaced with steel mats. Airplanes were parked in individual revetments. The tents went up quickly and the weather did not require us to have stoves. After we'd gotten pretty well settled, a small unoccupied house, living quarters upstairs and cattle below, was converted into an Officers Club.

For two weeks after the move we did very little flying. A combination of canceled missions and bad weather kept us on the ground except for a practice mission and another "milk run" to Zagreb.

On April 23rd the mission target was a German Airfield at Bad Voslau in Austria. This day we were carrying "frags," i.e., fragmentation bombs. These would be like twenty pound hand grenades with tail fins. They were hung on racks in the bomb bay in clusters. When released the clusters came apart so that the target area was very well plastered. Since, after release by the whole formation the sky become full of these things, we opened the formation to avoid obvious problems. After turning away from the target we snuggled up into a normal tight formation just in case fighters would be wait-

ing for us.

The next, April 24th, we flew a load of five hundred pounders to destroy marshalling yards in Bucharest, back again to Romania. Strike photos showed heavy damage to rolling stock and facilities.

On the 28th of April we tried to hit a seaplane station at Orbetello in Northern Italy. Heavy cloud cover prevented getting the intended results.

I think it was our twelfth mission that on April 29th found us winging over the very blue Mediterranean on the way to Toulon, the heart of the French Riviera. The bomb load consisted of six one-thousand pound bombs to be dropped on Nazi submarine pens. We flew at ten thousand feet or less while on the first half of the trip. As we got closer to the target we began to climb to the assigned altitude of twenty one thousand. As the climb progressed we began to lose manifold pressure and the engines could not produce enough power to hold our position. I first dropped down and tried to join a lower element. We still couldn't keep in position, so one at a time we began to drop our bombs into the ocean. By the time we reached the I.P. (the point where we begin the bomb run) we were six thousand pounds lighter but were still having problems. Roberts leaned over, slapped me on the knee and hollered into the inter-com, "What the hell are we doing here, we have nothing to deliver!" I called the fighter escort to tell them we were dropping out and heading for Corsica. When we got back down to ten thousand feet the pressure came back to normal and we cruised on to Corsica at 160 m.p.h. without further difficulties.

This U.S. Air Force field was home base for a group of P-47 fighters doing escort duty and other attack bomber missions. As we were landing a bunch of them followed us in. We were told that they were mostly out of fuel and very anxious for us to get off their runway. We accommodated them by pulling off onto the grass until they were all down.

When we were parked, Campbell took a good look at the supercharger ducts and found that during nighttime maintenance, the fasteners holding sections of the duct together had not been secured and because of leakage could not carry sufficient boost to the engines. This was the conditions on all four engines.

When we reported-in to the Base Commander, we ran into Captain Bowen, who, with another Group Officer, had come over to pick up another plane that had come in - in trouble - the previous week. During a quick lunch it was decided that Bowen would fly our plane back and the other pilot would take the other one. We took off and climbed to an agreed altitude of one hundred feet. I was in the copilot's seat and soon after the wheels were up, I nodded off. Next thing I knew Bowen had popped me on the shoulder and yelled that we had lost an engine. He already had the men in the back throwing anything heavy overboard. But he was also scanning the instruments, and when he got to the magnetos switches by my right knee, he cursed and told me to switch on the one that my knee had moved to the off position. The engine was started promptly and we were back on normal operation and the two plane formation continued with no further incidents ... except for the landing. The other plane turned onto final approach first and we got caught in his prop wash. We bounced around

a bit, but Bowen settled it down and landed in good shape.

Most of our targets were in the Balkan countries of Yugoslavia, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria. En-route to these objectives we attempted to deceive the enemy radar early warning stations by heading for an obvious target and then turning from that course to the objective we were scheduled to hit. But coming home it was a different story. No matter where we were returning from, we would, in full formation, pass over Mostar, not far from the coast in central Yugoslavia.

Late in April, we came back from a very successful raid on R.R. marshalling yards in Budapest. It had been a long trip and as we descended to about twelve thousand feet, we were smoking and eating K rations. As we followed the leader into the Mostar area, we turned right and followed a river valley; this move came after a few bursts of flak showed up.

At this point all hell broke loose. The air around us suddenly blossomed with many, many flak bursts. I saw four shells explode at our altitude, but ahead and to the right of us. The fifth shell made a direct hit on the plane that flew about fifty feet above us. The burst tore off the entire tail section, rudders, elevator and tail turret. That B-24 went immediately out of control and was last seen spiraling to the ground. We saw no parachutes, but learned later that two crewmen had jumped clear.

[Editor's note ... The described incident happened on 17 April 1944. It involved a/c #41-29220 - "HONEY CHILD." It took two hits, as described by other eyewitnesses. One in the aft section and the second in the bomb bay. The crew consisted of:

2LT James G. Price, pilot - KIA
 2LT Alexander J. Muszynski, copilot - KIA
 2LT David O. Ryon, navigator - KIA
 2LT Herbert W. Massa, bombardier - KIA
 T/Sgt Gordon K. Butts, AEG - POW
 T/Sgt Charles L. Isenhower, ROG - KIA
 S/Sgt Robert W. Bissell, AG - KIA
 S/Sgt Everett L. Sanborn, AG - POW
 S/Sgt Harry A. Parsons, AG - KIA
 S/Sgt Andrew M. Tittle, AG - POW

Further research shows that copilot, Lt Alex Muszynski, was flying as 'new inexperienced combat pilot' and most of his original crew was later transferred to the 726th Squadron.]

The formation disintegrated as each pilot went into evasive action. Dolan reached over and pushed all four throttles wide open. I put us into a steep diving turn and then pulled up in the opposite direction. We did catch some flak fragments, but they must have been pretty well spent. I had some concern about the tires that were exposed, so as odd lots of the Group approached the home field, I requested permission to land separately from other aircraft. Our landing was smooth as silk since the tires had suffered no punctures. The shot of whiskey from the Flight Surgeon tasted very good that night as we went through the regular debriefing.

May 10th 1944 started with a four a.m. wakeup call. Breakfast was at 4:30 and then to briefing at five thirty. Here the Group Operations Officer announced the target was Wiener-Neustadt, Austria. Our specific objective was to bomb a major ball-bearing manufacturing plant, plus a nearby air field. The Intelligence Officer gave us

statistics on the number of fighters and volume of flak we could expect. Finally the Weatherman gave us a reading on cloud conditions and winds aloft. Somebody wished us good luck and good hunting and we were dismissed until take-off at seven hundred hours (military talk for 7 a.m.). Roberts, Garber, Schmitt and I went to our tent to get heavy clothes, 45 automatics and parachutes before meeting the other men at the plane. This one was normally assigned to another crew; it was older, a B-24H, and the other crew had all left their parachutes on board. The airplanes were always pre-flighted before the flight crews arrived. However, Campbell was already checking external items while the other gunners gave their respective guns a careful checking out.

When we were aboard we made a urinary contribution to a five gallon can that was brought along for that purpose. This was part of a pre-startup routing and was done for safety reasons. Some manned positions on the plane were equipped with relief tubes, and at warm altitudes these can be used without complication. But when outside air gets below freezing, liquid flowing through the tube to the outside is rapidly carried by the slipstream to the rear where it is deposited as ice on the tail gunner's window, obscuring his vision.

Finally, at exactly 0700 the green flare shot from the tower and the lead plane started to roll. We watched ten or twelve ships move down the runway, then we taxied to number one position at the end of the long steel mat. Getting off the ground with a full load was always a nervous situation. There came a time when the four big Pratt & Whitney engines had developed all the power and all the speed of which they were capable and we could see the end of the runway not far away. This was a time to ask God for a little extra lift to get us off the ground.

Now we began to form up. For about thirty minutes we would climb and circle until the entire Group was in the air heading northeast over the Adriatic, over Yugoslavia to Austria. Speed, once you are in the air and climbing with a full load, is extremely critical. It has been said that a loaded B-24 took off at 150 m.p.h., climbed at 155, cruised at 160 and stalled out at 148 m.p.h. So, if we are low in the formation and the leaders are climbing at 155, we'd be right on the edge of stalling speed. This was one of the days I pulled out of formation, keeping my element in sight so I could keep the speed up until we got to an altitude where a decent speed could be maintained; then we'd join the others. All of us were aware of several crews in other Groups that had been lost during this dicey first thirty minutes of the mission.

By 0900 we were part of a mighty force of two hundred fifty B-24s climbing over the Adriatic Sea. All systems were working well, the props were in perfect sync and Campbell had begun to transfer gas from the outboard wing tanks. Our plane was in a low outside element so I was looking past Roberts and through his window to maintain a position fifteen or twenty feet from the wing of the plane next to us on our right.

As we passed over the Yugoslav city of Split our rate of climb increased so that we'd be at twenty-four thousand feet when we reached the I.P., a few minutes before Wiener-Neustadt. When the formation got to fifteen thousand, all the gunners would fire short bursts to

make sure they were operational. At about nineteen thousand feet, Zonghetti called from the waist to tell me that flame was coming from the exhaust of number one engine. This is a fairly common occurrence called "torching" and is quickly remedied by shutting down the engine until the flame disappears. After just a few minutes the engine was restarted and we moved to get back in formation. Then something else happened. Campbell called from his top turret to tell me that we had a good sized hole in the top of number three engine and that orange flames and black smoke were coming from it. Roberts looked out his window and said it looked like the engine was on fire. Then I looked out Robert's window and I too saw the flame and smoke. Since the wing to which that engine was attached was full of gas, I gave the order to bail out and rang the bell that emphasized that order.

Now it was time to set the auto pilot so the plane stayed straight and level. These devices got practically zero usage on combat missions, and this one wasn't working. So I trimmed up the ship as I heard from Lieran that all the crew in the waist section had jumped and he was about to go. Sam Garber and Bob Painter left through the nose wheel door and Roberts went out through the bomb bay. Now it was time for me to go and when I looked through the door to the bomb bay, I saw that Campbell was still on the catwalk, stuck between the firewall and the bomb racks; the space is not very wide and his clothing, or his harness, had gotten snagged. After fussing with the snag for a few seconds, without success, I simply climbed onto his back and we dropped through the opening "piggyback."

[To be continued]

MEMORIAL DAY TRIBUTE -- 2001

By Dr. Stan Cosby, D.Min.

(Nephew to Glenn Thomson Crew Chief - 725th)

She was alone and a little out of place. A beautiful woman, mid-seventies, with striking white hair. Out of place because this was, after-all, a Memorial Day display of World War II militaria. A guy thing. A circle of tables at Promenade Mall displaying vintage uniforms, artillery shells, military patches and insignia, models of tanks and planes and ships, all telling the story of another era, another time.

We struck up a conversation. Eye to eye, I saw just how beautiful she was. Again, the perfectly arranged white hair. Delicate features with fine lines at the corners of mouth and eyes. Eyes, soul-deep, though somewhat misted by tears. I could tell she had been remembering.

"Did you have a husband in service?"

"Oh, yes," she said proudly, "He was a pilot. He flew C-47s. He made parachute drops over Holland." And then she grew quiet, afraid of saying too much, afraid of becoming emotional.

"I get nervous sometimes when I talk about it," she confessed with a weak smile.

Then, of course, I asked the inevitable, the obvious. "Did he come home?"

"Well, he did survive the war. After we "got them," he stayed as part of the occupation forces in Germany. He then flew food supplies and medicines. He was assigned to top secret service, flying government officials. I moved to Washington, D.C. to be closer to information about him. One day he was to fly some government officials out of Toulouse, France. The plane crashed on take off. Everyone was lost ..." She choked a little as she said it.

"Oh, I'm sorry," I said. And then, trying to brighten the subject and also to give her a little time to gain composure, I asked, "Are you from Tulsa?" But she went on with the story. "Well, for a while, I lived with his mother and then came back to Tulsa."

"Did you remarry?"

"Oh, yes," she said, "years later," and there was a little frown of disgust which let me know clearly, *that* was an unpleasant subject. It was obvious, this fly-boy of hers was the love of her life and she had come that day, Memorial Day 2001, to remember and, I think also, to think forward a little.

"That must seem like a long time ago," I said,

"And yet just like yesterday."

She nodded thoughtfully and then she whispered: "He will always be young to me."

My throat locked up. My eyes swam. Words just would not come, both us, perfect strangers, caught in this rare moment of heart touching heart. Then, seeing my difficulty, she gently reached over and squeezed my arm, gratefully, I think. She knew that I knew. That, at last, her story had been told and someone understood.

Sometimes, time stands still. Sometimes, perfect strangers share their souls. Sometimes, memories bring a fresh wind and stories of the heart bring a new hope.

Again, there was a gentle squeeze, a tearful smile and quickly, without another word, she turned and disappeared into the crowd. And standing there alone in the Mall surrounded by people, I could not resist one compelling thought: "Dear Lady, when next you see him, thank him for me."

THE MUFFLED DRUMS SAD ROLL HAS BEAT
THE SOLDIER'S LAST TATTOO.
NO MORE ON LIFE'S PARADE SHALL MEET
THAT BRAVE AND FALLEN FEW.

YOUR OWN PROUD LAND'S HEROIC SOIL
MUST BE YOUR FITTER GRAVE.
SHE CLAIMS FROM WAR HIS RICHEST SPOIL,
THE ASHES OF THE BRAVE.

MORE ON THE 1LT WILLIAM SILLIMAN INCIDENT (Crash Off Coast Of North Africa On Way Home)

The ongoing saga of the loss of aircraft B-24L #44-49596, piloted by 1LT William N. Silliman (725th) continues to draw attention from our readers and those closely involved. This aircraft, on 4 June 1945, with its homeward bound crew and passengers, were lost off the west coast of North Africa shortly after take-off from Mallard Field, Dakar. They were scheduled for Hunter Field, Savannah, Georgia.

To recap the events that proceed this fatal crash, as was chronicled, in part, in the latest Ad Lib (Issue 33, Page 21 - Victor Melnick's letter), we have to go back to 21 March 1945. On that day 2Lt Silliman, flying a mission to bomb the Bruck Marshalling Yards in Austria, suffered severe damage to his aircraft (MACR does not list the serial number for this alc). Of the eleven (11) onboard, this is what we have in the makeup of that crew:

Silliman, William M., Pilot - Returned to Base
 Roberts, Carl B., Copilot - Returned to Base
 Stafford, Charles B., Navigator - POW
 McKenna, John H., Bombardier - POW
 Latchaw, Arthur J., N Gunner - POW
 Millis, Forrest G., AEG - Returned to Base
 Waite, Bruce C., B Gunner - POW
 Goss, Joseph L., ROG - POW
 Morton, Richard F., W Gunner - KIA
 Berns, Laurence L., T Gunner - POW
 Hilleary, Levi S., Photographer - POW

Of the 3 (three) that returned to Base (Silliman, Roberts and Millis) became part of the crew lost off N. Africa. Others on the fatal flight were:

Wellman, Clarence L. - Navigator
 Walsh, Martin E. - Bombardier
 Smith, Malcolm R. - ROG
 Geller, William - Gunner
 Chylek, John P. - Gunner
 Dye, Eugene - Gunner
 Prieskorn - John F. Gunner
 Kline, Curtis L. - Passenger - 465th Bomb Group



ORIGINAL SILLIMAN CREW MAKEUP

L - R Bottom Row: Richard F. Morton - AG, Arthur J. Latchaw - AG, Burce C. Waite - AG, Forrest G. Millis - AEG, Laurence L. Berns - AG, Charles L. Russell ROG
 Standing: Charles B. Stafford - N, William N. Silliman - P, Carl B. Roberts - CP, Donald Whitmore - B

Wiggins, Edward B. - Passenger - 465th Bomb Group

A simplified description of the incident, as written up by the Investigating Board at Mallard Field, reads thusly:

"Aircraft B-24 9596 took off from Mallard Field on Runway 30 at 00:08Z 4 June 1945. It made a normal take-off with all 4 engines operating normally and at an altitude of approximately 100 feet made a gradual left turn losing altitude in the turn until it crashed into the sea off the camp area. The aircraft did not explode in

the air but at the time of impact."

But to further clarify the story we have to look back at the mission that put most of the original Silliman Crew into German POW Camps. This is related in the following letter from one of the survivors: Sgt/Gunner Arthur J. Latchaw.

"I note on Page 21 of the current issue of Ad Lib some further comments by Victor Melnick, on the bail-out of Silliman's crew on March 21, 1945. I appreciate Mr. Melnick's report of his conversation with Millis.

Two of Silliman's original crew are still living; Larry Berns, the tail gunner, and me, the nose gunner. On the day of the bail-out we had three other persons with us who were not of our crew. Perhaps you have them listed. I have not communicated with them since 1945."

[Ed. I have only two (2), although not from original crew; Levi Hillerary, flying as photographer and Joseph L. Goss, apparently replacing Charles Russell]

"Melnick's letter to you, based on his discussion with Millis has both truth and error in it.

In the first place, we did not abort formation 'before the target run.' Our target was Bruck, Austria. We passed over the target but bombs were not dropped and the formation circled to make a second run. Flak had caught us the first time over and we developed a runaway propeller on #3 engine. This was my 17th mission, but my first experience with a runaway prop.

I could see the whole thing and it was a frightening

experience. The prop wound up so fast it howled like a siren until the pistons got so hot they seized in the cylinders. And it wasn't a gradual thing; when they seized the propeller stopped completely and the shock was so great the whole plane jumped. Then, after a few moments, the engine would cool and the prop would slowly begin to turn again, quickly gaining speed until it repeated the sequence. Each time this happened the plane bounced, the shock traveling from one end to the other.

The crew could hear Millis and Silliman discussing the problem on the intercom. Silliman was asking if there was any way to feather the prop, and Millis said there was not. Silliman asked how long the plane could stand the stress, and Millis said not very long because of the tremendous shock each time the engine seized. Millis told Silliman that the centrifugal force on the propeller blades was so great there was a possibility of a blade separation (the tip separating from the rest of the blade) and the resulting vibration would break off the wing -- on the other hand, he said, the stress it was under probably would cause it to break off anyway. When that happened, he said, the gyrations of the plane would probably prevent anyone, or almost anyone, from escaping.

The result of this discussion was that Silliman ordered the crew to bail out. There were eleven of us in that plane, from nose to tail. Everyone bailed out except for the three on the flight deck; Silliman, Roberts (copilot) and Millis. Can you conceive of any reason, other than a direct order, that would result in everyone from stem to stern bailing out?

I centered my nose turret, popped open the doors and climbed out, and found that the extra member of the crew who was in the nose (believe he was a bombardier) already had bailed out. Charley Stafford, the navigator, was just getting into bail-out position, and at that moment the emergency bail-out bell went off by my ear. I snapped on my chute and reached down and touched Stafford with the toe of my shoe. He rolled out under the nose wheel. I immediately crouched down and did the same thing.

I have been advised by a couple of sources that after bailing out the rest of the crew, the pilot, copilot, and engineer went to the bomb bay, prepared to bail out, but decided to wait there to see what happened. As they stood in the bomb bay, the airplane carried them down over the Adriatic and they spotted the island of Vis where we had an emergency landing strip. They landed, and radioed for a ride back to the base. I was told the plane was left on Vis, but can't verify that.

Your editorial comment was correct -- our Sperry ball gunner, Dick Morton, was killed on bail-out. While

in Szombathely, Hungary, I heard his chute had failed to open properly and he was in the hospital. Later I heard he had died.

Larry Bern's Hungarian captors pointed to a nearby hillside and told him that if he had landed a mile of so further south he would have been in Yugoslavia. I met up with him; Bruce Waite and Charley Stafford, in the prison camp at Nuremberg. Then, they marched us out ahead of the American Army to Mooseburg where Patton's troops came through on April 29th.

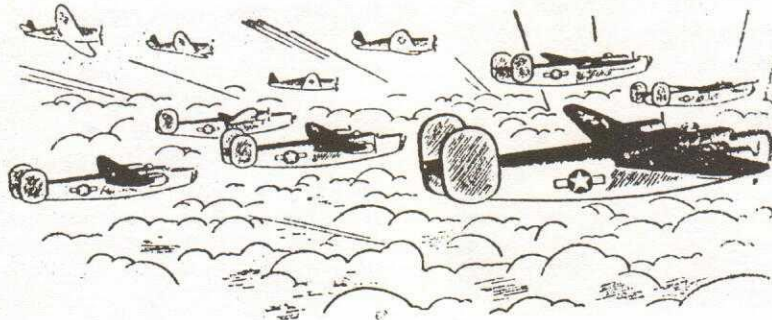
Of my crew of nine, Silliman, Roberts and Millis were killed when their plane exploded as Melnick described. Dick Morton was killed when we bailed out. Our radio operator, Charley Russell was badly wounded on an earlier mission and we delivered him to the hospital in Foggia. He survived and returned to the States, but has since passed away, as has the waist gunner, Bruce Waite. I lost contact with the navigator, Charley Stafford, years ago, but believe he has passed away. Larry Berns, the tail gunner, and me, the nose gunner, are the only ones left.

[Editor: Navigator Charles B. Stafford is alive and well. He lives in Midland, MI. He carries Membership Card #1604 in our organization]

Is this long-winded explanation necessary? No, except to set the record straight for my comrades who have passed away. Silliman was a well respected and highly competent pilot and I'm sure he did what he believed right under the circumstances. I also like and respected Millis, our engineer. The rest of the crew knew their jobs and did them well. Every one of them was gutsy and were there when you needed them.

I will be glad to correspond with anyone who has/had a need or desire for further information."

Ever since the first exposure of this story, on the loss of Lt William Silliman and his homeward bound crew (Ad-Lib: Issue 32 - Page 31 & Issue 33 - Page 21), I am truly blessed to be in contact with the sister of William Silliman; Ms. Bette Froehlich of Appleton, WI. She was gratified to see this incident brought to light, as she is finding out more and more about her brother that neither she, nor other members of her family, were aware of. Her renewed interest caused her to locate all the wartime correspondence that came from her brother (to their parents and relatives), from overseas. Bette compiled all of them and made copies which she placed in a bound booklet, to be given to all interested family members. Bette was most gracious to our efforts and sent me a complimentary copy for our records. It makes interesting reading, as it comes from the era and time we can all relate to. And it gives an insight to the meaning of a strong "family."



VIGNETTES BY 'ACHI'

MOMENTS TO CHERISH WHEN YOU'RE OLD & GRAY

By Achilles Kozakis, 726th Bomb Squadron

I had just completed a tough mission, the crew is intact, no one hurt. Walking across the steel mat revetment, with my A-3 bag containing my flying gear, to the awaiting truck or weapons carrier that will eventually take us (our crew) to our post-flight debriefing.

Two Red Cross girls are awaiting our arrival with hot coffee and greasy donuts laid out on white paper atop a table made of frag-bomb boxes. Also waiting are the debriefing Intelligence Officers (S-2), and after that our Medics with a 2 ounce shot of 100 proof Rye Whiskey. Our ration for today's mission.

For an instant ... You're walking on air!

Then, moments later reality sinks in and your gut is churning and grinding from within. Was it the donuts, the whiskey or the mission? It could have been the greasy donuts coated with sugar and washed down with the bitter coffee, grinds and all. Or, it could have been the 2 ounces of Rye that exploded when it hit the bottom of your gut. After all, you landed with an empty stomach after flying for eight hours. Even though the 100 proof Rye warmed your insides, you're still cold on the outside. Sometimes your hands and face are red and sometimes blue, depending on whether your gloves and heated suit were heating properly. The donuts had their misgivings as well. You knew all too well that you'd experience nauseated stomach after consuming one or two to satisfy your ravaged hunger. Or, just maybe, it was the mission itself.

The debriefing officer is asking questions about the mission and your thoughts relive the moments your trying to forget. You're cold, hungry and nervous and



TYPICAL [AFTER MISSION] RED CROSS HOSPITALITY DONUT TABLE
(Locale/Squadron Unknown)

when you're finally excused your ready for the "sack" or supper.

p.s. Many times I would skip supper and hit the "sack" for precious sleep, only to be awakened at 0300 hours for the next day's mission. They say war is hell!

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK (Written in early 1999)

On my way to Boston, flying at 29,000 feet in a DC-9, I was reminded of my earlier flights during WW-II. What struck me most was the space allocated for seating in the Economy Class Section.

The seat was no larger, or possibly even smaller, than that of an Emerson Nose Turret in a B-24H, Liberator bomber. I had, in my Emerson Turret, plenty of leg room to facilitate my cumbersome high altitude flying gear; boots, pants (2 pair), heated suit and gloves, B-10 jacket, goggles & oxygen mask, a Mae West, and last, but most importantly, my parachute harness.

Today's seating in the DC-9 would be most inadequate, for comfort, to say the least. The leg room for a 5'-11" person allows no space to move within the seat without disturbing your neighbor. The "dirty" looks one gets when shifting one's legs could be piercing. My flight took only 1 hour and 52 minutes. Thank God, I'm not on an eight hour mission to Ploesti.

Well, the war is over ... and I'll soon be reaching my destination. I'm pleased that I have nothing else to bitch about ... and they say war is hell!

Smile, it could be worse.

p.s. It's double-tough when the person in front of you lowers his back rest into your chest and the person behind is kicking your rear. Missions were never like this.



727th MEDICINAL WHISKY DISTRIBUTION TABLE
(Lt Peter Massare [w/cigarette] at right - others unknown)

"LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON (Continued - 10th Installment By Royal C. Gilkey)

I should have prefaces this history of the 49th Fighter Squadron earlier in it's creation. But time not withstanding and research having it's reward, I'd like to pass along what I uncovered in the book "COMBAT SQUADRONS OF THE AIR FORCE -- WORLD WAR II." It reads:

49th FIGHTERS

Lineage: Constituted 49th Pursuit Squadron (Fighters) on 20 Nov 1940. Activated on 15 Jan 1941. Redesignated 49th Fighter Squadron on 15 May 1942. Inactivated on 9 Sep 1945. Activated on 20 Nov 1946. Inactivated on 2 Oct 1949. Redesignated 49th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron on 11 Sep 1952. Activated on 1 Nov 1952.



49th Fighter Squadron Emblem (Adopted 23 July 1954)

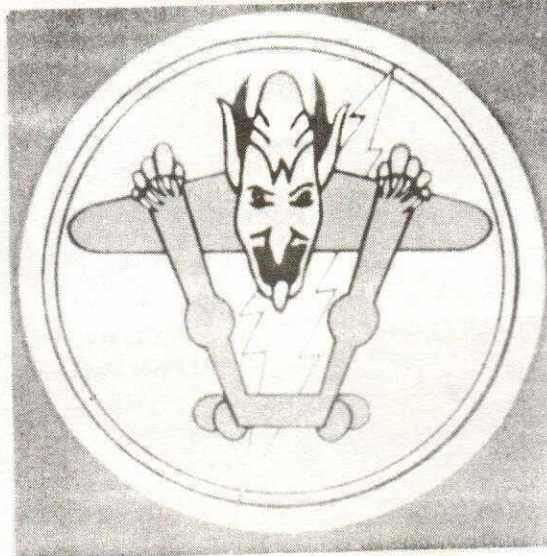
The next day's mission went far away to the Kurin Aircraft Factory in Czechoslovakia. On August 25, 1944, nine Squadrons P-38s took off at 0821 hours (8:21 a.m.) to provide top cover during penetration to the target and on withdrawal to prudent limit for three groups of 304th Wing bombers and with the 325 Fighter Group. Flying third in the Group, the 49ers reached the target at 1120 hours, their altitude being 25,000 feet. They stayed over the target for about six minutes, leaving at 1126 hours (11:26 a.m.). Their departure from the bombers took place 20,000 feet over Yugoslavia's Adriatic coast (in the vicinity of 4408 N. 1500 E) at 1250 hours (12:50 p.m.). Eight of

our P-38s got back to base at 1400 hours (2 p.m.). The "Lightning" flown by 2d St. Joseph F. Weber (Lansdale, Pa.) experienced trouble, forcing the pilot to feather his left propeller. He was left, shielded by returning 304 Wing bombers, in the vicinity of Krajna (Slovenia) at 1230 hours (12:30 p.m.). The last reported view of him was 20,000 feet over the coast of Yugoslavia at 4408 N. 1500 E. He was listed as "crashed" but later "returned in a B-24" (per p.13 of document listing "Pilots Lost Due to Enemy Action or from Other Cause" [1944]). Among the observations of returning pilots was one about a large petroleum fire at Trebic in Czechoslovakia. Also, a P-38 J, silver in color but with red 1st Fighter Group markings, was seen near the target. This plane joined into Squadron flights at brief intervals but radio contact could not be established. It was reported that the entire route to the target was obscured by thick haze, but bombs were said to hit it, kicking up dust and causing smoke. By laying bombs right on the target, the bombers really achieved their objective. The absence of enemy aircraft no doubt helped to account for this. Flak also was scant. Sortie credit went to all nine "Hangmen" on the long (1200-mile) mission.

The next day, August 26, 1944, Squadron P-38s flew escort for 5th Wing bombers out to attack Avisio Viaduct in northeast Italy. At 0745 hours (7:45 a.m.), nine of our pilots took off, making rendezvous with the bombers at 0920 hours (9:20 a.m.). R/V altitude was at 21,000 feet. From, 1005-1020 hours, our P-38s were over the target. Their altitude at arrival was 23,000 feet; when they left 15 minutes later, it was between 23 and 24,000 feet. Departure from the bombers was effected at 1100 hours (11 a.m.), the altitude being lowered to 18,000 feet. Most of the bombs fell in the area of the target, one seeing bomb explosions in Latisana (4547 N.

1300 E.) at 1040 hours (10:40 a.m.). It was CAVU over the target, and there was a general absence of clouds over the entire route. All nine Squadron planes returned to base at 1208 hours (12:08 p.m.), each pilot receiving sortie credit. Although moderate target-flak was encountered, no "Hangman" was hit. The 750-mile trip was flown without loss.

A much longer mission was undertaken on August 27, 1944. Nine Squadron P-38s took off at 0935 hours (9:35 a.m.) flying towards a rendezvous with six groups of 5th Wing heavy bombers briefed to attack Blechhammer, Germany. They met the bombers at 4900 N 1832 E., the time



WARTIME "HANGMEN" EMBLEM

being 1200 hours (12:20 p.m.) and the altitude 23-24,000 feet. Then the bomber formation looked good, but later it tended to become strung out and scattered. Flying first in the Group, our P-38s maintained a good formation. Their task was to cover the bombers' withdrawal. Thus, no bombing results were observed. No enemy planes put in an appearance during the withdrawal phase. Flak was run into at a couple of places along the route at 1215 hours (12:15 p.m.) & 1300 hours (1 p.m.), the respective coordinates being 4855 N. 1803 E. and 4704 N. 1805 E. At a town called Bos Gradiska (4509 N. 1715 E.), our pilots clammed to have spotted from 17,000 feet as many as seven motionless barges at 1350 hours (1:50 p.m.). Later, at 1420 hours (2:20 p.m.), a big ship with two destroyers or submarines nearby were seen from 14,000 feet in the harbor at Split along Yugoslavia's Dalmation coast. All nine of our P-38s returned to base at 1501 hours (one minute after 3 p.m.), each pilot receiving sortie credit for the 1120-mile mission.

On August 28, 1944, close escort was provided four groups of 304th Wing bombers briefed to attack targets in Italy, namely, a viaduct & bridge located at Ora and Avisio. Both places were in the Italian Alps and south of Bolzano. Our P-38s, ten in number, took off from Triolo Landing Ground at 0830 hours (8:30 a.m.) on an assignment to cover the bombers on penetration to target & subsequent withdrawal. Engine trouble forced an early return, leaving nine to reach the target at 1030 hours (10:30 a.m.) & 29,000 ft. They'd met the bombers 23,000 feet over a point whose coordinates were 4500 N. 1317 E. at 0947 hours (9:47 a.m.). The bombers' formation seemed loose & somewhat scattered. An enemy Me 410, seeming to come from the direction of Lake Garda (to the south), was seen approaching the bombers at an altitude of 29,000 feet. Our P-38s sought to chase off the Me 410 at approximately 1030 hours (10:30 a.m.), pursuing it to the vicinity of Innsbruck, Austria. Its weaving led the pursuers to suspect their quarry might be decoying them over an anti-aircraft artillery position. Having dropped belly tanks, they turned back in search of the formation. They were informed by a call that both the 48th and 37th Fighter Squadrons that had preceded them were heading for the Udine in northeastern Italy to strafe an airport there. Efforts to find the other squadrons in their Group proved to be unavailing, and it was learned that the bombers had already started home. After crossing the Venetian coast, they turned homeward, reaching base at 1230 hours (12:30 p.m.). Our pilots reported seeing a big military vessel anchored in Venice's harbor and pointed out where a plume of smoke, from what could have been a plane on fire, was observed at 1125 hours (11:25 a.m.) from 30,000 feet, the coordinates given being 4504 N. 1148 E. (in Italy's Po Valley). A lot of flak was aimed at the bombers flying over the Avisio River. As for weather, haze hung over the Adriatic Sea. Cirrus overlay the target at 30,000 feet; but contrails were visible at 31,000 feet. There was a scattering of middle cumulus over the Alpine mountain ranges north of the Po Valley.

The target for August 29, 1944 lay in Czechoslovakia and would involve 1200 miles of flying for the Squadron's "Lightnings." Their job was to rendezvous with four groups of 55 Wing bombers and provide them with close escort during penetration to targeted railyards at Moravoska in Czechoslovakia. Ten Squadron P-38s lifted off at 0845 hours (8:45 a.m.). The briefed rendezvous never took place because the bombers were nowhere to be found over Lake Balaton, located in Hungary southwest of Budapest. It wasn't until 1115 hours (11:15 a.m.) that rendezvous was finally achieved at the I.P. for the bombers at 24,000 feet over a place called Neutitschen. Our P-38s, which were flying second in the Group, circled a few times over the bombers until U.S. Mustangs (P-51s) relieved them. They then turned to go home. Only eight set course to do so because two of the pilots had already turned back on penetration to a point just short of Neutitschen, the bombers' I.P. This pair got back to base at 1245 hours (12:45 p.m.). The other eight landed at 1400 hours (2 p.m.) and received sortie credit. It remains to be decided whether the two who had returned early would get sortie credit. Returning pilots reported seeing no enemy aircraft. They did run into flak, however, along a river east of Gyor in northern Hungary. More flak was thrown up the formation over Lake Balaton's northeast tip & also from 4835 N. 1750 E. A score of barges was seen from 20,000 feet on a river below at 1050 hours (10:50 a.m.). Their cargo included no flak guns. Northwest of the I.P. (Neutitschen), the cloud cover was solid over the mountains. Elsewhere a cirrus layer floated across the sky at 26,000 feet. Contrails were visible at 20,000 feet. No bombing results were observed. The pilots were glad to enjoy a breather the next day (30 Aug. 1944), inasmuch as the Squadron stood down. T'was good to relax!

The P-38s became operational again on the last day of August. A long mission of approximately 1200 miles was on tap. It involved going to Popesti airdrome at Bucharest, Romania, as an escort for 5th Wing B-17s during what was described as "loading & withdrawal." Nine Squadron P-38s lifted off at 0837 (8:37 a.m.) for the mission. Flying first in the Group, they reached Popesti airdrome at 1127 hours (11:27 a.m.), their altitude being 8,000 feet as the second wave's tail-end B-17 was settling down for a landing. Our nine "Lightnings" circled the airdrome until the bombers; second wave had take off on the route home. It was then 12 noon. So at 8,000 feet, our fighters withdrew, remaining with the bombers until departure at 4157 N. 1910 E. The time of departure was 1420 hours (2:20 p.m.) and the altitude 8,000 feet. Setting course directly for base, the Squadron's three flights of three planes each arrived home at 1508 hours (3:08 p.m.). The pilots reported having seen barges on three strings of eight each on the Danube River, the first string being pulled by a tugboat. The time of this sighting from 10,000 feet was 1029 hours (10:29 a.m.), and the place was at 4350 N. 2254 E. The fliers had to buck strong headwinds going but had the advantage of a tailwind returning to base. It was noted that a first wave B-17 was still a the target-airdrome

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

when the second wave arrived. All nine pilots received sortie credit for this mission.

On September 1, 1944, the mission was to Ferrara (northeast of Bologna) along the Po River. (A new S-2 was on the job for this and succeeding missions by the unit's P-38s. He was 2d Lt. Royal C. Gilkey, who replaced Capt. Howard F. Wilson, his skilled mentor as top I.O.)

Ten Squadron P-38s took off at 0725 hours (7:25 a.m.) and flew off to the northwest, making rendezvous at 0909 hours (9:09 a.m.) and 19,000 feet over Capraia Island (Isola di Capraia) in the Ligurian Sea between mainland Italy and Corsica (Corse). The fighters then escorted three groups of 49th Wing bombers to the Modena area where they encountered flak, causing them to take evasive action and in the process lose the bombers among the clouds at 4438 N. 1054 E., the time being 0955 hours (9:55 a.m.). Flying at 23,000 feet, the fighters then headed northwestward over Bologna. From there, they continued to Arrezzo. Still flying northeast, they crossed the Adriatic coast where they picked up the bombers near Rimini at 4422 N. 1054 E., the time being 1045 hours (10:45 a.m.) and the altitude 21,000 feet. Staying with the bombers to the vicinity of Ancona point, they effected departure at 1105 hours (11:05 a.m.). From an altitude of 21,000 feet, our P-38s then headed home, arriving at 1135 hours (11:35 a.m.). The combination of flak and solid overcast had caused them to lose the bombers being escorted in the Modena area at 0955 hours (9:55 a.m.). Flak had also been thrown up at them from Bologna at 0959 hours (9:59 a.m.). Four flak bursts had warned off the pilots near Arrezzo (4327 N. 1153 E.). Our pilots told of observing what they believed to be bombing at 4356 N. 1254 E. near Pesaro and likewise near Rimini at 4402 N. 1236 E., both places being along the Adriatic coast. They recalled this had happened at 1040 hours (10:40 a.m.), being noticed from 23,000 feet. This may have been from medium-bomber attack, inasmuch as B-25s were seen flying over these parts of the mainland. Throughout the mission of some 800 miles, the weather amounted to a thick overcast that varied between 9/10 and solid. The tops of this overcast could be seen at 23,000 feet. As if this weren't enough, the route was plagued with haziness. At least, no enemy aircraft were encountered. Things were difficult enough without them. The Squadron flew last in the Group. All ten 49ers received sortie credit for the mission.

The previous 6 missions, as documented by Dr. Gilkey: August 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 31, 1944, the 49 Fighter Squadron did not fly cover for us. Although the 451st flew combat missions on 26, 27, 28, 29, of August 1944 we were escorted by other Fighter Squadrons.

It wasn't until 1 September 1944 that we matched up again. As our OPERATIONS ORDER (#150) of 31 August 1944 read: Normal effort B-24s each 451st BG, 461st BG, and 484th BG will attack Ferrara R.R. Bridge (44-53N 11-38E) on 1 September 1944. This is plan "A."

It continued with: ESCORT; Fighters will strafe A/C on DEBRECZEN AIRDROME and provide close escort for 5th, 49th, 55th, and 304th Wgs.

BOMBER RENDEZVOUS: 484th BG will be in rendezvous rectangle from 0700B until 0725B. 451st BG

and 461st BG will follow SOP to rendezvous with lead Gp. Lead Gp will enter rectangle at CANDELA, make 1 1/2 turns around rectangle and depart from BOVINO. Rendezvous altitudes 5,000, 6,000 and 7,000 ft.

BOMB LOAD: 461st BG load 500# RDX fused .1 nose and non delay tail.

484th BG and 451st BG load 1000 #RDX with .1 nose and non delay tail.

All A/C of 484th BG and lead attack units of 451st and 461st BGs load 3 cartons Window. Dispensing will begin 2 minutes before IP and continue at the rate of 6 units ever 20 seconds until clear of flak.

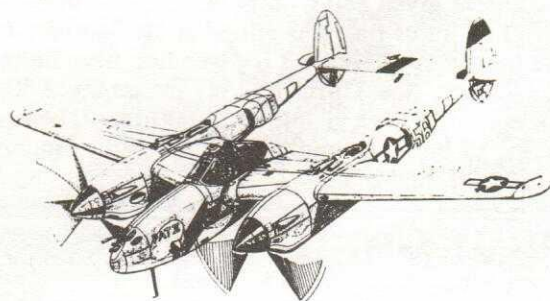
As an Annex to OPERATIONS ORDER #150 -- The 49th Wing target, FERRARA RR Bridge, must be destroyed as quickly as possible and 15th AF will continue the attack until it is destroyed.

The RR bridge is a 5 span (each span 15 ft in length) steel lattice (above deck) construction with five (5) stone or concrete piers. It carries two tracks. Near S approach two spurs lead to sugar factories. Overall length is 1390 ft and width 16 ft.

No enemy fighters were engaged, and minimal flak was experienced. No losses by the 451st Bomb Group. From our Group's recorded micro-film history I found this: "On September 1st we hit Ferrara Railroad Bridge, a vital communication point to the Axis defense system, but our results were negative due to bad weather."

Continuing with Dr. Gilkey's narrative: .. When Lt. Gilkey signed the 1 Sept. 1944 Ferrara mission report, he did it as "Ass't Squadron S-2." Reports for missions flown Sept. 2-6, 1944 were signed solely by Captain Wilson as "Squadron S-2." Both his and Lt. Gilkey's name appeared at the end of the Sept. 8 1944 narrative mission report, with the only live signature that of the latter. The reports for missions flown on Sept. 10, 12, & 13 bore only Lt. Gilkey's signature as "Ass't Squadron S-2." Capt. Wilson signed the reports as "Squadron S-2" for missions flown on Sept. 15 & 17, 1944. The mission flown on Sept. 18, 1944 was signed solely by Lt. Gilkey as "Ass't Squadron S-2;" but on Sept. 20, 1944, Lt. Gilkey's signature as "Squadron S-2" was affixed to the narrative mission report for the first time. From then on (until relieved to become the Squadron's "Information & Education Officer"), he served as "Squadron S-2" for the 49th Fighter Squadron.

Memory is somewhat blurred by the passage of time as to the exact date of transition, but a "SQUADRON HISTORY" dated 4 October 1944 announced in item 4: "... Capt. Howard F. Wilson was replaced by 2nd Lt. Royal C. Gilkey as the squadron S-2 Officer." The document was signed by Lt. Gilkey, who was at that time, Squadron Historian."



ERNIE CUMMINS 60th AIR SERVICE SQUADRON JOURNAL

(When The Hair Was Short And The Dollar Was Long)

*** POSTWAR COMMENTS ***

Two 60th men, in a burst of patriotism, boredom, or foolishness, chose to transfer into combat groups while in Italy. Both were shot down behind German lines, and one survived prison camp to make it back to the States after hostilities ceased. How his ship was destroyed is an example of changing tactics used by both sides. When approaching a target, fighters pecked away at the bomber formation, but broke off the engagement when the bomb run started, to hit again on the return trip or on the other side of the target. During the bomb run the planes were not able to take evasive action, being controlled by the bombardier and his sight, rather than the pilots. Anti-aircraft guns loved this period for potting the birds, level flight and constant speed made them easier to hit. To protect themselves during this short time period, gunners in the bombers wore flak vests, a sort of bullet proof garment covering their torsos.

Some wise guys tried an experiment with these vests, and when it worked for them, other crews took up the practice, and eventually entire Groups were using it. They carried extra flak vests that were spread on the floor of the aft section of the plane. When the bomb run was started, gunners left their turrets of swivel mounts and five of six would then lie on these vests, covering themselves on top with another layer. Sort of a sleeping bag of armor. When the "bombs away" signal was given, the gunners returned to their defensive positions and resumed their duel with the fighters.

Nothing remains secret forever, and one day the Germans learned of this practice. The attacking fighters swung away, the flak started bursting, and the gunners left their guns. The flak stopped, the fighters returned, and the formation was riddled and half destroyed by cannon fire during the bomb run, with no opposition from all those 50 caliber jobs. That ended the "cover up" procedure.

This type of "cover-up" may have occurred at one time or other by some other Groups, but certainly not by the 451st. At least not during my tour of combat (from July '44 through April '45). I never saw, nor never gave any thought to, nor did I see anyone else, leave their gun/turret position to seek refuge atop, or beneath, a bed of flak vests. This was most likely a fabricated untruth that was fed by some overzealous ground crews.

One cool September morning in 1944, the skies over the Foggia bases began filling with swarms of bombers lumbering around in spiraling climbs, getting into position for a strike to some far off target. At the 451st field, tow squadrons had completed their take off, and twenty planes were still on the ground at the east end of the runway.

The control tower is a structure perhaps forty feet high, timber legs set in a square pattern, tapering up to a platform that sports a small shack and an outside railing. It is located midway along the runway on the south side,

and beneath the tower there sits a small gasoline powered generator, supplying the current for the radio in-use by the officers on duty upstairs. Alongside the tower are a pair of empty jeeps, and ambulance with two aid men, and the 60th's big C-2 wreckers with Cpl Mawyer and Sgt Cummins on the cushions.

During missions takeoffs and landings, we supplied another vehicle called a Cleatrac, a towing tractor with a rubber tread, a tow-bar lashed to it's side which could be used on the B-24's nose-wheel. The driver of this rig always climbed into the C-2 and sat while the planes did their thing, as the view was better from the higher cab, and nine times out of ten, neither vehicle was needed. Sort of like fire trucks standing by.

After six or seven ships of the third squadron had lifted off, we noticed some activity up on the tower. One of the Captains was intently watching a plane that we, on the ground, could not see, and he was talking to the pilot by way of a hand held microphone, giving instructions of some sort. The geography of this field was peculiar, the elevation of runway allowing planes to dip and disappear from view while gaining speed to climb while circling in a valley that lay on all sides. When the did emerge some two miles distant, instead of seeing them against the sky, the background was hills and mountains, even when they had several hundred feet of altitude.

While all the other ships made their lift offs and got into formation, this one bird circled around the lower valley, out of our sight most of the time, but when passing the lower eastern end of the runway he was visible skimming the wheat fields. There was no radio in the wrecker, but we heard the officer over our heads telling the pilot to jettison his bomb load to lighten ship. One of the Communications guys rushed down the stairs and drove off in a jeep to find the Engineering Officer of the Bomb Group. By the time they returned, the main formation had departed to the north and our lone cripple was the only traffic, seemingly unable to gain enough altitude to use the landing strip. A half hour of this, the crew having dumped fuel as well as bombs, and all the time a steady flow of suggestions were being radioed into the pilot's ears on what to try next. Another jeep came to the tower, I overheard the officers talking as they started up the stairs. Their opinion was that the crew (in the low flying plane) had found a new way to avoid combat, and were aborting their mission by faking mechanical trouble.

Finally, an hour after it took off, the ship made it high enough to land, coming straight into the strip from the east, and not having to drop more than several feet to touch down with its wheels. After taxiing to its hardstand, the jeeps drove off to meet it and the crash crews and equipment went home.

There were several phases of the heavy bomber operations in the European Theater, and each had both rewards and penalties for those men engaged in them. At the very beginning, objectives were supply lines, (railroad freight yards, barge canals, river dams, tunnel and bridges, docks and warehouses), munition plants and factories that built weapons, or produced the basic materials for them (explosives, steel, coal, petroleum, ball bearing, optical instruments, aircraft, shipyards, etc.) and the bases were the enemy re-supplied, refitted and repaired his striking forces, (submarine pens, tank depots, air bases).

Other targets that the heavy bombers were called on to hit were battlefield positions, during beach landings or attempts to break through a defensive strong point. This was more risky for the ground troops, as aiming points were indistinct, smoke drifted in the wind, and just where the friends and enemies faced each other was hard to tell. Another factor entered the picture when the target was close to any religious shrine. For example, crews were screened before raids to Rome, in case anti-Catholics had the notion to let one drop on the Vatican City by "mistake."

At Castelluccio Air Base the 727th Bomb Squadron prided itself on producing some pretty fair "vaudeville" shows on a twice a month basis. Performers did not all belong to that outfit, but they had a promoter who got wind of any talent and persuaded them to appear. Barber shop quartets, drummers, pianists, singers, Laurel & Hardy routines, trumpet players, mind readers, and just about anything that would take your mind off of "What the hell am I doing here?" stagnation. After I had seen several of these shindigs and had become a regular in the audience, I missed one of the "stars" and asked the crew chief sitting nearby about his absence.

"Hey Slim, where is the demon coronet tooter tonight? That guy plays the Sugar Blues better than Clyde McCoy! Bet he makes a living with that horn in civilian life."

"Sorry to say he joined another band, Ernie. His ship blew up over the target last week, and he is playing for St. Peter now."

I'm sure that Ernie was referring to Captain John A. O'Connor, Pilot 724th. But, alas, happily, "Slim" was in error. John O'Connor is still with us and can be routinely seen at our reunion functions.

"Gee, that's tough. I have my eye on a harmonica player, but the rumor is out that he may be transferred to the Infantry."

"Yeah, with guys going to the hospital, home on rotation, or drunk and in the guardhouse, I have a hell of a time stocking the acts. Do you think we can make Swiss Bell Ringers out of the nuns at the Barletta Convent?"

1 September 1944 / Italy

Dear Mabel,

Hi there baby doll; what's cooking this morning? Not much around here - guard duty last night and a couple of hour's work this morning. One piece of news my Peanut will be proud of; the 60th men that worked across Africa can wear a ribbon now, not the Theater Ribbon (we already have that) but a solid blue color. It means the organization did a job worthy of the President's commendation. Some outfits have two or three

citations, but they are always combat units who have done some tough work, and for us fellows who sweated a summer over here doing the work of at least a thousand men who were still in England, this reward is a real "pepper upper." Not that your fellow wants a lot of tinsel to display on his blouse, but this particular one is the only one worth a damn.

Golly, the war news is great today! The radio claims the battle for France is over, with lots of mopping up to do, but the main objectives secured. One more country less the Germans can operate in! The Russians have gone through Rumania like cider through a tall Swede. The race is on to see who can enter Berlin first - I don't care who wins, just so this scrap is finished.

4 September 1944 / Italy

Dear Mabel:

Eight PM and its sundown - Ernie is on CQ (Charge of Quarters) tonight. - meaning he sleeps by the telephone. First time I've had this job, which rotates among the men like guard duty. Anyway it gives plenty of time to write letters, Hurray!

There are hundreds of flies here in the office, so I spread a dose of "Skat" on my hands and face, they sure don't like that smell one bit. We had another windy, dusty day - but a shower left me fairly white. No incoming mail for us, but the war news keeps us happy, as I guess you can realize. Home by Christmas is our motto, sure hope it's a fact.

Thinking of Harold, he is in the hospital again. This time his knee is haywire. Getting too old, we tell him! He hobbled around on crutches for a couple of days before they decided to get him into bed. And Reuben made Corporal after three years as a PFC, so now he has been very cheerful the last several days! He is regular Army, not like us "duration plus" guys, and promotions mean a lot more in their ranks.

The flying out of all those fellows shot down over the targets in Rumania during the past year is sure good news. Some of the men were prisoners since that big low level raid I'm always talking about. Imagining how they felt when the Russians freed the country and their own American planes set down on the airfields to transport them back to Italy! Boy Oh Boy! The radio news has been so favorable the last couple of days, I don't bother to read the papers, the printed word can't keep up with events. One Lt. in Southern France recently came into his own lines with around one thousand prisoners - they can't keep going long when that sort of thing occurs.

20 September 1944 / Italy

Darling Mabel:

Bet you've been wondering where my letters had been the last four days. Well, Ernie took a three day pass, went to the seaside home and ate, slept and sunbathed to my heart's content. Came back yesterday noon and had to work right away. Didn't find any mail for the three day absence, but no one else got any either. Sometime soon there will be a regular flood of letters, like they came last winter.

I enjoyed the home cooking on pass: spaghetti, fried spuds, eggs, cheese and fresh fish. "Mama" even had a couple of cans of American beer hidden away in a cupboard that she dug out just for me! The town had an English movie house and one of the shows I saw was

"Beyond A Shadow Of A Doubt," taken at Santa Rosa. By golly, those street scenes looked great. I remembered all those times you and I traveled on the same streets. It was a darned good plot too - guess you and the folks saw it a long time ago, but it was all new to me and I enjoyed every minute of it!

Also sat through an Eytie film at another theater where the actors used their hands a lot when speaking. It was easy to follow the story without understanding everything that was said. I even noticed (who wouldn't?) that the operator ran the third reel before the second! Similar to the "Snaffo" outfit back in the Middle East. The last day of my pass I spent with Gabe who had just returned from Rome. He and Steve Tanner spent six days there; also spent a hundred and fifty bucks! (My "vacation" only cost eighteen!)

Gabe phoned to Steve's camp and he came into town for the evening. We talked and joked and I saw the things Laxalt bought as souvenirs. Honestly Peanut, the table cover he paid \$45 for wasn't worth \$10. Of course I told him it was pretty. After supper at Gabe's messhall, the three of us went down the street to the place where they have their laundry done and I took my film viewer along to show the family what California looked like in color. You should have seen their reactions! The kids cried if one of the grown folks looked at a new picture first and some of the funniest arguments ensued over misunderstandings the Italians had over conditions in the States.

For instance, the pictures of Hollywood and San Francisco showed some tall buildings and one woman said, "How can such tall buildings be made entirely of wood?" she actually did believe all structures in America were wooden, partly due to some war propaganda stressing the easy destruction of our cities. No doubt early in the war the peasants were told that a few incendiary bombs could burn out the whole country. Also, a relative had lived in a small town in the States and her reports "home," via letters, told only what her limited travels revealed - evidently no skyscrapers or brick buildings.

To prove that wood was so plentiful, I explained that we built most of our family sized houses of it. I next showed 'em the Redwood pictures. The one showing a Ford car driving through the tunnel tree caused another long talk. We had to explain the auto was real, not a toy and demonstrating the size to prove it wasn't a midget car like most European machines. The one they all thought was the prettiest was the Exposition at night. And they also liked the Lake Tahoe and Yosemite shots. I guess we did a good job of making that particular family dissatisfied with their little stone city.

Laxalt told me he pulled a boner when he wrote Elmi that Larry was on his way home. We all thought he was headed that way and Gabe, like a dummy, sent word to Montana. The results was the Mrs. L.K. met every train, eagerly awaiting for hubby! Well, after two weeks of being disappointed, she answered Gabe's letter saying the trip Larry was making must have taken him elsewhere.

Well, that takes care of most of the news, lover. There is one little bit that I am "sweating out." Nothing important, Peanut, but in a few days I'll be able to tell you if it was one of those rumors or a straight tip. Don't

get excited, now, it is nothing like Larry's good luck.

It is chilly these nights, so I'm going to wear my new wool sweater to bed and pretend your soft, warm body is keeping me toasty Oh Boy! Be good darling, Kisses and stuff ... Ernie.

23 September 1944 / Italy

Dear Mabel:

You Gotta' change those envelopes again, Peanut. As of September 16th the Cummins Kid announces the birth of another healthy, bouncing stripe. Surprised, Mrs Sergeant??

Love & Snuggles, The ex-Cpl

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THE DERELICT

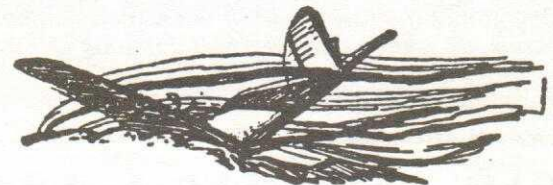
What markings graced this noble steed,
sleeping now amid the weeds?
Rotting in an earthen bunk
and slowly turning into junk.
Do aircraft dream of better days?
Of bearing in with guns ablaze?
And twisting in the morning haze?
Or do they rest in peace?

Proudly once you graced the sky.
In mortal combat did you fly?
To battle once against the Hun,
perhaps to fight the Rising Sun?
Did you once watch your brothers die,
falling broken from the sky?
Abandoned now, I wonder why.
I hope you rest in peace.

You slowly sink into the earth,
whose bauxite ore once gave you birth.
Ashes to ashes and dust to dust.
Aluminum to oxide and steel to rust.
Do you listen for the beat of the drum?
A call to battle that will never come.
For you my friend, the war is won.
I hope you rest in peace.

It's getting dark, but I hesitate.
I must leave soon for it is late.
I'll leave you here to sit and wait.
I'm sorry friend, it is your fate.
Never more to turn and bank,
no fuel will fill your rusting tanks.
Alas my friend, I give you thanks.
I hope you rest in peace.

(author unknown)



OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL BLY-BY

REPORTED SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

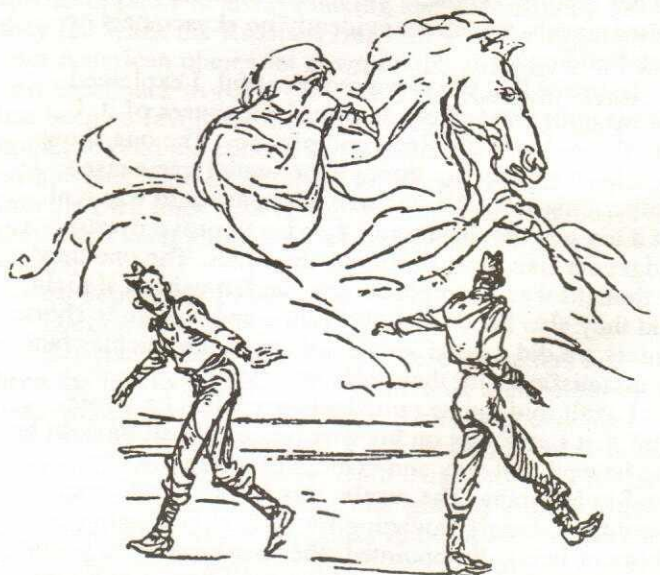
- Carter, Edward F., 726th - 28 October 2000
- Cincala, Stephen P., 724th - 14 June 2001
- Dow, Thomas K., 727th - 30 June 2001
- Fisler, Karl E., 727th - 13 May 2001
- Grillo, John P., 724th - 13 March 2000
- Happ, John P., 727th - 8 March 2001
- Hutchison, Martin L., 726th - 7 March 2001
- Janensch, John P., 725th - 11 April 2001
- Lynott, Edward F., 726th - 30 December 2000
- Manning, Ralph A., 726th - 23 February 2001
- McInerney, Charles W., 727th - 12 August 2000
- Miles, Elbert P., 724th - 8 February 2001
- Millar, Douglas M., 724th - 12 December 2000
- Perry, Jack K., 725th - 24 July 2001
- Ramsdell, William A., 726th - 28 February 2001
- Ramsey, J.W., 725th - 2 July 2000
- Reichenbach, Jack, 726th - 7 June 2001
- Schmidt, Eli C., 724th - 22 March 2001
- Younger, Joseph M., 725th - 11 February 2001

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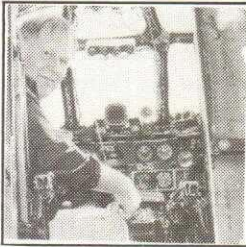
Each of the names in the adjoining column was accompanied by a \$50 contribution in the name of that person, or crew. If you wish to note/commemorate a buddy, or family member by this means, place the name of that person at the lower part of our check. Only one name, crew, or section per each \$50 donation. Please.

SPECIAL MEMORIAL TRIBUTE OFFERED IN THE NAME OF:

- Memorial to Crew of Sod Buster - From Carl Webber
- Memorial to 5 April 1944 Mission - From Rog Johnston
- Fazio, Armand A. - From son, Peter Fazio
- Henley, Raymond K. - From Edward Leahy
- Janensch, John P. - From Wife, Harriet
- Janensch, John P. - From A. Jay Woods
- Johnson, Verne G. - From Wife, Dorothy
- Johnson, Verne G. - From Dau., Kay Kasprzak
- Johnson, Robert A., From John D. Allen
- Kimmel, Richard F. (KIA), From Ralph A. Limatola
- Leiter, Stanton, From Wife, Florence
- Perry, Jack K., From Friend, Dorothy Williams
- Ramsey, J.W., From Ralph A. McBeth
- Stout, Laverne C., From Harold T. Bennett
- Younger, Joseph M., From Wife, Faye



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



CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

MUSINGS:

Time for a little pontificating. Something for me to do, other than doing research and mowing the lawn. Just to take some time and put my feet up on the old ottoman and think back. It's hard to realize that it's been almost, and in some cases more than 60 years ago that many of us were "called in" for service to our country. And it's been about 56 to 58 years since we trod the soil of Italy. Those years in Italy were filled with turmoil, tragedy, and at times laughter and boredom.

We lost a lot of good men back then. About 422, by my count. These I have listed as Killed In Action. Now in our autumn years we are experiencing similar losses among our 451st members. Of the 4,857 former members I have in the "overall roster," we have lost some 1,283 ... That's not accounting for those that have melded into society and nothing has been heard from, or about them, since leaving the Service. And from our current membership of 1,941, we have lost 639 members. I leave it to you guys to keep me abreast of what you hear as to those that have proceeded us.

With this in mind, I hope my pontificating hasn't dampened your spirits. I just thought you would like to know "what the count is."

REUNION:

On a lighter, or perhaps darker side; has the prospect of attending our 2002 Reunion in Salt Lake City given you any anxiety? We know this terrorism thing is running at a high pitch, but we hope by September 2002 things will have settle down. I know that those that trained at 'Wendover' will be interested in seeing the old Base. Although I didn't serve there, I think that it has remained pretty much the same; physically. It's just lacking the tents. And, if we concentrate, I'm sure we can stir up a sand storm or two, when we get there!

As to EVEN HOLDING this reunion .. I contacted some 80 of our members, via the Internet (e.mail) and asked them for their reaction - as for a "go" or "no-go" on proceeding. With few exceptions, the word was to go ahead with our plans. With the 2002 Winter Olympic being held there, things were sure to be secure and safe. And most answers pointed out the fact that we can't let these terrorists quell us into changing our way of living. Then we will have lost our freedom .. something WE fought for back in the "40's."

NEW MEMBERS:

There has just been a trickling of new members into our organization. Some have come by way of the Internet, or by word of mouth. In some cases it's been a relative, or friend, that has spent time on the Internet looking up WW-II items and has stumbled onto our location and passed the word on to a possible candidate. In most cases, when the new member files his application with

this office and I send him his membership card, decal, bumper sticker and past Ad-Libs, I try to include the names and addresses of his crewmates or tent buddies. I give only what's necessary, so's not to jeopardize my pledge to keep your name and address as confidential as possible. How the candidate handles this information is up to him.

DONATIONS:

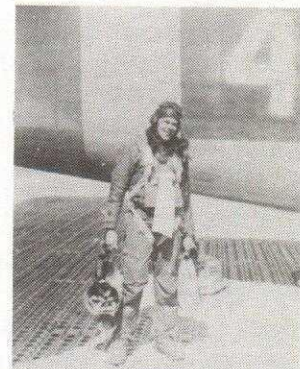
The ever present factor of sustaining this 451st effort; be it by newsletter, planning reunions, research, et cetera, there comes the need for funding. So far you guys have done your part adequately. But it seems that it's always the same members that are supporting this effort. I'd like to see some of you other members, who haven't kicked-in any funding, or, haven't for a long, long time, drop a stipend to the organization, just so we may continue. You'll find all the necessary information on how to contribute in the masthead on page 2.

RECRUITMENT:

I'm sure some of you members know of a 451st buddy or two, that is not currently involved with us. As previously stated, 'we're losing good men.' That can be seen every time I publish the Ad-Lib. If you know of someone that was overseas with us, test him about joining up with us. He may even like it!

BRAGGING RIGHTS

ME (My 36th Mission

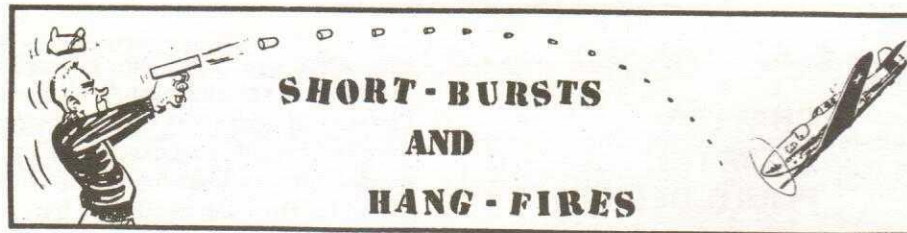


BOB KARSTENSEN [April 20 1945]

MY 724th CREW



STANDING: Henry Rollins, Pilot; John Dilks, Navigator; Edward Snow, Copilot; Harvey Miller, Bombardier
KNEELING: Eldon Morrill, B Gunner; Fred Gardner, AEG; Anthony Paonessa, ROG; Leo Cegla, T Gunner, Robert Karstensen, N Gunner, Anthony Kalik, AAG



George Rafter, 726th [BOMBARDIER: GLEN A. CHAMBERS' CREW]

I just wish I had found out about the 451st organization while Glen Chambers and Roy Monsen were still alive.

(Editor ... I too, wish we had found you sooner. Of your original crew, you are the only known surviving member. Course, that's not taking into consideration the "unfound," Robert Woolis, Frank Fenalson, William Lewis and Joseph Cleary. We shall keep on the prowl for them as we seek out more of our lost members.)

Kent Gillum, 724th [GUNNER: ROBERT E. CARLSON'S CREW]

The Lone Star Museum at Galveston, Texas, has recently added a room dedicated to the Ploesti Raids. The room is made like a briefing room with large maps, showing strings from Italy to Ploesti and back. Around the walls are highlighted twenty missions with a large plaque depicting different problems over the target. Along with this plaque are included some of my 451st pictures.

The "Wings Over Houston" air show this year (2001) is working towards having one hundred World War II aircraft in the air at one time. Everything from L-5's to a B-29. The "Tora" Group always reacts the attack on Pearl Harbor.

(Editor ... Good to see your keeping up with all that is "Aviation." Especially that which concerns us. Keep watching and writing.)

Frank L. Tedesco, 727th [COPILOT: ROBERT J. ANDERSON'S CREW]

Just want to thank you again for continuing to issue the "Ad-Lib." I very much look forward to receiving it.

A comment on the little dog "PDI." He was with us (Harry Waite, Don Schaffner and I) for a number of months. We always considered "PDI" stood for "Pilot Direction Indicator," because of the way his tail wagged back and forth. I've seen his name as "Pretty Damn Independent," which was not the original intent of the name. Not a big deal .. but just for the records.

(Editor ... Thanks for the update. "PDI" would appreciate the fact that he's not forgotten. Even to the fact that his title (name) is remembered by those of us that can relate to having pets while serving in Italy. Our's was named "Poco.")

Stan Cosby, 725th [Associate Member - Nephew to Glenn Thomson, Crew Chief]

I am interested in finding out about the ship [Hamer's Crew] brought over. Do you suppose you could query the members as to the fate of "Slick Chick?" Lt. Frank Hamer brought it over in November 1943. They stayed in Dakar about a month, through Christmas, came to Gioia del Colle in January were another crew took the plane, flew a mission, and never came back - at least, that's how Billie Meador [AEG]

remembers it. I am certain that Hamer and his crew, "The Happy Hoboes," never flew "Slick Chick" in a combat mission. Is there anyone out there that knows the fate of "Slick Chick?"

(Editor ... This is a tough one! None of my data gives a clue to the finality of "Slick Chick." There is no MACR (Mission Air Crew Report) on #42-52165. All I can assume is that it was transferred out to another Group. We'll keep the door a'jar for input from our members ... Aaaa Haaa! I just found out, via the Internet, that it was transferred into the 449th Bomb Group and was shot down on 22 April 1944)

Sheril D. Huff, [Secretary 49th Fighter Squadron]

Excerpt taken from a letter sent to Sheril D. Huff from Royal C. Gilkey, - Squadron S-2]

To Major Sheril D. Huff,

The note you included with the foregoing specialized periodicals inquired: "Did you get your copy of the 451st Ad Lib-Spring 2001?" The answer is "NO," explaining my missing what your describe as a "Very good write-up about the 'Little Friends' 49th FS. That my eyes would love to see! If you know editor-compiler Bob Karstensen, maybe you'd be good enough to suggest that he send me a copy. Heretofore, he has been very meticulous about forwarding copies of the 451st Bomb Group publications, featuring (among other items) "Little Friends' Fighter Squadron," the most recent being a "9th Installment" attributed to me. That particular installment was terrific, setting forth the following clarification:

"It is to be noted that the mission report for August 22, 1944 bore the signatures of both Intelligence Officers in the 49th Fighter Squadron, vis., 'HOWARD F. WILSON, Capt, Air Corps, Squadron S-2, & (no par) ROYAL C. GILKEY, 2LT, Air Corps, Ass't Squadron S-2.'"

(Do Excuse my error --- I did get a copy)

These words mean a lot to me, as you can imagine, Sheril. The name Karstensen will always be at the top of the list of those who have made Dr. Gilkey feel his life has been worth while. Please let him know this.

(Editor ... To both Sheril Huff (for passing on the journal of Dr. Gilkey) and to Dr. Royal C. Gilkey (for having documented the events of the 49th Fighter Squadron in the first place), I owe a much deeper debt of gratitude. I, and I hope our 451st members, have gained a much deeper insight into the activities of those that flew protective cover and strafing missions, while we conducted our bombing runs. It was, and still is a pleasure, to research and integrate our respective efforts.)

Edward Longenecker, 726th [ROG: RICHARD S. LONG'S CREW]

I had an interesting day on this past June 6th visiting

Charles and Dorcas Haltom at their home in Bryan, Texas. He and I had lunch and then spent the afternoon in his "War Room." Many mementos, as you can see in the picture. This was a GREAT visit.



(Editor ... This much I can say after looking at the photo: "That Haltom is well organized." I'll bet that was a "Barn Burner" of a get together! You guys could share a lot of memories as a result of that disastrous 14 July 1944 mission to Pefurdo, Hungary. While you and 6 others of the crew managed to evade, there were 5 of the crew that ended up as POW's, including Major Haltom.)

James E. Barden, 725th [GUNNER: CHARLES G. TRUMPER'S CREW]

What a pleasant surprise to get a phone call from Chris Pollard and to be informed that some of my comrades were still alive and well. After all these years of not having any contact or knowledge of their whereabouts -- I was overwhelmed by emotion! This is great!

To learn, also, that you have formed an organization of former members of the 451st Bomb Group, is also exciting. May I say here, that I for one, really and truly appreciate all of the many, many hours that you have toiled in bringing all of this together. I was able to contact Charlie Trumper, Harvey Brown and Jay Milnor by phone. We enjoyed the reminiscing. Thanks so very much!!

(Editor ... I was pleased that Chris Pollard (our computer GURU -- Webmaster to the 725th Website) was there to get you lined up with us. I hope you enjoy the association with us.)

A.J. Woods, 725th [NAVIGATOR: JOHN P. JANENSCH'S CREW]

I regret to inform you of the death of John Peter Janensch on April 11, 2001.

Pete's wife, Harriet, contacted me last week and during our conversation told me that when they received the Ad-Lib, Issue 33, she read it to Pete and he expressed a great deal of interest in it. I think I had told you before that he had macular degeneration. He was particularly interested in John A. Foster's article where he referred to Capt. Ed Bowen giving him a check ride when he reported to the 725th Squadron. Thank you for sending Pete the 451st B.G. Ad-Lib. I am certain it was a helpful assist to Pete at a crucial time for him.

(Editor ... I was glad we gave Pete some comfort during his last days. He will be missed.)

Donald Wiessend, 724th [GUNNER: ADAM E.

METZ'S CREW]

Thanks for the excellent issue of Ad-Lib (Spring 2001) which I received a short time ago. Again it gave me pause to sit down, relax, and read the exploits and bravery of our flying comrades of the 451st Bomb Group in our struggle for victory in WW-2.

No doubt, just like many others, that was so long ago, and yet it was such an important part of our lives, it has left vivid memories. Each combat mission was prefaced by, "I hope me and my crew make it back." Those were very serious days in our young lives.

(Editor ... Well said, Donald. Your appreciative remarks, along with your donation, are most welcome)

David Helsel, 725th [ASSOCIATE MEMBER]

I recently bought your book on the 451st B.G. I loved it! My grandfather's brother: Robert Helsel served in the 725th as a Radio Operator. He passed away 9 March 1977, before I could talk to him and ask him any questions. Would you have any idea how long Robert Helsel served in Casteluccio? Judging from some pictures, this puts him there around Oct 1944.

(Editor ... David, you hit me, blindsided, without any information to offer you. I DO NOT have Robert Helsel among my computers 5,000 names .. anywhere. If your search brings up any information, be sure to pass it along to me. That goes for you members, too!

While I'm at it ... One of our "unfound - now found" former members, S/Sgt Gunner Edgar W. Gaeth, just signed-in with his list of 725th crew names. He listed his Officers, which I'm not familiar with, as: Pilot, Robert Bjolin, Copilot, Martin Wolkof and Navigator, Richard Malin. I know for a fact that Bjolin was part of the 725th, as I have him listed on at least one flimsy, if not more. The one I'm looking at is dated 10 April 1944. Any help out there, such as 'copies of shipping orders bearing said names and serial numbers would certainly be appreciated.)

Sally Elliott, (DAUGHTER OF COLONEL EATON)

You do such an amazing job and I know we, as well as everyone else, looks forward to your "Ad-Lib" bulletin. As I've mentioned before, Dad never talked to us much about the war, his Bomb Group, nor his experiences. So we have learned a lot and have gained much insight into those wonderful men of the 451st who served our country. Thanks for keeping it all alive for our generation!

Jack Garrison, 726th [GUNNER: DALE W. MILLER'S CREW]

Talked to Arlin Feil in the nursing home (assisted living) in Eitzen, MN and he is about as usual. His daughter takes real good care of him.

I have one question that I wonder if you can find an answer to. It has bothered me off and on for a long time. When we were in Fairmont, Nebr., just before we went overseas, we had a radio-operator named Richard (Dick) Smith on our crew. Sometime in Oct or Nov 43, he went AWOL - dressed in his class A's. He left our barracks saying "I'll be seeing you - You know it's just about time for us to go overseas." I saw him briefly a week later in Lincoln, Nebr., at the railroad station. Do you have any idea what happened to him?

(Editor ... I have a Richard (nmi) Smith (ASN

36277377) listed on the Overseas Manifest that listed all the Miller Crew; dated 17 November 1943. Beyond that ... NOTHING. I had no idea that he wasn't with you guys during the fracas. He must have been able to evade the MP's, unless you saw him shackled and guarded on that railroad platform. Perhaps one of our members can add to this "missing man" dilemma.)

---X--X--0--X--X---

AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION - 101

Some time back, Col. Richard Colman (Ret.), 726th, was kind enough to correct me on the photo of "Hard To Get" (42-78525) that I had placed in the Ad-Lib. The photo was NOT the aircraft that he brought overseas and was not the a/c that he went down in on 25 Feb 1944 over Regensburg, Ger. Since that time I have located a photo of his original a/c (42-7738).



REPLACEMENT A/C "HARD TO GET"



ORIGINAL "HARD TO GET"

MORE A/C RECOGNITION - 101

Digging yet deeper into my photo archive, I found another discrepancy as to Photo ID. "FERTILE MYRTLE" shows up twice. Once as a 'silver skinned' a/c, and then - as would be - an original painted a/c. From the photos, there is no way to get the serial numbers of the silver skinned a/c. Wally Forman, in his book, "B-24 Nose Art Name Directory" lists 6 a/c from different Groups (453rd, 98th, 376th, 451st, 461st, 484th) as bearing the same name. The serial number that I have is 42-78471. That was the a/c that was shot down on 23 August 1944 with Lt. Cornelius Donoghue, 724th as A/C Commander. But which one was it? (More on this incident from Ad-Lib, Issue 30, page 5) We could use some help from you 724th Crew Chiefs.



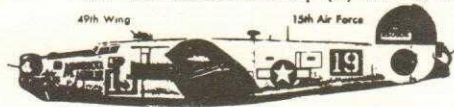
ORIGINAL (?) FERTILE MYRTLE



REPLACEMENT (?) FERTILE MYRTLE



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