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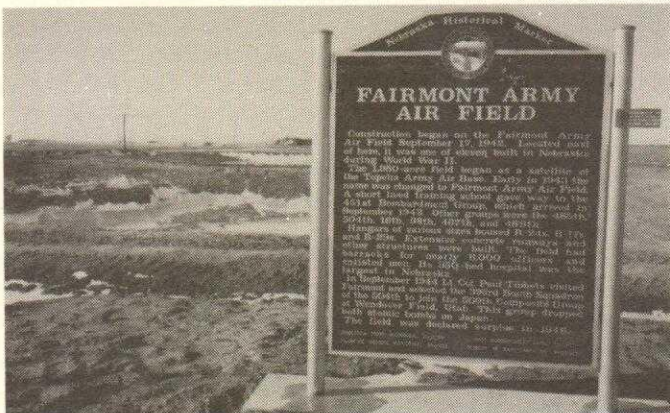
FOR THE MEN WHO FLY 'EM • FOR THE MEN WHO KEEP 'EM FLYING

Issue 35

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FAIRMONT, NEBRASKA REVISITED



AMID NEW ROAD CONSTRUCTION HISTORICAL MONUMENT STILL STANDS

I really can't explain it, but the old Fairmont Army Air Force Base still intrigues me; Bob Karstensen. Since our momentous Omaha Reunion, back in September 1990, and our trip out to see the old Base, whenever I get in the area I feel compelled to visit it again.

Nostalgia? ... Yes ... Taking a nostalgic look back at what was once an important part of the 451st legacy can stir up memories. And for me, though I never served

there, to once again trod the concrete aprons, where the mighty Liberator once held forth; to sense the hustle and bustle of men and vehicles as they performed their duties, continually draws me back.

Compassion? .. Yes .. Compassion for the men that were killed in the performance of their training duties. The blood of our dead are forever implanted in the soil of Nebraska, as well as into the soils of enemy nations that felt the might of our air offensive.

Since our 1990 Reunion I have returned several times. The most recent, mid-March 2002, when I drove out to Salt Lake City to fulfill duties related to our 2002 Reunion. This time I took lodging at York, NE and drove the 15 - 18 miles it took to get me to the Air Base. I noted the improved [under construction] 4 lane highway leading south from York, which in time will lead all the way to Salina KS. Nearing, where once the Historical Monument had been, I noticed that it was no longer in the same spot. It had been moved from its former location on Route 81 to a spot on the side road, just a few yards off Route 81. This change may be an improvement as it allows safer parking for more than one vehicle, thus allowing folks to get a closer look at the wording inscribed on the monument.

Satisfying my interest in seeing this historical marker, with its honors to the 451st Bomb Group, I returned

CONTENTS

Review of Fairmont Army Air Field	2
Vignette From "Achi" [Old Geezer].....	3
Closer Look At 25 Feb. Regensburg Mission	4
Sharing our Stories [by Anita Strickbine]	5
Ernie's Journal - 60th Service Squadron	6
Capt. Lloyd Ryan's Early Diary	8
A Page Out Of S/Sgt Chepulis' Diary	11
"Little Friends: 49th Fighter Squadron	12
Comic Instructions For Flight Engineers	15
Our Diminishing Ranks - Final Fly-By	16
Movie Making: 451st / 450th Style	18
Words From The Flight Deck	19
J. Foster's Con't Saga / Italy & Yugoslavia	21
Short Bursts And Hang Fires	23



LOOKING DIRECTLY EASTWARD FROM ROUTE 81 LIES FAIRMONT ARMY AIR FIELD

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

Compiled and Published by Bob Karstensen

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to the city of Fairmont and availed myself of the camaraderie offered at the American Legion Club.

I had the good fortune to run into the former Legion Commander, Dick Smith, who, back in 1990, took an active part in offering us Color Guards, and other Legion amenities, for our 'on Base' formal presentation. Dick, in turn, put the word out that one of the 451st members was 'in house,' and before I knew it, I was renewing old friendships from two decades past. That small town atmosphere still prevails and I felt more than comfortable in their presence.

I certainly think that it would be worth your time to look back at our 451st legacy by dropping by and letting the community of Fairmont know that they are not forgotten.

As an adjunct to my visit to the village of Fairmont, I ran across the following article on the Internet. I don't know at what period of time it was aired, but with permission of its author, I'll add it to this forum of past memories.

A PIECE OF AMERICAN HISTORY**FAIRMONT ARMY AIR FIELD, NEBRASKA**

(Courtesy, Melanie Wilkinson: Reporter, York-News & Times)

The planes roared loudly, as bombing practice continued. More than 7,000 soldiers of the United States Army proceeded with drills, stockpiled weapons and prepared to be shipped overseas to wage war. The runways had much of a parade atmosphere, the hangers were full of planes, and large buildings held top secret weaponry and bombs to be used in other parts of the

world. It was World War II, and the Fairmont Army Air Base was teeming with movement and purpose.

Today, the base is a quiet remembrance of the thousands of different people who worked and trained on its ground, as well as the 22 crew members that lost their lives there and even more that perished in battles around the world.

The Nebraska Aeronautics Department and the Nebraska Historical Preservation Society have evaluated the airfield and are completing a study entitled "The World War II Era Aviation Facilities in Nebraska," according to Don West, president of the Fillmore County Historical Society. A report due in July, will include a review of the Fairmont air field [circa 2000].

"There were 12 Army air fields in the state, developed during the period of mobilization during World War II," explained Bob Puschendorf of the Nebraska Historical Preservation Society. "Each of these air fields had different missions.

The Fairmont field was a huge complex, and is one of the rarest among the 12 because it is still in public ownership (by the aeronautics department) and much of the facilities are still standing." Puschendorf explained many of the fields were taken down as fast as they were put up. The structures were not intended for long use and were to be temporary.

"It's actually quite miraculous that so many buildings at the Fairmont site are still standing. They were put up fast and there were many restrictions on wartime construction material. An air field such as this is an extremely rare survivor and is a major part of the state's history. "He said the intent of the study is to determine what facilities still remain, and to make a concise inventory of what is significant. He said that will lead to the designations of certain fields to the National Registry of Historic Places.

Doug Rung has done a lot of research on the air field, and said the study has indicated that Fairmont was ranked the most preserved and in the best condition of all the other bases. Many people that come to the air field have said they can feel the presence of the past, they can see the planes coming in and taking off, and the men that were there. This was a mini-city at the time, and it was part of not only the history of the area and the state, but really of the world.

If it is included on the National Registry of Historic Places, we will proceed with finding grant money and other contributors to preserve this site. It is so valuable and it should be saved for future generations. This could be a tourist site that would put Fillmore on the map," Rung said.

According to the aeronautics department, consultant Barb Kooiman stated that, "The Fairmont Air Field is really the only one that still carries the mystique, the sense that something big happened there."

"Something big did happen there -- in September, 1942, when the official word from the federal government was received that the site two miles south of Fairmont would become an air base for training and other purposes to support the war effort. The space of 1,840 acres was condemned by the government, and in a mere five months the site was ready for operation.

The Village of Fairmont went through a lot of changes at that time, for there were housing needs and sewage concerns. Under the watch of the first commander, Major Ellis Eno, the base became a reality. It was soon the location of 300--400 separate buildings, 10,000 square yards of runways, and accommodations for as many as 7,000 men. There were officers' quarters, kitchens, barracks, mess halls, rest and recreation rooms, a dispensary and post exchange, according to historical records.

By May 1943, the first 600 military men and 100 civilians were employed there. Even a base newspaper, the "Dust Bowl Sand-Sock" rose from the installation. A military hospital was built, with 350 beds, it was the largest hospital in the entire state in 1943. There was storage for top secret bombs, and a \$50,000 telephone service was installed. The air base served as the last training stop for the airmen and their planes before deployment overseas. Crews refined their flight operations in the four-engine B-24 Liberator Bombers, while the base was also home to the B-17 Flying Fortress Bombers. Later in the war, B-29 Super Fortress Bombers would arrive.

The first air group to occupy the new base was the 451st Bombardment Group, which trained at the base from September 9, 1943 through November 26, 1943. Theirs was a time of hardship, for during their short training session, two separate crews were killed during training near the Fairmont field. On October 10, 1943 a crew of six men went down. Twenty-two airmen were killed in another training incident on October 15. Those that trained there were sent to war shortly after leaving Fairmont, as well, according to various members of the Fairmont community that remember the active days.

According to West, a "giant celebration and reunion was held at the air field 10 years ago. This included approximately 1,100 members of the 451st Group and their families (which accounted for about half of those that trained there at that particular time). Another reunion was held in 1996, which included all squadrons and air base personnel that had trained and worked at the base, West said.

Fiske Hanley II, a member of the Bomb Group 504,

visited Fairmont recently and presented the museum there with a copy of his book, "Accused American War Criminal." Lieutenant Hanley was at Fairmont Army Air Field, training with B-29 planes as a flight engineer. His group left Fairmont in early December, 1944, to pick up a new B-29 in Kansas and then on to Iinian where they bombed Japanese-held islands. On March 27, 1945, their plane was shot down while on a mine-laying mission off the Japanese coast. All the crew members, except Lt. Hanley and one other, were lost. Harlan Fintel, a navigator from Deshler, was also killed. Both survivors were captured by the Japanese and imprisoned until late August, when the war ended. He and others continued to remember the times when they were young, being prepared for the horrors and work of war, at the base.

According to Ruth Black of the Historical Society, many of the young men trained there receive donations and participated in many key missions during the war. Many have also been active in contributing memorabilia to the museum, in an effort to keep the memory of it's activity alive.

At the close of World War II the base was deactivated and the four large hangers were used for grain storage, according to Fillmore County historical records. It also became the site for manufacturing grain dryers and grain elevator equipment, a broiler industry and a flying school.

In 1948, it was turned over to the aeronautics division. "The stabilization, viability and preservation issues will obviously come into play, if the air base is deemed as rare as it appears to be," Puschendorf said. "These air fields are extremely important artifact of Nebraska's effort during World War II."

The air field is now quiet. Marked by a monument along Highway 81, it is hardly invisible from traffic -- as the large hangars and other buildings still loom in the distance. The tower is gone, and the runways have weeds growing through the cracks in the concrete. Despite its vacancy, the feeling surrounding the historical site is one of sentimental, bittersweet memories of those that worked, lived and died there.

VIGNETTE FROM "ACHI"

By: Achilles Kozakis

"Old Geezers" (slang for an old man) are easy to spot:

At sporting events, during the playing of the National Anthem, Old Geezers hold their caps over their hearts and sing without embarrassment. They know the words and believe in them. Old Geezers remember World War I, the Depression, World War II, Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Normandy and Hitler.

They remember the Atomic Age, the Korean War, the Cold War, the Jet Age and the Moon Landings, not to mention Vietnam.

If you bump into an Old Geezer on the sidewalk, he will apologize. If you pass an Old Geezer on the sidewalk, he will nod, or tip his cap to a lady. Old Geezers trust strangers and are courtly to women. Old Geezers hold the door for the next person, and always, when

walking, make certain the lady is on the inside for protection.

Old Geezers get embarrassed if someone curses in front of women and children and they don't like violence and filth on TV, or in movies. Old Geezers have moral courage. They seldom brag unless it's about their grandchildren.

It's the Old Geezers who know our great country is protected, not by politicians or police, but by the young men and women in the military serving their country.

This country needs Old Geezers with their decent values. We need them now more than ever. Thank God for Old Geezers!

Pass this on to all the Old Geezers you know. Also, anyone else who might appreciate this. God Bless America!

CLOSER LOOK AT REGENSBURG MISSION

Bob ... You asked if Colonel Eaton was on the Regensburg Mission on the 25th of February. No Eaton did not lead that mission - Winski and I were leading that day. In fact, I was awarded the DFC for leading that mission. And, too, the Group received it's first Presidential Unit Citation for the job we did.

Eaton did not fly that mission because he was sick, and secondly, it was not our first mission to Regensburg. We had tried to bomb it on the 22nd of February, just three days before. We bombed by ETA through the clouds without much success. I was also on that mission, leading the low flight - don't recall who was leading the Group that day.

You asked about evasive action. Bob, I flew as either deputy lead or lead on quite a few missions and I don't ever recall taking severe evasive action to throw off the flak. It's hard enough flying formation when flying straight and level - impossible if the ship you are flying wing-on, is jerking around all over the sky. The lead ship sets up the automatic pilot as soon as you were outward bound and all changes in altitude and direction were programed in. Coming off the target the lead ship would turn off the target and make a diving turn either right or left to confuse the flak gunners. But then back on the autopilot for the run home. As an aside, Eaton was very firm on the use of the autopilot, and would become very upset if anything happened to the autopilot of the ship he was in. The Group Engineering Officer would catch hell as soon as we landed!

The weather was perfect going to the target, but got much worse on the way home. We had to work through very thick storm clouds in order to keep the formation together. About two hours out we received a message to land at Foggia Main because our base [Gioia del Colle] had been almost washed away. We had to drop down to under 500 feet to stay under the clouds in order to keep the formation together. So, since it was several days before the crews could get back to home base, there was no critique except by the Intelligence Officer at the base where we had landed.



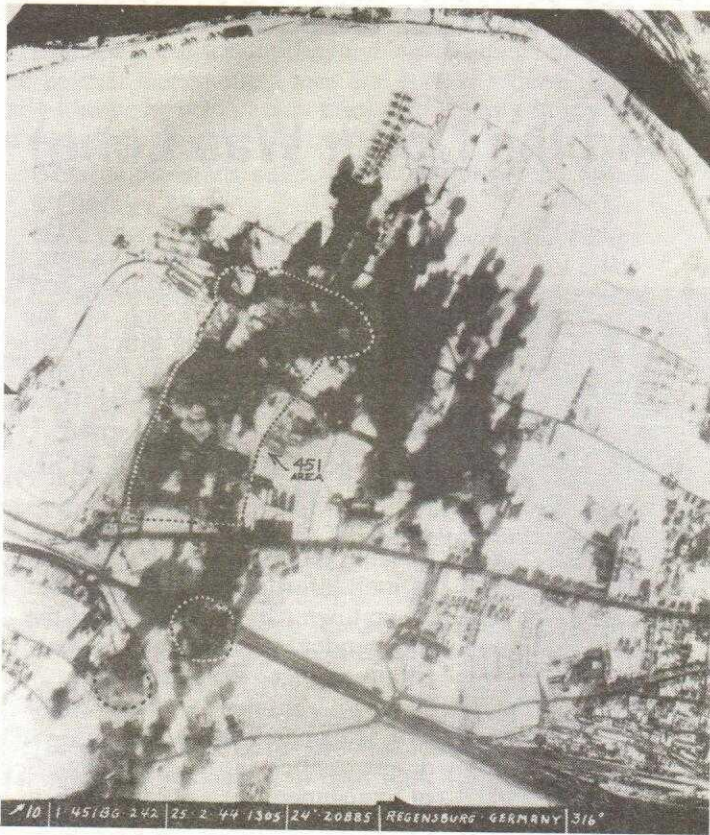
OVER REGENSBURG, GERMANY ... 25 FEBRUARY 1944

I may not have told you, but shortly after landing I received an urgent message ordering me, the Group Navigator and Bombardier to immediately ride a truck back to home base [that night!], because of a special briefing at Wing Headquarters the next morning. We arrived home early the next morning, just in time to change clothes; hustle over to Eaton's quarters, where he was in bed, for a short critique before heading out to Wing Headquarters, where the new 47th Wing Commander, General Rush, was being welcomed. The meeting was to also announce the awarding of the DSM to Lt. Col. Gideon, Deputy CO of the 450th Bomb Group for leading the overall mission. I didn't know about that until the meeting had already started.

I was asked to brief those in attendance, on our portion of the mission. I had the Group Navigator Byers and Group Bombardier Hughes with me also. I told them, when we hit the IP we could see the target clearly ahead - and there was no smoke, which seemed to indicate that we were the first element over the target. Our photos also clearly indicated that. In all fairness, I must also state that we were directly behind the 98th Bomb Group, which was leading our wave. But may have had another target as their primary objective.

When I made the statement that there appeared to be no bomb damage to the target, one of the Generals stopped me and asked me to repeat that. After I finished speaking they asked the Navigator and the Bombardier to give their versions, base on their logs.

As I left the briefing and was walking down the hall, I was suddenly whirled around by a very large and red-faced Colonel Gideon. He screamed at me and said, "What the hell are you trying to do to me?" I was quite confused and said, "What to you mean?" He said, "I've just come from Bari where I was awarded the DSC for leading the 15th Air Force on that mission!" All I could say was that I told it like it was and that was all I could do. He was livid and I thought he might have a stroke right on the spot. When I got back to base I briefed Eaton on it and he said that I should just forget about it. I never heard another word about it.



BOMB STRIKE EFFECT FROM 25 FEBRUARY 1944 MISSION

Just to add a little humor to what I've already said; My Intelligence Officer, Elliott Arnold was allowed to go on that mission and ended up preparing an article for publication. It was a pretty good article, except when putting it together someone got some B-17 pictures in it! Before he joined our outfit in Wendover, he was a writer with King Features. On this mission he was in the lead plane of the high flight, and was a little upset with me because I wouldn't let him fly with Pilot Richard Coleman on my right wing. Of course he was quite happy after the mission, because Coleman and his crew were one of the six ships that we lost. My good friend Monroe Quillen, Group Operations Officer, was flying that day with Coleman as deputy leader. Six months later I joined Quillen in Stalag Luft III.



MAJOR CHARLES HALTOM & SGT TOM CHARLES
UPON RELEASE FROM PRISON CAMP

SHARING OUR STORIES

By Anita C. Thomas Strickbine Parent, Teacher, and teller of Tales.

I have read that there are two things that we, as parents, give to our children: one is roots, the other wings. What an enormous, difficult, and magical assignment this is. Unfortunately, I have not met a child yet who comes with instructions. We tackle our assignments through memories of our own childhoods, advice from other parents and friends, much love, hope, and prayers.

As I read, listen, and share stories about this world, and these times; I keep hearing the same message: "We must tell our stories." It occurs to me that there are few better ways to establish healthy, nurturing root systems than to share the stories we know with our children. Only we know our stories, and only we can tell them in our own way. Because we live them every day we are seduced to thinking they may be unimportant, or that they are already known. No one knows your story in your special way, and that way is a unique avenue to communication, understanding, and who knows? perhaps someday world peace, that so many of us seem to find at the top of our wish list this time of year.

This season is a wonderful starting place. You have unique family memories regarding customs, special foods, misunderstandings, revelations, challenges, joys, people, places, wonder, and stories you've heard to share with your children ... and they want to know. Take a gentle moment to reminisce. What you know is impor-

tant. It helps give them an anchor, a common experience with you through words, a moment when you let them know just how very special you think they are because you are sharing ideas, and time in a very busy world. They have stories to tell too, if we'll listen. One of the most miraculous things I know about stories is they cannot be told until they have passed through our hearts.

DO TELL!

(Editor .. This little vignette, as sculpted by Anita [nee] Thomas Strickbine [daughter of Charles M. Thomas, 727th], holds true for us "Old Geezers," as Achi, in a previous story relates. We've got our stories to tell ... and to who better than our grandchildren, if not our own offsprings. What's left, of your war stories, you can pass on to this organization)



ERNIE CUMMINS' 60th AIR SERVICE SQUADRON JOURNAL

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

When Ernie Cummins passed away December 20, 2000, at the age of 84, he left us a legacy that hopefully will allow us to continue for some time to come. Through his writings and his generosity, he has been steadfast in his commitment to his WW-II memories. His writings are not only for the men that he was intimately associated with; the 60th Air Service Squadron, but to the 451st Bomb Group that he adopted so enthusiastically and without reservation.

Ernie has been a good friend and comrade. When he wrote his last letter to me (Ad Lib - Issue 32 - Page 36), he made mention of "remembering us in his will." He held true to his word. I was notified by his attorney in California that his wish was soon be fulfilled. His bequest will be more than welcome and will help to continue this effort.

Excerpt from Letter of 24 September 1944

The other night when the ratings were announced, I put ten bucks into a pool with the other guys being promoted, and the E.M. Club Bar set up drinks for the outfit. When a couple of dozen men make advances at one time, the cost per man is lower, but this trip only a few guys were lucky to be promoted. Instead of celebrating with the gang, I went to the hospital to take rations (smokes, candy, etc.) to Reuben Vogele, as he missed drawing his rations, both in camp and in the hospital. Guess who is stationed there with the Red Cross to keep up the morale of the patients. Madeline Carroll, no less! Maybe I should visit Reuben more often, what say?

Little Willie, when he went off to school a few days ago, told us the studies would be a little tough for him. And sure enough, he flunked out. Yesterday I took extra blankets down to the guys at the school, which was on my route - a trip of a couple hundred miles - and when I looked for Willie, I learned that he had already returned to our camp.

I guess winter is finally arriving. We now have four blankets and in a day or so, we get woolen "long handles," and O.D. uniforms. It's been raining off and on for the past week. On the road a guy will run right through a storm and have sunshine and dry pavement for a little while, then hit another drizzle further along. When I got in last night, the ropes tying down my load were wet, and so tight from shrinking, we let 'em alone



ERNEST R. CUMMINS
B. 25 December 1916 / D. 20 December 2000

overnight before trying to loosen 'em. Had Jack Casey with me and we talked about San Anselmo, etc. He remembered us seeing him at Tahoe on our wedding night, and laughed about the two girls with him. He said they both knew he was married.

Excerpt from letter of 30 September 1944

After the ratings last time, our Special Service Sgt took down a list of junk information to send to the home town papers. I wonder if the Independent was hard up for space filling articles? What a laugh!!

P.F.C. Bricker, a fellow in my tent, is engaged today in digging a drainage ditch for the Squadron. Sort of punishment for a scrape with an M.P. He is so disgusted he's talking about getting back into the kitchen again, as he use to be Mess Sgt - in an Officers Mess. Figures if he's working in camp instead of on the road, his temptations won't be so great. And here in the last few weeks he's been collecting Corporal stripes

for the future. He's even thinking of getting married to an Italian girl.

Our rations today were four bottles of Ruppert's Beer, two Cokes, two Hershey bars, one pack of gum, seven packs of cigarettes and one big black cigar. (I always give mine to Ray, my boss, to make points!) I also got matches, ink, shaving cream, etc. At four P.M. we get our pay. But this month won't include my new raise, but next month it will be added for a month and a half. My wife's paycheck is sure a whopper now. I hope I can make enough in my civilian life to support us in the way we are accustomed ..Hi..

We have been issued our wool clothes again, and my waist size is 33 inches, about the same as always. The guys on my crew also have a special belt to wear on jobs that shake your guts apart. It's called a 'kidney belt,' sort of a wide leather corset affair, which supports a man's mid-section. How about some pointers on adjusting girdles, honey?

Excerpt from letter of 4 October 1944

8:30 - Back from the show, waiting for the water to heat on our stove. I'm going to brew up some onion soup. Surprising to relate, the diet we get includes onions, either raw or cooked, twice a day at the least. One of my favorites now is a salad of tomatoes, onions and green peppers! Sometimes a real hot pepper gets in the mixture. It's funny to watch the expression on a

G.I.'s face when he unexpectedly chomps on a mouthful of tongue-burning vegetable.

Had spaghetti for supper, and stewed chicken. Private Bricker has changed jobs and is now a Cook. He really knows how to season things up. Living in my tent, the outlook for snacks is bright!

Good night again, cutie. Dream about Ernie . Sgt. C.
8 October 1944

Dear Peanut: Been working the past couple of days and nights. I was so tired when I got in yesterday afternoon, I showered, ate and was in bed by seven P.M.

During the trip we picked up an Officer who was hitch-hiking out of a city at midnight .. and did we have a funny experience with him! Earl and I were taking turns at the wheel and I had the last stretch. When I asked this Looey where he want to go, he names a field, but said he did not know just how to get there. We were going to the same place and he was sure delighted when we set him down right at his destination. Being only one day overseas, he was eager and excited and it was then, at 2:30 A.M, I inquired if he knew where Earl and I could obtain blankets for a few hour's snooze. "Glad to help! My plane has forty blankets in it. Wait 'til I borrow a jeep and I'll get you a dozen!"

Well Mabel, I went with him .. found his ship .. and then he discovered that his crewmen were sleeping inside the plane, instead of in their tent. That didn't stop him, however. He swiped a couple of blankets off each sleeping man and tossed them into the jeep.

But the best of all was getting our cots. Inside a Supply Tent it was pitch black and by striking matches, we found a big pile of cots. The eager beaver Looey says, "You strike the matches, I'll unfold and set up your cots!" I persuaded him to leave that detail to Earl and me. I believe that fella would have even tucked us in ..ha.

All this time he was telling us of his landings and experiences coming over. He showed us a ditch where he had gotten his wheels stuck in the mud. He told us

how the one ship, landing ahead of him, had cracked up. "First time I ever saw a bomber burn!" he moaned, "Just think .. A third of a million bucks gone up in smoke!" I had to laugh at him (silently of course) because he was so green and anxious to get into some real action. A good kid, he must have been about 23, I'd guess. He wanted so badly to be "One of the gang."

The whistle is blowing for the work formation - more later, Honey.

Back again at quitting time .. even Sundays we work. Recovered a stolen jeep today and phoned the M.P.'s to come and get it. Someone had painted over all the numbers with bright blue paint. So when I brushed that off, I found the outfit's markings.

Yes Peanut, Johnnie Wilson is still the Top Kick. I'm thinking you have the idea that most of the Squadron has already gone elsewhere, haven't you? There are still a lot of the fellows here that were 60th men when I joined the Army, so Ernie isn't all alone and lonesome. The standing joke between the new and old timers is the distinction given the "veterans" of the California desert. They saw what was "really rough" action, over anyone who joined since then ... Hi.

Some of our men are buying the little gold colored stripes to sew on the sleeve of their blouses, denoting six months overseas for each stripe worn. Boy, how some of these Joes love to shine up and strut around. Ray Brackney says that I'm due to get another bar to hang under the Driver's Medal, which makes me laugh like hell. Never intend putting the thing on anyway. I saw a colored guy in a Red Cross snack bar wearing one, and that is exactly why we don't want to be seen wearing the crazy gadget .. Just looks silly.

My last two days were busy ones, Mabel, with meals in different messhalls. Met the little Mexican kid I wrote about last winter (he slept in my tent and talked to himself, remember?). But now, in conversation at least, he has improved a lot. Seems quite rational.

Had fried eggs this morning at his messhall.

POEMS ADAPTED FROM 'PUPTENT POET'

(CIRCA 1945)

ORDERS

"At eight AM we're taking off,"
The Colonel sternly said.
So the Major sent the order down,
"At five we leave our bed."
Well, the Captain took no chances,
Because Captains never do.
And so he told the topkick,
"Have the men get up at two."
At midnight the CQ woke us,
And here we sadly sit,
Because it now is almost noontime,
And we haven't flown out yet.

-- based on works of T-5 C.D. Westerberg

FIELD MOVIE

Beneath a starry summer sky,
Upon a stubbled field,
The soldiers sprawl enraptured
While a movie is unreeled.
They weep and laugh with shadows,
They gasp at acted strife,
Drink deep of formula romance
Embrace a synthetic life,
But these soldiers move in pagent
More vast than any seen,
And know it not -- for them
Drama lives upon a screen

--by Sgt Virgil Scott

Captain Lloyd Ryan's Early Diary And Remembrances From Overseas

Bob,

While looking for something else, I ran across a few pages of a diary I kept from 21 November 1943 to 17 April 1944. I do not remember keeping a diary and have no idea if I kept anything after April, and if so, where is it? But I thought you might be interested in reading what I wrote.

A few dates of interest. Left FAAF, Fairmont, Nebraska on November 21, 1943 for staging area in Lincoln. On November 30th we took off for Morrison Field, Florida, for the beginning of our long hop. Everything was given a final check and we finally took off on December 2nd. Landed in Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico that afternoon. I had a bad cold, but started to go on the next day - however a prop governor went out at warm-up, so then I decided I might as well get my nose cleared up, so we stayed over for three days. Ran into Thistlewood, a classmate of mine, on his way home after completing his 50 missions. I got a lot of good poop from him and also had a couple of good parties. Borinquen is a beautiful field, right on the ocean with beautiful barracks. Went into the local village of Aquidilla, but it was much too dirty. Lots of propaganda about them wanting to be the 49th State, but it's time they became a little more civilized and raise their standard of living first.

Left Borinquen on December 5th for Waller Field, Trinidad. This was nothing but an airfield cut out of the jungle - started using mosquito nets. Pulled out the next day for Belem, Brazil. Was an interesting hop over the jungles of French and British Guiana - no landing fields for hundreds of miles but the 'Lamplighter' ran like a charm - never a sputter. Belem was awful - hot, murky, poor food and barracks not too sharp - so we did not stop over. We left promptly the next morning and went to Natal, Brazil. Arranged for a complete mechanical inspection of the plane in preparation for the Atlantic. Were briefed direct to Dakar, bypassing the Ascension Islands. Forced to stay over in Natal due to bad weather in Africa, plus Dakar was full as they could not move out. Couldn't go into town due to a fiesta going on, but we *did* go swimming in the ocean - a nice sand beach and beautiful salt water. Managed to get some papaya and mangoes, which brought back fond memories of the P.I. Finally pulled out of Natal on December 12th on our big hop. Landed in Dakar 11 hours and 45 minutes later - a very uneventful flight. We saw lots of water and had only about 30 minutes of instrument flying in spite of all the talk about the stationary front in the ocean. A lot of the boys had as much as two or three hours of instruments. My navigator, John Robinson, started suggesting



Captain [later Col. Ret.] Lloyd Ryan, 725th Squadron

a little turn to the north (we were still some 2 hours out) and after about fifteen minutes of this I told him to turn his ADF off. He must have slept through part of the briefing because we had been told there were reports the Germans had a radio station somewhere in southern Morocco that were broadcasting a radio beam to get people off course. The landing was uneventful, except for the noise. It was the first time I had landed on a runway with steel planking. Went swimming again in Dakar. While swimming

some of the harbor guns started practicing. Got our first sight of Africans - wogs, as they called them here. They wear sheets hung around themselves and look like scarecrows. Saw my first overseas USO show - pretty good - had three pretty girls who were good actors and good singers. One night General Arnold showed up at the Club for a couple hours - evidently on his way back from the conference at Oran. Finally got away from Dakar on December 17th, enroute to Marrakech. What a temperature change - warm in Dakar, now it's freezing cold. Went into town to look around but not much to see - everything closed up - very few cars but lots of horses. Saw our first charcoal burner cars and buses. What a clumsy looking outfit. Thank heaven we stayed only one night in Marrakech - took off for our final destination, Telergma, near Constantine. Found a place to take a hot shower so went in as often as possible. Arrived there early in the afternoon and immediately started building a stove. Got it built the next day after freezing one night. We lived in tents and ate C rations most of the time. However the cooks (who are Italian prisoners) were very good at making the food appetizing. Lived in mud almost all the time. Flew practice missions and went into Constantine. Found a place to take a hot shower so went in as often as possible - much more satisfactory than sponge baths. Had delicious donuts at the Red Cross Officers Club and a good snack bar. Went to the Casino quite often, for it was the town gathering place - served wine, but nothing else. One big difficulty - not a build- ing is heated.

Finally left Telergma enroute to Gioia del Colle, Italy on January 19, 1944 (the airfield had been built by Army Engineers - about 5 miles from Bari which is on the east coast - with a steel planked runway). Arrived safely and went on training status. Flew a few training missions and went on our first real one on **January 30**, across the Adriatic after a radar station in Albania. Could not see the damn thing from 20,000 ft. so didn't hit it. No opposition of any kind.

Second mission on **February 2nd** to the same area and blew a different radar station clear off the map. Ran

into a bit of flak this time for it was very close to Durazzo Harbor. One plane crashed on landing for his landing gear had been damaged. Another came back with the hydraulic system shot out, but made it. One ship, the Bombardier and Navigator were hit by flak - both got Purple Hearts. Oh yes, we went in Lamplighter II [formally named 'Small Fry' 42-52156]. Original Lamplighter [42-7721] was wrecked on landing by Lt R.L. Connor due to a flat tire. I watched him bring it in and cried like a baby. We had taken such good care of that ship - but c'est la guerre.

Third mission was after a target north of Rome on **February 3rd**. Returned bombs to Base due to complete overcast over target.

February 8, 1944 - The Group ran its fourth mission. I didn't go as it was someone else's turn to lead the Group. Jim Hunt crashed on takeoff and was killed instantly. His copilot Ed Niederkorn and two waist gunners were thrown out. Eddie was badly hurt but will live. Others have minor injuries. It appears he was trying to land gear-up and hit a four foot rock wall. I think it was due to ice and he failed to salvo his bombs soon enough - bombs then had a low detonation and messed things up even worse. Wish I could write to Martha Hunt, but prohibited from doing so until 60 days after the accident. The nose gunner on the lead ship was killed by flak (*ed. believed to have been Leo Doring, 726th flying in S. Winski's a/c*) and one of our ships returned with 51 holes in it. A bit rough but still no fighters.

February 10, 1944 - Ran a tactical support mission on the beachhead at Anzio. I led the Group with Colonel Eaton riding as copilot. Went in at 13,000 feet and blew hell out of the target (Oh yes, I was promoted to Captain when I arrived in Italy - effective December 16th.) Still no flak holes in the ship. One ship was damaged so badly he had to make a belly landing.

February 12, 1944 - Started a mission but was forced back by weather. Doesn't count for we didn't get out of friendly territory.

February 16, 1944 - Went along today as Deputy Group Leader after the same target as yesterday. Luckier today - found a hole over the target so dropped bombs. No flak no fighters, but am afraid we missed the target due to not seeing it soon enough. We can only pray for better weather.

February 17, 1944 - No flying today for some unknown reason. The Wing just gave the Group a day off, so went into Bari and picked up my mattress. What a situation - facilities for recreation are mighty few. Guess it is just one more hardship brought on by the war, however it is still relaxing just to go into town and get away from the post. It is worth the trip just to eat off a plate, have tablecloth, glasses and waiters. Spent most of the afternoon in the Officer's Bar with the rest of the boys, but the wine and cognac is too weak to do any good towards drowning the blues. Planes are filled with 2700 gallons and eight 500 lb. bombs - wonder where we will go?

February 20, 1944 - Haven't been anywhere yet for the weather has been stinko. They say there is a polar mass of cold air moving down from Russia causing it all - whatever it is, it is plenty bad. Was snowing this morning when we woke up, but still were briefed to go

bomb the beachhead at Anzio. The boys there must be having a mighty hard time of it for the Wing to even think of sending us out in such weather. We did not go due to our runway being so slick and so soft. I feel sure that had we tried we would have lost a couple on takeoff. Maybe we will go tomorrow, if the wind will blow all night and dry out the runway. I hope we do have a mission for the boys are beginning to get restless and irritable just sitting around.

February 21, 1944 - Sweated out a mission to Augsburg this morning. What a run that would have been. Germans are reported to have 68 heavy caliber guns there and about 160 fighters. I was to lead the high group in the second wave at 25,000. There would have been 9 groups of 18 ships each, which wouldn't have been too bad with the 8th AAF also attacking targets in the same area. However was glad to have it called off. Would prefer that the gunners see a few fighters before we go dashing up into the middle of them. Went to Gioia this afternoon, to a barber shop. Spent over an hour getting the works; shave, haircut, shampoo - all for 70 lira, or cents. Don't expect a mission tomorrow, for the weather still stinks. Got Bob Hoffman (my copilot) a chance to ferry a P-40L to Bari today. He was as happy as a kid at Christmas - had a good trip, too.

February 22, 1944 - Went to Regensburg today - Nine groups of 18 ships each. The rendezvous was a bit snafued and I ended up with my group in the first wave when I belonged in the second. It was a long haul. I thought we would never get there, but when we did the target was completely overcast, so we didn't hit it after all. We had to rid our bombs because of the weight was causing us to use too much gas. We finally saw a railroad and dropped the bombs (sorry about the little town nearby). It was a bit rough today, but not on us because we stayed in pretty good formation. Saw about 20 fighters but they attacked only the stragglers. They sat up at about 30,000 feet just waiting for someone to drop out of the formation. Saw a lot of flak; very accurate and almost the barrage type, but managed to keep my group out of it. Ran into stinko weather coming home - haze so bad it cut visibility to half a mile - then had to turn to avoid clouds, and finally had to let down to 1,500 feet over the Adriatic coming home. It was a real sweat session wondering if I could keep my 18 shops in the clear. I hope I never get involved in such weather again. I hope they start giving us credit for two missions every time we go into Germany. They should, since we have to bomb the same targets as the boys from England do, and they only fly 25.

February 23, 1944 (Revision on yesterday's mission - The 449th lost seven ships.)

Today, **23 February**, the boys went after a target in the same area. Again, ran into bad weather and had to turn back. They were jumped by six (6) FW-190s and one (1) ME 110. None were shot down, but two gunners in our Squadron were injured. One of the boys, in Bill Tuney's crew, was injured by shrapnel from a 20mm cannon shell which exploded. Good News - The Wing officially gave us credit for two (2) missions, so we are now on a par with the 8th AAF.

February 25, 1944 (Recorded on 27 February)
Went on a mission to Regensburg and hit it hard.

Even the German radio admitted that we had knocked out 50% of their productive ability, so it is probably more than that. However, it was costly. Our Group lost six ships - four of them were in the 18 ship formation I was in and three of them out of our Squadron; Kimmel, Zender and Pries. We were jumped by fighters an hour before we got to the target and for some reason all 30 of them jumped our formation, although the Group ahead of us wasn't flying as well as we were. I saw Zender get it, for he was flying on my left wing. He was hit in the #3 engine and set on fire by a nose attack. My nose gunner, Gilliland, got the German, but not soon enough. I didn't see our other two go down, but from all reports they were straggling a bit when they were jumped. Most of the fighters came in on the tail. They finally stopped after about ten minutes. Obviously we kept on going but fully expected more attacks - but they quit. The flak over the target was heavy but we didn't lose any ships there. We weren't due to pick up our fighter escort until about forty-five minutes off the target, so we were really sweating out more fighters. None came up and then we saw out P-38s in the distance. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. There was never a more welcome sight. Finally had to land at Foggia (a B-17 base about 50 miles north of our base at Gioia, which was deemed inoperable for us to return to). There I ran into Pat Collin's old State-side pilot, which put us in solid. They were having a party that night, so we all drank mucho and did our best to forget the days losses. But that is war, I guess. God, how I wish this thing would stop. However, one good thing - figures show that 80% of all bomber crews that do go down come out alive. Usually as prisoners, but you are still alive.

April 17, 1944 - Went to Regensburg on the 25th of February, then to England on March 5th. Just got back on April 13, after a marvelous vacation. On the 14th went to Budapest and on the 15th to Bucharest. Cancelled out on the 16th and today started out for an airport about 25 miles north of Ploesti. We didn't get beyond the Yugoslav coast due to weather. To bed now, for I expect we will go after the same airport tomorrow and there will probably be another early briefing.

END OF MISSION DIARY

[Editor; the following addendum is Lloyd Ryan's description of his trip to England.]

I will now tell about the marvelous vacation in England. Colonel Eaton called me in and gave me a set of orders to fly to England and pick up a load of classified material (new radar to be installed in our ships) and return. He said to take an old war-weary plane that had been flown throughout the African Campaign - but now unarmed. So off we went with my copilot, navigator, crew chief and radio operator. Left Italy and flew to Casablanca, refueled and got something to eat. Then the starter on #3 engine wouldn't work, so got some help and they cranked it and got all four running. Took off for England, planning arrival to be around 0800. After takeoff the astro-compass fell out of the dome in the nose and broke. Okay, so we use the old fashioned compass which had not been calibrated for over a year. Flying at 9,000 feet and pretty soon we noticed lights on the ground. The closer we get to it, it has to be a city. We figured the only city in that part of the world that

was not in a black-out condition has to be Lisbon. So I tell Robinson to plot the heading we had been flying on the map and figure out how much error there is in the compass; then, that I am immediately turning west for at least an hour and then I want a northerly course to get abreast of the southern tip of England (obviously in an UNARMED plane we did not want to fly up the coast of Europe). Everything went well for a few hours. When it started to get light and we figured we were a couple hours away so we started to try and contact the Base at Lands End. But the big radio doesn't want to work. We figured we are maybe a couple hundred miles west of England, so we turn towards the Island, still trying to make radio contact. Suddenly we see a couple of fighters coming out to see who we are. I tell the crew chief to get up in the hatch and fire a couple of red flares. Sure enough, two British Spitfires came up and looked us over and thankfully saw we were American. By now we were close enough that I picked up the range on the ADF radio, so I could home-in, gradually descending. The VHF worked, so called for weather. Weather was not good; current ceiling 400 feet, visibility a mile and getting worse. So down we went, crossed the beacon at 300 feet and made out the RAF field directly ahead, so crossed it and started a circle to the right, never seeing the American field which was close by. We landed at the British field, waited a couple of hours, then took off and went to the American field, where the Ops Officer told me we had flown directly over them in our landing pattern. I said that I had not been able to see the field.

We stayed overnight and then went directly to Leicester. On arrival was told we were cleared to go to London for three days and by then our plane would be loaded and ready to go. We took the train to London - It is now March 7th. On March 10th we leave Leicester and go back to Lands End. On landing I wrote up the things I wanted repaired (forgot to say we got the starter repaired on arrival, March 6th. Mainly I wanted the radio and astro compass fixed. The next day I was called in by the Security people who informed me that there had been another plane from the 15th AAF carrying a load of the same stuff as was on-board my plane. This plane, which was scheduled three days ahead of me, had crashed on take-off and scattered all that top secret gear all over the landscape. The Base Commander called for a very thorough inspection of the plane - so back to the club and the almost continuous poker game. On March 12, Operations tells me that they are going to send the ship to a depot, but they want me to test fly it locally to show it is safe to fly to the depot. I alert the crew to bring their luggage and we would do the test flight and if there was 2,000 gallons aboard, we would land in Casablanca. But they anticipated this and they loaded only about 1,200, plus they had off-loaded all the top secret stuff we had come for. I took off and came back and buzzed that airfield like it had never been buzzed before, and sure enough on landing the Ops Officer met me and said the Base Commander wanted me immediately. To make a long story short, they gave me a receipt for the airplane and authorized the crew to go to London for 10 days, and then I would have to basically hitchhike back to Italy. So back to London

Since we had valid orders we went to the Finance Office and got a pay advance. We stayed at an excellent

hotel directly across from Hyde Park - Went sight-seeing on the tube. One evening, about 8:30, the sirens started sounding, so Hoffman (my copilot) and I went out and stood under the portico at the front entrance to see what was going on. The park was full of anti-aircraft guns and searchlights when all hell broke loose. The shrapnel from the flak was falling in the street so we thought better and went back inside. The reports the next day were that considerable damage to a couple of apartment buildings, a few blocks away, had been badly damaged. We

realized we should have gone to the bomb shelter, but this was our first experience with these conditions.

When our time was up and very little money left, we got the train back to Lands End and started talking with the Air Transport Command about how to get back to Italy. We finally made it all the way back to Foggia. We could then contact the Base and get somebody to come to get us. Got back April 13th, and was on the list to fly every day for a week ... Enough!

A PAGE OUT OF S/SGT CHEPULIS' DIARY

Mission: #7

Ship: #9

Target: Odertal Oil Refinery

Date: Dec. 17, 1944

Squadron: 727th

Flew at an altitude of 24,000 ft. Temp was 36 degrees below zero. Flak was pretty heavy - rather accurate, too.

Well, it happened! We were attacked by German fighters, 109s & 190s, shooting rockets at us. One ship blew-up right in front of me. We had a mid-air collision (not me). One chewed the tail off another ship. The ship with the tail knocked off went down like a rock. The tail section flew right by my waist window. Saw a chute open from the remains of that tail. Another ship's wing was shot off. Went right down - no chutes. The German ship made a pass for the ship I was in (I was flying waist position). The left and right waist guns were froze. I prayed until I was blue in the face, as the enemy ship came towards me. I got my gun to working again.

They made three passes at us. The first ship came in smoking and left smoking. The second ship came in firing. He hit our rudder a few times, and he left firing. The third ship came in, but broke away before we could fire at him.

It was estimated that about 10 to 12 ships were shot down. As to any enemy ships knocked down, I couldn't say.

Fighter escort? Like hell! Just before we were jumped there were plenty of P-38s. But while being attacked I didn't see a P-38. I was sweating throughout. As the enemy fighters left, our escort came.

I was scared today. Never before in my whole life

did I come so close to being killed. There is a ten (10) man crew on a B-24, but to me there are eleven (11). The extra one being, I guess you know who? Yup, that's right - The guy upstairs!

[Ed ... Doing a little research, from what data I have compiled, I see that the make-up of the crew leaving the States in August of 1944, consisted of: Lt. Raymond W. Fyhrie, Pilot; Lt. Seymour J. Reshkin, Copilot; Lt. Verne E. Williamson, Navigator; James E. Smith, Bombardier; T/SGT John W. Kane, AEG (Replaced by T/SGT Salathiel A. Ramirez); S/SGT Frank W. Scott, AAEG; Cpl Ralph M. Welling, ROG; Cpl Brack Crisp, AG; S/SGT John T. Foust, AG; Cpl Henry F. Chepulis, AG.

Of the afore named crew; seven have joined as members - four are known deceased - two were, at the time of their deaths, already members. Kane and Ramirez have yet to be located.

Ship #9, if my records are complete, was nicknamed "BABE." It carried the serial number 42-05359. It replaced "CON JOB," (42-78145) which went down on 22 August 44, with the Turnbull Crew. An oddity, that befell the aircraft "BABE," was that the following day, 18 December 1944, it suffered severe damage on a mission to Blechhammer, Germany and was forced to crash-land at Vis, Yugoslavia. (Circumstances and name of Crew unknown)

The 451st lost only two aircraft on the 17 December mission. As S/SGT Chepulis wrote, "We had a mid-air collision." True, my records show the crews involved were those of: 1Lt. William Shelton and 1Lt. Theodore C. King. Of the Shelton Crew: 1 KIA, 2 POW and 8 EVADED. On the King Crew: all KIA, save one who was POWed.]

MORE PUPTENT POETRY

**Milk, we know is pasteruized,
But this old Army is alphabetized.
To be a PFC, or a glamorous NCO,
You have to be authorized by a damn TO.
The CQ in HQ and the BC in CP
Throw ARs at a guy like me.
All is fubar, all is snafu, so -
The EM in the AAA at the APO
Get munched from the tough CO,
The SOS, the AGO, WOJG and CWO.
Whether it's AAF, QM, FA or FD,
The RA, AUS, NG, OCS or ERC,
The Armv's not the place to be**

**If you never passed the ABC.
When you're on guard, or on CQ,
Thinking is the only thing you do;
You remember the USO and the ARC,
And cuss the guys in the ASTP.
AWs are enforced by the OD,
VD is classified now as LD;
Even here across the seas,
We have trouble with the MPs.
Whether WAC, WAVE or GI,
No matter how hard you try --
This axiom is apparent yet,
The Armv's run on the alohabet**

"LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON (Continued 11th Installment by Royal C. Gilkey)

This effort to deal with the significant transition within the Squadron's Intelligence Section must now give way to a continuation of operational flying during the month of September 1944. As has already been stated, the first day involved a Po River target for bombers out to blast, under P-38 escort, Ferrara's railroad bridge.

On September 2, 1944, the mission was to strafe vehicles found on roads in and around Nis in Yugoslavia. Knocking out road transport on the approaches to this junction along the Nisava River was the objective. Ten Squadron P-38s left base at 1025 hours (10:25 a.m.) and were over the target area at minimum altitude for half an hour, from 1220 - 1250 hours (12:20 - 50 p.m.). They gave it a good working over, accomplishing major destruction. At Kovanluk (4318N 2291E), a cluster of trucks was found. It was attacked. The fighters then proceeded to the airdrome at Nis, looking for targets of opportunity. They then flew northwest to Zitkovac (4331N 2142E). There our fighters' formation got separated, returning to base without incident from that point. What happened during the strafing? Lt. John B. Thomas from Pearsall, Texas was leading the Squadron when it found an estimated 150 trucks on the Lovanluk-Nis road. In addition, trucks were spotted parked along the roadside going west from Kovanluk. Nobody could be seen around them. The vehicles stood motionless, presumably having been deserted by operating personnel. The situation was made to order for claims. Lt. Thomas claimed a locomotive destroyed near Zitkovac (4331N 2142E). Probably destroyed was a locomotive outside a railroad station beyond Nis (4320N 2153 E). A single truck was destroyed along a road in the vicinity (4318N 2201E). The target time for this destruction was 1240 hours (12:40 p.m.). Lt. Oliver Bryant (Wilmar, Cal.) claimed to have destroyed a couple of locomotives and a gasoline trailer-truck at a road-railway junction northwest of Nis (4320N 2153E). That took place at 1225 hours (12:25 p.m.). Lt. James Hokum (Los Angeles, Cal.) claimed to have damaged a couple of locomotives at 4329N 2153E; and to have destroyed two trucks, while damaging two others. His target time was 1230 hours (12:30 p.m.).

Yet another pilot, Lawrence T. Goffena (Sidney, Ohio), claimed to have destroyed a truck at 4318N 2201E, his target time being 1225 (12:25 p.m.). No enemy aircraft interfered with the Squadron's mission, but flak was fired at the "Lightnings" when they flew by the airdrome at Nis. The potential for conflict was observed there, however, because 20-25 enemy aircraft, mainly FW 190s and Me 410s, could be seen on the airfield. All 10 of our pilots returned to

base at 1425 hours (2:25 p.m.), having flown 550 miles roundtrip. They themselves ran into no serious trouble but did hear over the radio that a P-38 had apparently crashed not far from Nis. The weather was CAVU, they said, except for some haze in the sky. Each of our pilots received sortie credit for an exciting strafing mission.

A dive-bombing mission was undertaken the next day. Ferry boats were the target. They were to be found at the north terminus of a ferry at Smederevo, Yugoslavia located southeast of Belgrade along the Danube River. Ten Squadron P-38s took off on this mission at 0835 hours (8:35 a.m.), but only nine reached the target because one had to return early for mechanical reasons. The rest reached the target area at 1030 hours (10:30 a.m.). They stayed there until 1050 hours (10:50 a.m.). While flying at minimum altitude, they released all 18 of their 500-pounders on the river's north bank. Results could not be observed because obscured by dust and smoke. It was thought that most bombs struck north of the target itself; however, Col. Daniel S. Campbell (San Antonio, Texas) shot up a couple of barges while dive-bombing. He began his bomb-dive at 8,000 feet and released his bombs between 3,000 and 2,000 feet. All told, four and a half tons of bombs were dropped. Shortly after the dive-bombing, our P-38s happened upon an airdrome with about 22 enemy aircraft of assorted shapes and sized on the field. Discernible among them were Ju 87s, some apparently loaded with bombs; what looked like a couple of Me 109s, and a high-wing observation plane. Havoc was wrought on the ground by our P-38s. Col. Campbell destroyed three enemy planes and shot a fuel-storage tank. Capt. William H. Edwards (Irontown, Ohio) destroyed two enemy planes on the ground and shot up a "donkey" engine. Likewise, George W. Baird, Jr. (Wausau, Wis.) destroyed two enemy planes on the ground. A couple of enemy aircraft, one an FS 156, were destroyed on the ground by

Charles A. Hughes (Emmetsburg, Iowa). Two more e/a were destroyed on the ground by Paul J. Ragusa (East Elmhurst, N.Y.), who also blew up a steam shovel. A triple killing of enemy aircraft on the ground was accomplished by Robert E. Trottier (Manchester, N.H.). The destruction of three more on the ground is attributable to Edwin C. Baquet (Roseburg, Oreg.), who shot up a fuel tank during his attack. Joseph F. Weber (Lansdale, Pa.) claimed to have destroyed two enemy planes on the ground; and James Hokum (Los Angeles, Calif.) another three. In addition to all this, a tractor was put out of commission and a couple of gas storage tanks (one of which did not burn) got shot up,



Wartime Insigne of the 49th Fighter Squadron

adding yet more to the amount of destruction. A Heinkel 111 and an FW 190 also met with destruction on the ground as victims of P-38 gunnery. Ironically, there was no enemy air resistance, although some flak was encountered from elsewhere than the airdrome being strafed. The pilots reported seeing a couple of ferry boats and half a dozen barges at Smederevo. When our Squadron's pilots arrived on the scene at the primary target, they did not find evidence of any previous dive-bombing by the 82nd Fighter Group. There was neither dust nor smoke below, and there were no bomb-craters. Our planes' pilots who flew the whole 700-mile mission in CAVU weather (with some haze) received sortie credit after return to base at 1220 hours (12:20 p.m.). Such were the details behind this entry in the Squadron diary for 3 Sept. 1944: "Planes of the 49th dive-bombed ferry boats at Smederevo, Yugoslavia. The Squadron also strafed an airdrome near Kovin, Yugoslavia. They destroyed 22 planes on the ground, much equipment, and many vehicles." The claim of 22 enemy aircraft destroyed on the ground was a reason for the Squadron's fliers and ground crew to take great satisfaction from a combined dive-bombing and strafing mission that ended up scoring numerically significant successes, without any loss. As leader of the Squadron and Group, Col. Daniel S. Campbell (San Antonio, Texas) demonstrated exceptional expertise in combat flying.

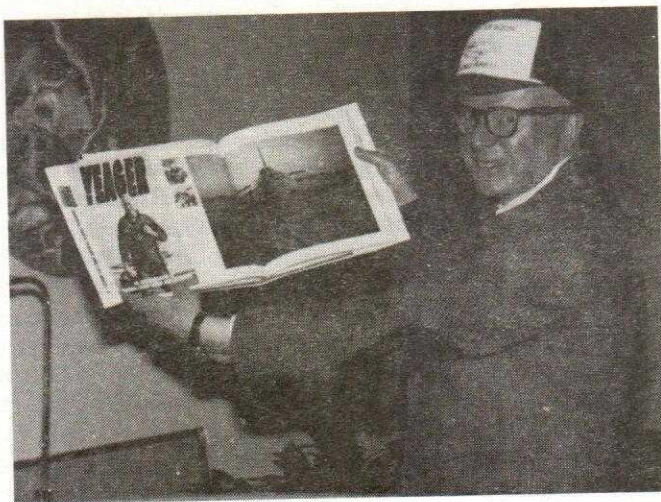
On 4 September 1944, an escort mission was mounted, with six groups of 5th Wing heavy bombers going to attack harbor facilities at Genoa (Genova), Italy. This target lay in the center of the coastal arch washed by the Ligurian Sea on the northwest side of the Italian peninsula. Seven Squadrons P-38s took to the air at 1040 hours (10:40 a.m.). Six reached the target, one being obliged to return early by hint of cockpit trouble. Their job was to escort the bombers on penetration to the target and withdrawal from it after bombing. Rendezvous was effected with the 5th Wing's B-17s in the area of Piombino, a point along Italy's west coast across from Corsica's panhandle. Flying 21,000 feet over Piombino at 1220 hours (12:20 p.m.), our P-38s shepherded the bombers northwestward into the target area, arriving at 1300 hours (1 p.m.) and staying for 20 minutes, their altitude being 28,000 feet. Their time over the target was from 1300 - 1320 hours (1 - 1:20 p.m.), after which the bombers' withdrawal was covered, until departure from them at 1350 hours (1:50 p.m.) over Piombino. The altitude at departure was 24,000 feet. Our fighters then headed homeward. All six landed at 1545 hours (3:45 p.m.), thereby ended a 1,000-mile mission. The Squadron's position in the Group was last. No enemy aircraft were encountered, but heavy barrage-type flak was. Along Italy's west coast in the vicinity of Pisa, artillery fire could be observed. Pisa, just north of Livorno (Leghorn), was located on the Arno River between Piombino's port and Genoa's harbor. Because the weather was CAVU, bombing results could be observed; and they were reported to be excellent. A couple of war vessels that might have been destroyers were along the docks, and a motor vehicle of medium size was visible in the dock area. Enemy planes were conspicuous by their absence, with none being sighted. The Squadron's position in the Group was last. Those "Hangmen" completing the mission got sortie credit.

On September 5, 1944, a "window-dispensing" mission was the Squadron's assignment, followed by covering bombers in their attack on railway bridges in Hungary's capital Budapest, and protecting them on withdrawal. This was to support an Allied thrust aimed to drive the enemy north through the Danube River Valley. Eleven Squadron P-38s took off at 0805 hours (8:35 a.m.). Mechanical difficulties forced one back early. The others flew on to make rendezvous with the bombers at 29,000 ft. over a place called Varoslod at 1012 hours (10:12 a.m.). They reached the target at 1030 hours (10:30 a.m.), nine of them dispensing "window" from 1022-1027 hours (10:22-10:27 a.m.) along a flight path of 120 degrees and an altitude of 32,000 feet. The drop started slightly east of the bombers' I.P. (Initial Point on the bomb run). The P-38s were about five miles in front of the bombers as the "window" bombs were dropped. They kept dispensing "chaff" until the bombers' path was crossed at target. Then the fighters stayed in the target area until 1040 hours (10:40 a.m.) and covered the bombers's withdrawal, taking their departure 19,000 feet over the Danube River - coordinates 4510N 1920E - at 1120 hours (11:20 a.m.), when they were considerably south of Budapest. Our pilots then returned to base, landing at 1250 hours (12:50 p.m.).

During their interrogation, the mission's pilots reported that the bombing results were good. Hits clobbered a gas works. One railroad bridge there, though, escaped being hit. Another railway bridge disappeared under dust and smoke from a cluster of bomb bursts. Heavy but inaccurate flak was encountered over Budapest. That none of it was on the lead group of bombers attested to the efficiency of the "window" bombs released by the fighters. Also observed from 20,000 feet at 1100 hours (11 a.m.) were a couple of ferryboats, a tug pulling nine barges, and an additional string of them north of Mohacs (4603N 1843E) on the Danube River. Over the target area, it was CAVU. Homeward bound, the pilots could see in the distance to the east and overcast that ranged from 5,000 - 10,000 feet. During the 950-mile mission led by the 49th Fighter Squadron, no enemy planes were encountered. Happily, there were no losses to report. Group deputy commander Lt. Col. Thomas B. Whitehouse led the whole formation. An anonymous diarist for the "Hangman" Squadron summed up the day's operation this way: "Today (Sept. 5, 1944) our planes dispensed 'window' bombs and then escorted bombers to Budapest, Hungary. No enemy e/a were encountered, [and] flak was intense at Budapest." All 10 pilots who completed this mission received sortie credit. The early return did not, nor did one pilot who never got off the ground when the mission started. Instead of Budapest, the next day's mission went to Belgrade.

On September 6, 1944, railroad bridges at Yugoslavia's capitol were the target of three bomb groups of the 49th Wing under escort by our P-38s in lead position. Eleven "Hangmen" took off in the morning at 0800 hours (8 a.m.) and headed for rendezvous. They met the heavy bombers at 0930 hours (9:30 a.m.) at 22,000 feet over coordinates 4348N 1910E (in Bosnia, southwest of Beograd [Belgrade]). This occurred at nine minutes before the scheduled R/V. Fifteen minutes later, they were over the target, escorting the bombers on penet-

ration. Flying at 25,000 feet, they stayed in the target area from 0945 - 1000 hours (9:45 - 10 a.m.) and then protected the bombers on withdrawal. The bomber formation was good, and there were no enemy planes to harass it. Not until midway across the Adriatic Sea did the P-38s take their departure; and at that time, a little after 1115 hours (11:15 a.m.), what was called "the point" came into view from an altitude of some 20,000 feet. By 1150 hours (11:50 a.m.), all eleven Squadron "Lightnings" had returned to base. They reported good bombing results, pointing out that a succession of hits were scored on a bridge located east of Belgrade's airdrome. The bombers ran into heavy but inaccurate flak over Yugoslavia's capital. On an airdrome a little south of Zemun but west of Sava River (shortly before its confluence with the Danube), about a score of single and twin-engine enemy aircraft could be made out (coordinates 4448N 2024E). It was determined that the bridge undergoing bombing was the one that crossed the Sava River at coordinates 4447N 2027E. The weather was



I HAVE LONG BEEN CURIOUS AS TO THE APPEARANCE OF DR. ROYAL C. GILKEY. THROUGH THE KINDNESS OF SHERIL HUFF (SECRETARY FOR THE 49TH FIGHTER SQUADRON), AND OFFERING THESE PHOTOS, DR. GILKEY APPEARANCE IS NO LONGER IN QUESTION. DEVILISH LOOKING BLOKE, WOULDN'T YOU SAY?

CAVU in the target area. Sortie credit went to all 11 "Hangmen" completed the mission. The fliers got a rest the next day (7 Sept. 1944) because no missions were scheduled. This non-operational respite was short-lived, however.

[ed .. Although this report indicates that the 49th Fighter Squadron would fly escort for the 49th Bombardment Wing (484th, 451st and 461st Bomb Groups - mission's order of flight), our 'OPERATIONS ORDER #154' does not show same. Section 'B' Category '2' states clearly .. "Escort: None for the 49th Wg." Just where and when this contradiction of orders came about - whose to know at this late date.

From the 10th to the 22nd of September the 49th Bomb Wing was engaged in flying eight (8) supply missions to the Bron Airdrome at Lyon, France. We finished off the rest of September by flying two bombing missions (24th & 25th) to Athens, Greece. Gratefully, this was a month when the 451st suffered no (zero) combat losses.]



AN ESCORT OF P-38'S

Oh, Hedy Lamarr is a beautiful gal
And Madeline Carroll is, too
But you'll find, if you query, a different theory
Amongst any bomber crew -
For the loveliest thing of which one can sing
(This side of the Heavenly Gates)
Is no blond or brunette of the Hollywood set
But an escort of P-38's.

Yes, in days that have passed when the tables were massed
With glasses of Scotch or Champagne,
It's quite true that the sight was a thing to delight
Us, intent upon feeling no pain.
But no longer the same, nowadays in this game
When we head north from Messina Straits.
Take the sparkling wine, every time just make mine
An escort of P-38's

Byron, Shelley and Keats ran a dozen dead heats
Describing the view from the hills

Where the wildflowers play and the winds gently sway
An army of bright daffodils
Take the wildflowers, Byron, the daffodils, Shelly
Yours is the myrtle, friend Keats -
Just reserve me those cuties,
American beauties -
An escort of P-38's

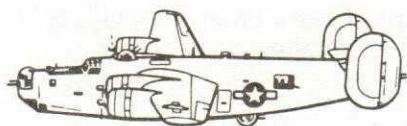
Sure, we're braver than hell
On the ground all is well
In the air it's a different story.
We sweat out our track through the fighters and flak
We're willing to split up the glory.
Well, they wouldn't reject us
So heaven protect us
And until all this shooting abates
Give us courage to fight 'em
And one other small item;
An escort of P-38's

(Author Unknown - Copied from A.R.C. Officers' Club,
WEEKLY BRIEFING - Foggia, Italy - June 18, 1944.)

DON'T FORGET: YOUR DONATION TO THE CAUSE IS GREATLY APPRECIATED

REGULATIONS FOR FLIGHT ENGINEERS

If the Flight Engineer will kindly observe the following rules. It will be a hell of a lot easier for the rest of the crew. Regulations are listed in their order of priority.



1. Keep the navigator awake.
2. Don't get smart with the crew -- remember your pilot is still learning to fly and he is more scared than you are.
3. Wake up the navigator.
4. Don't ask embarrassing questions of the crew, such as:
 - a. Where are we?
 - b. Where are we going?
 - c. What time will we land?
 - d. Is that a German fighter outside my window?
5. Tell jokes, but don't interrupt the radio programs.
6. Pour coffee and give a cup to the navigator to help him keep his eyes open.
7. Don't use the relief tube, use the sextant opening.
8. You just woke up the navigator.
9. Don't ask for the comic book from the Reverend-Sir-In-The-Front-Seat until he has finished it. Where are your manners?
10. If the left engine fails, discuss it quietly with the navigator before telling the pilot. You may scare him.
11. Take notes of anything you see. It will help your case before the board.
12. Check the navigator.
13. Brace yourself for every landing, you could get airsick after the first bounce.
14. When leaving the aircraft, bow to the East and give thanks.
15. Go back and wake up the navigator.

OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

REPORTED SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Aherens, George W., 726th - 15 November 1994
 Anstett, Lawrence W., 726th - 8 January 1988
 Arrell, Virgil H., 724th - 28 January 2002
 Bagwell, John S., 726th - 19 February 2002
 Bennett, Harold A., 726th - 27 January 2000
 Bennett, Jr. William R., HDQS - UNKNOWN
 Bihn, William A., 726th - 12 April 2001
 Boyce, Robert E., 724th - 2002
 Brady, Owen J., 724th - 10 January 2002
 Dewey, George E., 726th - 26 March 1988
 Dupont, Leon L., 727th - 5 September 1998
 Emmons, George H., 725th - 1 April 2001
 Fazio, Armand A., 727th - 19 April 2001
 Ferneau, Clark, 725th - 1 May 2001
 Fox, Francis W., 725th - 26 April 2001
 Freeman, William K., 725th - 26 March 1998
 French, John R., 724th - 20 January 2002
 Gadberry, Odis R., 725th - 12 August 2001
 Gano, Howell G., 726th - 13 April 1999
 Giasson, Henry G., 725th - 5 March 2002
 Griffin, Edward T., 726th - 20 December 1988
 Hayden, Stewart J., 725th - 21 September 2000
 Heinrich, Richard G., 724th - 14 May 2000
 Hjellum, Ossie, 725th - 15 April 1998
 Huff, Charles W., 724th - 15 November 2001
 Inman, Dexter, 726th - 11 June 1993
 King, Robert G., 724th - 18 February 1989
 Kline, Richard B., 726th - 2 March 2000
 Kozsuch, Sr., Albert R., 726th - 2 April 2001
 Mach, Norbert J., 726th - 27 September 2001
 Manning, Ralph A., 726th - 23 February 2001
 Manoogian, Morris A., 724th - 26 October 2001
 Marnell, Patrick A., 724th - 6 March 2001
 Matthews, David C., 725th - 22 November 1988
 McGee, William, 727th - 14 November 2001
 McPherson, Corbin D., 725th - 25 January 2001
 Morfit, Charles B., 726th - 9 July 1997
 Prochnow, Lawrence W., 726th - 27 August 1998
 Ramsey, Charles R., 727th - 21 November 2001
 Recchia, John R., 727th - 21 July 1999
 Sadowsky, James H., 725th - 5 March 1994
 Sanders, Kermit E., 727th - 28 November 2001
 Scrafford, Elmer J., 727th - 9 June 2000
 Shay, Carl, 727th - 15 March 2000
 Stafford, Charles B., 725th - 18 April 2000
 Stebner, Stanley S., 727th - 31 March 1998
 Sturman, Grant E., 726th - 3 October 2001
 Williams, Hilary H., 727th - 21 July 2000
 Winters, Orris A., 725th - 5 March 2001
 Word, Marshall D., 725th - 17 August 2001

Wright, Joseph A., 725th - 21 July 1993

[In some cases you may notice a delayed listing as to Date Of Death (some as far back as 1988). This is partially due to late notification (if any) by the family, or, in some instances I have had to look them up individually, through the Social Security Death Index. This, only after failing to hear from them after repeated mailings].

SPECIAL MEMORIAL TRIBUTE OFFERED IN THE NAME OF:

William Silliman Crew/ 725th - From Bette A. Froehlick
Crew #6/ 724th - From Walter F. Cutchin
Crew of Extra Joker/ 725 - From Wesley Nelson
Crew of Lonesome Polecat/ 726th - Lewis Henslee
Crew #3 of Gashouse/ 724th - From Bennie C. Hayman
Ernest W. Akins/ 727th - From Jack Jones
John S. Bagwell, Jr./ 726th - From wife, Delcia
Robert E. Barnd/ 726th - From wife, Mickey
Glen A. Chambers/ 726th - From son, Charles
John R. French/ 724th - From wife, Janis
Peter A. Massare/ 727th - From son, John
Gustave H. Meissner/ 725th - From George Tudor
Harold I. Moe/ 727th - From Jack Jones
Barton E. Nelson/ 725th - From Duane Maybay
J.W. Ramsey/ 725th - From Wilbur Fowler
Alvin G. Reise/ 725th - From sons, David & Jeffery
Kermit E. Sanders/ 727th - From son, Daniel
William N. Silliman/ 725th - From sister, Bette Froehlick
Edward H. Stresky/ 727th - From Frank Lather
Douglas G. Wadlund/ 727th - From Sedge Hill



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

SILLIMAN CRASH STILL EVOKES MEMORIES

Ever since our first airing of the Lt. William Silliman crash off the coast of North Africa, Issue 19 - Winter 1990 - Page 32, I have gleaned much information outside of our normal avenues of research. William Silliman's sister, Bette Frochlich, has had quite a hand in helping us, both by expressing her thanks for what we've done to put closure to the episode that cost the life of her beloved brother, and to furnish more details as to the emotions that prevailed in the mind and heart of her brother. She has reciprocated by granting us the privilege of viewing all of her brother's correspondence from overseas; right up to the last letter that any of the family received prior to the crash.

One crewmember's body was recovered from the crash site in the Mediterranean at the time of the accident. This was the body of S/Sgt William Geller. All of the other members of this crew who died in this incident have their names inscribed on the "Wall of the Missing," at the Tunsia American Cemetery.

*Excerpt from letter written 23 March 1945.
[In reference to mission on 21 March 1945]*

Dear Mom,

..... We went on a mission to Bruck, Austria and that's one we should have stayed home on. Right before the target we lost and engine and it happened so fast we were unable to feather it. We turned around and started home by ourselves. The engine was beginning to freeze up due to lack of oil. It finally froze but the prop broke loose and ran away. It was turning just as fast as it could, making a noise like you've never heard, and the ship was vibrating something terrible. Everyone was hollering over the interphone wanting to know what was going on and what we should do. We thought it was going to pull the engine off, maybe the wing. That's where I screwed up. Instead of telling everyone to stick by the ship, I called and said I was getting out of the seat because if that prop came loose, I didn't want it to come through the side of the ship and hit Boob [nickname for the Copilot, Carl Roberts] or me. I may even have told them to bail out, I can't remember as I was too excited, but when I got back on the flight deck I called everyone on the interphone and they had all bailed out except Boob, Putt [nickname for AEG, Forrest Millis] and I. I flipped on the auto pilot and it flew the ship as we 3 were back on the catwalk ready to leave. We expected something to break any minute but it never did. We didn't know where we were, but after a couple of hours we finally spotted the Adriatic and found an emergency field on an island off the Yugo coast. We only had about 20 minutes of gas left so we had to get down. As we lost altitude we lost another engine on the same side. Finally landed on two engines on this island. Made that O.K. That night we went to a Yugo dance. Really a kick. As you can plainly see the whole thing was my fault so I have miserably failed in my job, as the whole crew should have landed with us. As near as we can figure out, the boys bailed out somewhere in relatively safe territory and if they get picked up by the right persons, they will be back in a week or so. Boob, Putt and I

are the only ones left on the crew. Don't write this to any of the folks until they've written you about having received a M.I.A. notice.

The next day we caught a transport back to Italy. We landed at the 2nd Bomb Group's field and blew a tire on the ship. I went up in the tower trying to contact our field for transportation and I saw J.G. Johnson on the schedule. The ships were just coming back and when Jamie landed and I went over to his ship. We only got to talk about 20 minutes before I had to leave to catch the ship that came over from our Group to take us back. I'm going to try and get over there one of these days. [2nd Bomb Group (B-17s) were stationed at Amendola, some 25 miles northeast of Castelluccio]

We three are flying tomorrow with a make shift crew in the same ship we piled up on the runway a while back. Good thing I'm not superstitious.

Bye for now ... Love, Bill

Dear Mom,

14 May 45, Mon.

..... I don't know, but it is possible that I may beat this letter home. We are flying home in the very near future. Can't tell you much, but we are getting ready to leave. Yesterday I sent home a box with all my winter clothes in it. Keep your eye open for it. Boy, I've accumulated more junk around here. Some guys went home a while back and we inherited multi-junk from them. Andy has sent home 3 boxes already.

I have a new crew now to fly back with. A darn good Navigator and Bombardier, and a bunch of "off-the-ball" Gunners. Putt and Boob are still with me. Boob made 1st Lt. last week and Putt is a Tech Sgt now.

Bye for now ... Love Bill

[Believed to be the last correspondence received from Wm. Silliman prior to fatal crash on 4 June 1945]

17 May 45

Dear Aunt Eff & Uncle Sam,

..... My promotion came through on my birthday, a nice present, I'd say.

I ended up with 21 missions over here. We are all finished and packing up to go home. Our tent is really a mess, everything all over the floor. It's rather difficult to get in, or out. We are going to fly home, so I may be back in the States before you get this. So, if you get time to write, just send it to Quincy. This is almost too good to be true. We are just waiting for the orders so we can take off and hope we never see this hole again. ... Gosh, I've accumulated so much junk that I don't know if I'll ever get rid of it. Guess I'll give it to the Italians.

This is about all for this time. Write when you get the chance. Thanks again for all the magazines.

Bye now Love Bill.

MOVIE MAKING -- 451st -- 450th STYLE



OFFICERS OF CREW #20

**LT. EDWARD SNOW, COPILOT; LT JOHN DILKS, NAVIGATOR;
LT HARVEY MILLER, BOMBARDIER; CAPTAIN HENRY ROLLINS,
PILOT**

I don't know how word got down to the Enlisted Men of Crew #20, but by some means it did. Whether it came via our Crew Officers, or from someone in Operations, at this point in time I can't remember. Nevertheless, we were to report out on the Flight Line, with flight gear, but with no intentions of flying a mission; either combat or training.

What greeted us, when we got to the designated revetment, was a movie Camera Crew, complete with Director, Cameramen and equipment. It seems that our crew had been given the assignment of becoming movie actors and taking part in a film about Ploesti. Why, we asked? The reply, from the Director, led us to believe that we were about the only intact combat crew left at Castelluccio Air Field that had flown against Ploesti. That seemed logical and we accepted that. Of course, the fact that our Pilot, Captain Henry G. Rollins had just become the 724th Squadron Commander, may have had a hand in the choice. (Captain Rollins assumed command when Captain Stanley Jackson and Major Douglas Sanford, in aircraft #44-49423, were forced to land in Russia after the Oswiecim, Poland mission on the 26th of December 1944.)

The date of our first filming was on the 5th of January 1945. The weather was cool, but not uncomfortable. Typical Italian winter .. snow for Christmas and gone by New Years Day.

Apparently our crew was picked before we lost our Radio Operator on the 29th of December. He, T/Sgt Anthony J. Paonessa, had flown as spare gunner with 1Lt Martin E. Uhl's Crew (replacing an ailing Sgt Marvin B. Bassell) and they were reported missing somewhere in the area of Udine, Italy. We did not know that Tony was KIA, only that he was MIA. They were in aircraft #42-51880, nicknamed, 'Purple Shaft.' We later learned that only two survived, Pilot Lt. Uhl



ENLISTED MEN CREW #20

**S/SGT LEO CEGLA, T. GUNNER; S/SGT ANTHONY KALIK, W.
GUNNER; T/SGT FRED GARDNER, AEG GUNNER;
S/SGT ELDON MORRILL, B. GUNNER; S/SGT BOB KARSTENSEN,
N. GUNNER**

and Tail Gunner, S/Sgt Gerald L. Honaker.

Without a complete crew, we Enlisted Man had to locate someone to fill the gap. The man we selected seemed like a likeable and outgoing person .. which later proved to be our mistake. Without mentioning names (and for the life of me I don't recall his name) we had a deuce of a time getting him out of the 'sack' to go 'on location.' For the next two days; the 6th and 7th of January he was almost impossible to roust out of bed. Just how he did as an actor/participant, I have no idea.

It seems like the Director chose who he wanted, and in what position he wanted to film that person in. Other than the Officers, who must have been given their normal positions, we Gunners were assigned positions different from what we normally flew. My filming position was at the Right Waist gun. Although I had flown Waist position on some missions, my normal spot was in the Nose Turret. Our Assistant Engineer, S/Sgt Anthony Kalik, who was normally in the Waist, ended up being a Nose Gunner. Just how, and where the rest of the crew were positioned, I have no idea.

We spent a lot of time waiting for our 'call' to perform, so we sat around just watching the camera crew at work. When my turn came the Director wanted me to have a 'speaking part,' so speak I did; loudly and probably off-key. While pre-fighting my position, I was to make some comment as to how the Tail Gunner, S/Sgt Leo Cegla, was doing in pre-fighting his position. But for the sake of proper Hollywood photography, the Director had me pull the butt of the Waist gun up under my chin. I guess he thought the butt end of a 50 caliber machine gun would add more character to my face.

I don't think that any of us gave much thought as to how this was going to turn out. We had no idea if this was going to be a Feature, Documentary or a Training Film. I think we were glad for the experience of working in this field of 'movie making.' But



**T/SGT ANTHONY J.
PAONESSA
KIA 29 DECEMBER 1944**

to our dismay nothing has been heard about our efforts, up until just recently.

On the 27th of December 2001, I received an e-mail from the Webmaster, Craig Linn, of the 450th Bomb Group. His message reads, "I was wondering if any of your members might remember a documentary that was done on the 450th and 451st BG's, about the raids on Ploesti? I have done some research and found the name of the movie -- 'Air Siege.' Just wanting to see if anyone might know of, or know where to get a copy of it."

After my reply, Craig follows up with this message on 30 December 2001, "Interesting note is that I KNOW it was produced, as I have talked with a few members of the 1st CCU that did the filming. I also did some research on the NARA website (National Archives) and found some footage on the 450th that is labeled 'Mission to Ploesti.' However upon doing some more research I found that this footage is of men hitting a target in Northern Italy called San Stefano, namely the port there. It's only about 400' of film, but I imagine that was used for some of their footage. I have already received some footage on the 450th, of



'KID' KARSTENSEN
BEHIND THE LENS'



'MOE' MORRILL
BEFORE THE LENS'

which I bought, that has some pretty interesting sequences in it; flying and the like. But I have been unable to find the film 'Air Siege.' I e-mailed the National Archives and they said there is a pretty good chance that they have it, as most of their stuff is not catalogued, but finding it would be another thing."

So, there's where we stand. Either they (the Hollywood moguls) are waiting for an appropriate time to release this blockbuster film ... or

our efforts are on the 'cutting room floor.' Someone out there must have the answer ...



'ANDY' KALIK & 'PAPPY' GARDNER
INTO "WARDROBE"



'THE GREMLIN' MILLER
"ON THE SET"



**CHATTER
FROM THE
FLIGHT DECK**

Bob Karstensen

I have long wanted to pay some form of tribute to the men that we lost during our tenure with the 451st. Starting back from October 10, 1943, when we lost our first crew (2LT Cecil Burr and his crew) in a training flight out of Fairmont, NE, to April 25, 1945 when 1LT Edward Stresky and six of his crew of nine were Killed In Action (KIA).

In making this effort I feel that they are not forgotten. Time will some day lessen the achievements of the 451st Bomb Group, but hopefully not the sacrifice that these brave men of the 451st Bomb Group endured in behalf of our Nation, their family and us crew mates.

During my research I have accounted for some four

hundred and twenty two (422) men that were either Killed in Action (KIA), or, as I use another term for accidental deaths, Killed in the Line of Duty (KLD). These I derived from our first casualty in 1943 until the end of hostilities in 1945.

While at the Air Force Museum (Research Section), Dayton, OH, in 1983/84, I ran across some research volumes called (if I remember correctly) Registry of Dead WW-II & Korea. With some local 451st members we transcribed the names of all those that were listed as part of the 451st Bomb Group. These names were those that were permanently buried overseas and did not include those that were re-interred back in the States at the request of the families.

I found some 173 members that were either buried in foreign soil, or their names are inscribed on "The Wall Of The Missing." Of the 173, 50 are remembered by name only on "The Wall." These men, in all likelihood, were lost as a result of aircraft ditching or bailing out over water.

In doing this research I was amazed at all the different countries that these men were laid to rest. I shall

try and give you a rundown as to location and count from my research.

Sicily-Rome American Cemetery in Nettuno, Italy records the most with 44 listed; including 11 on the Wall of the Missing.

Lorraine American Cemetery in St. Avold, France holds 35 with none (0) on the Wall of the Missing.

Florence American Cemetery in Florence, Italy cares for 30; including 14 on the Wall of the Missing.

Ardennes American Cemetery in Neupre, Belgium maintains 27 plots with none (0) on the Wall of the Missing.

Rhone American Cemetery at Draguinan, France has 11 sites; including 4 on the Wall of the Missing.

Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery at Henry-Chapelle, France records 10, all on the Wall of the Missing.

North Africa American Cemetery at Carthage, Tunisia cares for 9, again, all on the Wall of the Missing - all from the Silliman Crew. One member of that crew (S/Sgt William Geller) was recovered after the incident, but after all my efforts, I have not been able to locate his final resting place.

Epinal American Cemetery at Epinal, France honors 2, both on the Wall of the Missing.

A bit of confusion on my part when it comes to entering the 173rd KIA member, a Sgt Robert L. Miller (member of 1LT John Morris' crew). At the time of his re-interrment from Europe in August 1949, he was brought back to **Honolulu National Cemetery** in Honolulu, Hawaii at the request of his family. Since the Honolulu Cemetery was then considered 'overseas,' and Hawaii was not considered a 'State' until March of 1959, I'm at a loss as to just what his burial location/status should be; Stateside or Overseas?

Now I'm left with some 249 that were returned to the States at the request of the family. My goal now is to find where they are interred. Of the 249, I have been able, via web sites on the Internet, to locate approximately 65. There are, on the Internet, several sites that list cemeteries. But they are generally the major National Cemeteries; Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery, St. Louis, Santa Fe National Cemetery, Santa Fe, etc., etc. It's almost impossible to locate any of our deceased if they have been buried in one of our nations smaller graveyards.

A case in point: while searching for the burial sites of 1LT Kenneth Whiting Crew ('EXTRA JOKER' lost on 23 August 1944 on the Markersdorf Mission), I found that nine were buried in the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in a group burial. The one remaining, Sgt Harry Bates, was not among them. I checked all the cemeteries in the area of his enlistment (using the second digit in his serial number "3" to verify he enlisted from the Pennsylvania area) and came up with nothing. It wasn't until I bounced my dilemma off Brian Lindner (associate member historian on the Extra Joker) that he came up with the burial site, via Harry Bates' brother. It was the 'Swamp UCC Church' in Reinholds, PA.

Now that you know what I'm up against in my research, perhaps some of you can assist me. If you

know of a buddy that lost his life overseas and whose body was returned 'Stateside,' pass the word on to me.

Left out of my list of deceased were four that were killed in the train wreck (14 September 1944) in Terre Haute, Indiana. They were: S/Sgt Richard A. Hancock, 724th - John O'Connor's Crew; T/Sgt Robert Hoekstra and S/Sgt Charles B. Jordan, 726th - both from Charles Small's Crew; and S/Sgt Robert P. Thorn, 727th - Cortland Read's Crew. I wasn't sure how to classify them, as they were, then, unassigned, having flow their missions and returned stateside for reassignment.

Books of common interest: Louis B. Head, Copilot on the Paul E. Harden Crew (725th) writes of his evasion experiences, under the title: "*Dancing In The Dark.*" With the subtitle: "*And the Nature of Escape and Evasion in Croatia During the Second World War.*" 'Tis a heady piece of literature that takes you into the psyche of those that avoided capture and got back to friendly lines.

Early on, when Louis was bemoaning the fact that the rest of his crew could bear the title of POW's, while he alone, because of his good fortune in avoiding capture, could claim no special honors in what he did.

That's when I informed him that there was an organization that fit right into his wartime status. That was the "Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society," headed up by Ralph K. Patton out of Pittsburgh, PA.

Delighted to hear that he now had an organization of brother co-evaders, he proceeded to hone his memory and write this book.

The book can be purchased locally, but, it may take some time for the bookstore to order it and get it in. Simpler means would be to order it direct from iUniverse; either by phone: 877.823-9235, or by way of the Internet: www.iUniverse.com. Cost \$12.95 plus S & H.

Rendez-Vous 127 Revisited - by Yvonne Daley-Brusselmans.

Many of you will recall the Anne Brusselmans. She and her daughter, Yvonne, were guests at our Norfolk, VA reunion in 1988. The late Anne Brusselmans was instrumental in the rescuing of 'downed' American, Canadian and British airmen in Northern Europe during WW-II. Yvonne pays fine tribute to her mother and others that took part in aiding our Allied airmen. The book is available through Sunflower University Press, Manhattan, KS 66505, or direct from Yvonne Daley-Brusselmans, 1962 Brae Moor Drive, Dunedin, FL 34698. If sent to Yvonne, you will get an autographed copy - just mention that you were with the 451st. Cost: \$17 plus \$3.50 for Priority Mailing.



Host Bob K - Guests Anne Brusselmans and Daughter Yvonne

ITALY & YUGOSLAVIA

(Continued Saga by Pilot John S. Foster - 725th

Continued from Ad-Lib, Issue 34

We bailed out at eighteen thousand feet. My chute opened and I was floating down to a green and wooded countryside. It was a very peaceful experience. All through training, and over here, we'd known that we might have to "hit the silk," but I don't think anyone really looked forward to it. (the "silk" is actually nylon). All at once I heard Campbell saying, "Hiya skipper, how you doin'?" I looked around that there he was, not fifty feet away. Very briefly we discussed what we might expect on the ground; then the wind and my weight separated us. I began to think about what they'd taught us about landing in one of these things. From roughly one hundred feet above touch down, I saw a man running toward the spot where I'd probably land. I did no maneuvering and hit the ground with a jolt, gathered up the nylon and ran for the woods.

Back to the airplane for a minute. Our conclusion, after much discussion among the crew, was that we'd caught an incendiary round fired from a gun being warmed (test fired) high above us. Also, as Campbell and I were talking on the way down, we witnessed the final performance of our airplane. We saw it dive straight down, pull up and execute an almost perfect loop before going into its final dive to the ground. We later learned from the Partisans that a minor fire-fight had occurred between a group of Tito's Partisans and some Ustachas, who were mercenaries, paid by the Germans. The Partisans drove them off and were able to remove the machine guns from the waist window locations. However, the guns were damaged to the point where they could not be made to work. At the same time, Tito's boys picked up all the surplus parachutes from the wreck, as well as my "45" and the holster. The chutes provided nylon for petticoats and other ladies clothing for most of the women in the immediate area. Later, I saw one of the Partisans wearing my holster, but the gun was mangled.

From the woods I saw the man I'd seen from above and now saw that he was wearing a red skull cap with a star on the front of it. That indicated that he was a friendly Partisan, so I went out to meet him. Together we walked down to where Campbell was waiting. He was surrounded by twenty or thirty townspeople.

By now it was about 11:30 a.m. and we were being led to a small town (I never did know its name) by the fellow who turned out to be the Mayor, or at least the number one citizen. He had us sit in sort of a gazebo in the back yard of a big house. We got the impression that we were going to be fed, but before any food appeared a decanter full of a clear liquid was brought to the table. Our host poured the liquor (it was slivovits, distilled from plum juice) and proposed the first toast. He pro-

udly raised his glass to "ooooosa." It took a few seconds of mental gymnastics to conclude that he was toasting the U.S.A. The second toast by the number two man in the group was to "Rooooosvelt." It wasn't Mr. or President ... just Rooooosvelt. The third round was to Churchill, and then it was my turn. With glass in hand I saluted Marshall Tito.

By this time food was on the table and both Campbell and I needed it badly! The wine that came with the food we did not need, but we toyed with it politely.

About 2:30 p.m. the two of us were taken to a road that exited the town to the North. They told us to simply stay on this road until we were met by other Partisans, plus six others of our crew. We set off up the road in a pleasantly mild state of inebriation. Our welcome to this country had been highly satisfactory, considering that not only the liquor, but also the fresh fried potatoes, scrambled fresh eggs and excellent home baked bread.

We hiked for about an hour before we came to Koprivnica. It was a great relief to see six of our guys all hale and hearty, except for Lt. Painter. Painter had had a hard landing and had injured his knee. After greeting each of the six we just sat around and compared notes on our adventures after leaving the airplane. We also enjoyed the spirited singing and dancing of the Partisans as they killed time before taking off that night to kill Nazis. We saw boys with homemade uniforms standing almost as tall as the Wehrmacht rifles they carried. There were girls, sixteen or seventeen years old, carrying rifles and with wicked looking knives, along with hand grenades hung around their waists. They were robust, healthy looking bunch, eager to move out to give our mutual enemies something to think about.

Before dark we'd had another good meal, which this time included pieces of beef and pork; we had good local wine to go with it. In describing our earlier meal, I stressed "fresn" eggs and potatoes, which were a real treat. Our G.I. food in Italy included powdered eggs, which turned out green at times, and potatoes, also powdered. These didn't taste like, nor have the consistency of real fresh spuds.

At 10:30, after a couple hours of sleep, we became part of a military contingent hiking down a dark road to an unknown destination; and this was still May 10th, the same day we flew out of Italy. We walked until 2:30 a.m. on the 11th. Sleeping and eating took up most of this day until we were on the road again at 9:30 p.m. On this segment the going was tougher. Roads were muddy and rutted and we were walking up and down through hilly country that entire long night. This stretch ended at a small house soon after 9:00 a.m. on May twelfth. Our escort told us we'd be staying here a couple of days, and after the twelve hour hike - sleeping on the floor was no

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

problem.

The residents of this house fed us breakfast of mush, ersatz coffee (much like Postum) and course corn bread. But the major event of this day came soon after breakfast when our final two crewmen, Martin and Zonghetti, came walking in. They were both in fine shape and so now all ten of us were together: HALLELUJAH! Later in our trip we were joined by fragments of other crews who had lost their crewmates to death, injury or capture by the Nazis. We were very lucky!

Our escort has taken very good care of us. These men are Tito Partisans. Most are Serbs combined with quite a few Croats. In this early portion of the trip we traveled in Croatia. Most of the communication between us was in hand motions. However we soon found that Garber and Martin knew enough German to really get something clarified, when that was necessary. Also in our group were a Dutchman from Amsterdam, a Russian and a barber from Czechoslovakia who shaved us once in a while. The Dutchman, who spoke passable English, told us he was from a wealthy family wiped out by the Nazi advance into Holland. He'd been held in a forced labor camp until he escaped and made it into Yugoslavia.

The next day our crew of ten, plus the escort of six or eight, was joined by twenty civilians enroute to a communist party conference. They were with us most of the day, but toward evening they just disappeared.

On May 15th we started our trek at 8 a.m., after a really good sleep. The group had grown to nearly seventy, including fifty soldiers and ten civilians. With us were two big carts loaded with telephone equipment and weapons. Since Robert Painter's knee had become very painful, he rode in one of the carts. Zonghetti rode on top of the stuff in the second cart. His feet had been rubbed raw because he was wearing only the soft felt liners and outer sheepskin flying boots. He had neglected to bring his G.I. shoes tied to his chute straps as we had all been warned to do. A few days later, the escort people produced a pair of British boots for "Zonghi." These were some improvement, but were made from stiff, fairly inflexible leather and were not very comfortable on feet that were already sore.

Before nightfall the wagons had left us and Painter was still on one of them. The next part of the journey was over terrain that would make it impossible for him to negotiate with his injured leg. We were told that he would be in a Yugo hospital manned by British doctors. It turned out that this was not where he wound up.

THat night we bedded down in the woods outside of Zagreb. Women from town brought out food and then we tried to sleep. It was cold and we had no blankets. After a shivering, fitful attempt at sleep, we were awake and colder than ever. The escort would not permit a fire because the smoke would give away our location to German air patrols that flew over the area at regular intervals. When the sun got fully up, it warmed us a bit so we did get some restful sleep. Later in the morning we were told to prepare for a long hike, starting at 9 p.m.

It was pitch dark with no moon when we started out working our way around Zagreb towards the Sava River. Upon reaching the river we found that the rowboat we would use to get across was on the opposite side. One of

the Partisans, a big husky fellow took off his shoes and tunic, dove in, swam the fifty to seventy-five yards across, got the boat and came back for us. The boat had a normal capacity of six, but we overloaded it so that twenty-five of us got over in three trips.

As we left the riverbank, heading West, a big black cloud was above us and appeared to be dropping lower 'til it seemed to be just over our heads. It got so dark that we began to hold hands just to stay together. Well ahead of us a couple of our escort were trying to keep us going in the right direction. All at once star shells began to light up the sky in front of us and the chatter of machine gun fire broke the dead silence. Word was soon passed down the line to turn back and get back to the river ... FAST! We ran, stumbled, fell down, got up and ran some more until we were back to the Sava and the boat. On the other side, while we waited for the others to come across, Hank Roberts posed an interesting question: "How would you like, right now, a big juicy hamburger, french fries and a rich thick chocolate milkshake?" He'd say something like that every once in a while, when things were a little tense or when we hadn't eaten for too long. That night we slept with a roof over our heads, in a big barn full of hay.

The next day we awoke with the realization that we still had to get past Zagreb. The next attempt started out earlier and took us in a different direction, this time South before again heading West. It was mid-afternoon when we started out. The first two hours we had easy going on a decent road. When we reached a wooded area we turned West, the pace slowed and we were told to keep very quiet. I had to start gulping dry corn bread to stop coughing that came with the bronchitis I'd picked up that cold night we slept in the woods. One of the escort came to me and said that if I didn't quite coughing, he'd have to shoot me. I think his warning was mostly for effects, but we were in a delicate situation. We found out about an hour later that we were within a few hundred yards of a German airfield and that our next objective was to cross railroad tracks over which many Nazi soldiers, and much war material and gasoline moved.

The Partisan escort deployed behind trees along the quarter mile over which we would move, one at a time, to the embankment that supported the tracks. When each man got to the embankment, we were to go up and over on our bellies. Once over, it was simply a matter of running into the woods on that side. Within fifteen minutes we all were safely over, standing at ease in the woods, congratulating ourselves on getting past a major obstacle. This kind of talk was rudely interrupted by a monstrous explosion. As soon as they knew we were on the other side, our escort placed explosives and blew up a large section of the track. The people at the airfield knew something was going on and they immediately began lobbing mortar shells wildly, but in our direction. We took off running and didn't stop until the R.R. tracks, or what was left of them, were a mile behind us.

We walked all that night and after sunup stopped in a town where a friendly family fed us breakfast that consisted of the routing bread and milk, plus a "treat" of two pieces of raw bacon.

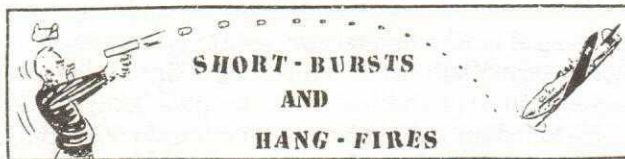
After resting until 11 a.m. we moved on once more.

Houses were attractive and the people we saw were pretty well dressed. Our destination for the day was reached about 3 p.m. and the local family treated us to a meal of beef-steak and potatoes. Someone told us that there was a barber located on the town square. We all needed a shave since the Czech barber, who's been traveling with us, had parted company before we'd left Zagreb. On the way a fellow yelled at us using explicitly stateside obscenities. As he approached it was clear that he was wearing G.I. coveralls. His name was Dan, a native Yugoslavian who had worked as a lumberjack in Oregon for several years. He'd come for a visit with his family just prior to the Yugoslav involvement in WW-II, and had found himself stranded with no reasonable way to get out.

For the next seven to ten days our lives consisted of walking, eating, more walking and more eating; there was very little sleep. The sleep we did get was mostly catnaps in barns, on boards, on boxes and tables. Sometimes we walked at night and hid out during the day; sometimes it was the opposite, all depending on the rela-

tive security of the area we were passing through. The food was always welcome, but it was predictable: bread, milk, kidney beans. After an almost non-stop stretch of thirty hours with almost no food, the escort folks gave us the day off and we purchased two lambs. We paid for this meat, at \$3.50 each, from our "escape" money. My notes tell me that the lambs were barbecued on an old fashioned spit. We went after this feast like a pack of hungry dogs, eating with our fingers and licking them so as not to miss any juice. Following our polishing off the 'piece de resistance,' we were given a bottle of good schnapps for dessert. We consumed this while sitting on the side of a hill watching a formation of our planes pass overhead on their way home from a target in Austria or Hungary.

We could see that one of the B-24s was in trouble. It was trailing smoke and falling out of formation. The next day we were told that this ship had crashed trying to land. The result, according to witnesses, was that four men were killed, three were caught by the Germans and three were on the loose.



Kent G. Blackman, 725th [NAVIGATOR: RAY W. BERGMANN'S CREW]

I received your Spring 2001 edition of the 451st Ad-Lib. Thank you so much for keeping me on your "still flying list." This latest edition was especially interesting for me, involving the "Italy & Yugoslavia -- And The Trip Over," by Lt. John Foster. My crew and I took practically the same flights, -- even to getting a brand new B-24 at Mitchell Field!! We left a few weeks before Foster and his crew, and except for slight differences, we flew the identical route.

Our crew (Replacement Crew #34) consisted of: Ray Bergmann, Pilot; Keith Curfman, Copilot; Myself, Navigator; Sidney Richardson, Bombardier; Charles Hirsch, AEG. Memory fails me on the names of the other crew members.

Anyway, we finally landed at Belem, Brazil after flying through a violent thunderstorm over the jungles. I was not sure what our heading should be after the strong winds, so we took a 15 degree right hand correction to the southeast and dropped down to tree top level to do a landfall on the Amazon River. Once in sight of the river, it was simple to turn left and follow the Amazon into the Air Base at Belem.

Unfortunately, upon landing, I was stone deaf! I had left West Palm Beach, FL with a slight head cold, but was cleared by the Flight Surgeon to depart with my crew. The sudden drop of 12,000 Feet, down to tree top level, was a bit too much for my ears and I couldn't hear a thing. The pilot and copilot insisted that I go to the Base Flight Surgeon to get my ears cleared. The Infirmary found blood clots in both ear, so they stuck me in the hospital to dissolve the clots. The next day my crew,

using a borrowed ATC navigator, continued on the prescribed route through Natal, Brazil on to Dakar, Africa.

A few days later I was released from the hospital and immediately checked in with Operations. Luckily, I caught an ATC flight to Dakar and flew as a passenger to try to catch up with my crew. At each stop along the way I checked with Operations to try to learn the whereabouts of Crew No. 34. Finally at Tunis we made contact. A happy day!!

We left the next morning, late in March 1944, to cross the Mediterranean, then on to Italy to join the 725th Sq. of the 451st at their base near Foggia.

After a few combat orientation flights as members of other crews, early in April '44, we began combat missions as our own crew. Unfortunately our Bombardier, Lt. Sid Richardson [#0253] was seriously injured by flak on an earlier orientation flight and he was eventually repatriated to recover back in the States. Our replacement Bombardier was F/O George Boege. The first combat mission of our crew was the Marshalling Yards at Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Briefing had said this target was lightly fortified with only a few mobile flak batteries up in the mountains.

But April 12, 1944 was our UNLUCKY day! A high altitude flak burst, at about 20,000 feet, caught our left engines and we were engulfed in flames. Before the Tokyo tanks could blow, our pilot, Ray Bergmann, gave orders to the crew to bail out. I believe all of our crew bailed out safely, and were all ultimately confined in POW camps in Germany.

My limited combat experience did not allow me to become acquainted with very many guys in the 451st, thus I have not attended any of the reunions. Most of my war time friends are buddies known from Stalag Luft III in Germany.

However, Bob, I greatly appreciate your Ad-Lib and hope you can continue publication. To help defray some of your expenses, please throw this donation into the kitty.

[Editor ... Your letter, Kent, sent me scurrying into my data base to see who it was that your memory failed to recall as to crewmates. The Enlisted Men on your original crew (besides Charles Hirsch - dec. July 1992) were: Maurice Cameron (dec. March 1988), John Douglas (dec. Date Unknown), Elmer Edmonds, (Member #1485) Ronald Mackey (Yet to be found) and Sol Marcus (KIA on take-off with Quisenberry Crew, 5 April 1944). Two crewmen (other than from your original crew) that were with you on that infamous day, 12 April 1944, were, of course, Bombardier Lt. George Boege (Member #1312) and Sgt. Marvin Gordon (Member #1389)

As to your reluctance to become too deeply involved with us as an organization .. and pledging your commitment to guys that you spent much more time with in POW camp. I can understand that. I've had candidates for membership, tell me straight out that they weren't interested because of the short amount of time they were with us. But above all, in my small way, I'm trying to instill the feeling of prestige and honor of being affiliated with our 451st heritage, no matter how long they walked among us. But not to beleaguer the point, I can also give you names of guys that were with us in Italy, also for a short duration, but find our goals, and reunions, worthy and fulfilling.]

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

Thanks you for so very much for all the literature you sent upon joining the organization. I was so excited about hearing from my group, as I have had no contact, or news, from any of them since 1943. Now I have been in touch with the three who are still alive and looking forward to seeing them again. Thanks to Chris Pollard (our non-member intermediary) for not giving up on me and my whereabouts. Looking forward to attend one of the reunions.

[Editor ... Glad to have you with us Jim. Happy too, that your reuniting with old crewmates worked out so well. I'm sure that Pilot, Charles Trumper, Copilot, Harvey Brown, and Radio Man Joseph Milnor were just as glad to have you among us. During the war you guys made an awesome crew .. But now you four will have to carry the load since Neils Christensen, Harold Shumard, Ted Bonney, Ken Taylor, Jim Jackson and Harry Siegel have passed on.]

Perry M. Davie, 724th [AEG: KENNETH R. ELLOITT'S CREW]

It has been some time since our first contact. I want to thank you for sending me the crew list and addresses of Kenneth Elliott's crew. I am in contact with four of the remaining crew. I'm enclosing a donation for membership. Sorry I'm so late on response.

[Editor ... No fear Perry, I left a spot open for you with whatever information I could come up with. Glad too, that the four member's names I sent you were responsive to your contacts. But, apart from them, I can't seem to get Henry Zoldowski to follow-through with any sort of response. I've tried twice, before you suggested I try again. No luck.]

Ken S. Duncan, 725th [GUNNER: KENNETH C. MORSE'S CREW]

RE: Ad-Lib Issue 34 / Page 7

April 5th Mission To Ploesti

With a great deal of interest and memories, I read the 34th issue of Ad-Lib, especially the subject article which I believe I can shed some light on.

Although I did not keep a diary, I am almost certain that the surviving gunner was Nose Turret Gunner. S/Sgt Lloyd Moyer. Moyer was a member of Lt. Kenneth C. Morse's Crew, as was I. We were one of the original crews to reach Italy. S/Sgt Moyer was flying that day as a replacement crew member (apparently on Lt. Quisenberry's a/c), and I was flying as a replacement Ball Turret Gunner on another a/c, which was lined up to take-off after the unfortunate crash. (Lt. Morse and our other crew members were not flying that day.)

I remember the mission well, as the crash on take-off of Lt. Quisenberry's a/c delayed the take-off of the remaining a/c which delayed our take-off some thirty minutes. As a result we were late in meeting our fighter escort. As a further result the fighters could not escort us all the way to Ploesti and once the fighters left us we were jumped by German fighters. As I recall we had quite a running battle (Incidentally I was on a total of five missions to Ploesti).

Upon return from the mission I learned that one of our a/c had crashed on take-off and it was then, or shortly thereafter, that I learned that S/Sgt Moyer was the only survivor and was in the hospital badly burned.

A few days later, members of our crew visited S/Sgt Moyer in the hospital. He had been badly burned on the head and hands (his boots and flight suit had protected the rest of his body).

Moyer claimed it was pilot error for the crash. He said that he had checked the a/c loading on the slide rule and reported to the pilot that the a/c was tail heavy with too many men and extra ammo in the rear of the a/c. The pilot brushed him aside, saying, "We always fly this way."

After returning to the States I visited Sgt Moyer in the Army Hospital at Camp Atterberry, near Indianapolis, Indiana. Here he was undergoing skin grafts on his hands and face to do the best they could to restore his face and hands. After that I lost track of him, as I was busy getting along with my own life after the war.

I believe your records also show a S/Sgt George S. Hulten as a member of Lt. Ken C. Morse's crew. He was the replacement for S/Sgt Moyer.

[Editor ... Thanks for the verification as to who the survivor of that 5 April crash on take-off was. That 1st high level mission to Ploesti was a rather costly one to the Group. We lost 1 a/c out of the 724th (Captain Robert Stone, Pilot) and 4 out of the 727th (1Lt. William C. Stenning [KIA], 1Lt. Claremont D. Brownell [KIA], 1Lt. Wilfred B. McAllister [KIA] and 1Lt. Lewis H. Williams [POW]). Add those losses to those that occurred on the take-off, you have 27 that were killed and some 34 that were POW'd. Besides George Hulten (deceased April 1984), I noted two others that were listed as replacement gunners for your crew: William R. Hammett and James Likevitch. I have no clue as to their present location or status.]

Paul E. Harden, 725th [PILOT: AIRCRAFT COMMANDER]

I'm really glad you send us the 451st Ad-Lib because it reminds us of yesteryear and now time flies as you age.

The terrorist attack on New York and the Pentagon sure reminded us of Pearl Harbor. It brought back memories of that time period in our lives, and the similarity of how it affected all of us.

We hope to get to the Salt Lake City Reunion, but first I'll have to run a check on our health at that time.

You do such a superior job of keeping the 451st alive and reminding us to assist you in this worthy endeavor.

[Editor ... Thanks Paul. I appreciate your kind words and generous donation. With help from guys like yourself, we hope to keep the 451st afloat for some years to come. I harken back to 1982 when our reunion was in Colorado Springs and you 'busted your butt' to make it all come out right. Even to the point of acting as MC during the major events. Thanks again]

John H. Dayton, 727th [PILOT: AIRCRAFT COMMANDER]

Several issues back, you showed a picture of some musicians, sitting on fuse cans in a wine cellar. I was one of those guys. There were 18 of us, and were rehearsed on evenings that we didn't fly. We had some fine times together.

We also played for Enlistedmen's Club and Officer's Club and on one occasion we played at the hospital at Foggia. (We froze our ears when we rode in the back of a G.I. truck to get back to Base.)

It was a combination musical and stage show with all G.I.'s playing the part of ballet girls and the like. That is where the picture came from that you showed in the Spring Issue 33. There were seven guys dressed up with sugar sacks, oranges, lemons, etc, to create the effects of the 'other gender' and it was hilarious. The taller one (about 6'3") was the one that they decided to carry around in the finale. It looked like a pelican carrying an octopus.

When the show started there were three rows of nurses sitting in the very back. They were warned about the nature of the show and at the end there were only three sitting there.

I recall another time when we played at home base in the Officer's Club and they brought up twelve nurses from the hospital in Gioia del Colle. Those nurses had been caring for the sick and wounded and when they were introduced to about 250 live Fly-Boys, they were overwhelmed. Needless to say, they never missed a dance all evening.

When the dance ended our Colonel went out to get his Jeep and it was gone. Someone had confiscated it. Well, I found the culprit some years later. He lived in Coquille, Oregon and is now flying with the angels. He told my mother about how he stole the Jeep and described it in perfect detail.

This is what makes the fly-boys so different. They never stop trying.

Please keep up your fun publication.

[Editor ... Thanks for clearing up the purpose of the 'Ballet Dancers' dilemma. So far none of the participants came forward on their own to lay claim to being

in the photo. Can't hardly blame them.]

Lloyd M. Ryan, 725th [PILOT/SQDN OPERATIONS OFFICER]

I have recently joined a group of veterans from all services responding to a request from an enterprising young history teacher at one of the local middle schools - for the past five years she has invited veterans to be interviewed by 8th graders - I went this past October and it was very interesting - had so many that we had to be divided into two groups and then were served lunch with the children joining in - a large group of volunteer Moms and high school kids served (in fact put together the potluck lunch). The children will say thank you on November 8th, with their version of a USO Show presented in a very large professional theater.

[Editor ... What a fine tribute to be bestowed on diminishing ranks. With your World War II background, I'm sure you had the students riveted/captivated.]

Paul L. McMillen, 724th [GUNNER: JONATHAN S. MARTIN'S CREW]

The poem, "Memories of Wendover" was great in the last issue. I was at Wendover with the 458th B.G. Then went to Tonopah, Nevada. Ended up at Norwich, England with the 8th AAF. We got in our 25, then in May of 44 we transferred to the 15th AAF and joined up with the 451st - 724th Squadron. I was on Jonathan Martin crew, flew all my missions as Tail Gunner.

[Editor ... In more ways than one, you did a grand tour of Europe. Over the years memories grow dim, but my flight diary shows that I flew several mission (as spare nose gunner) with you guys. Check your log and see if you flew on 30 July 1944. We were jumped by German fighters (ME 109's, I think) that day ... good thing I was with you to help ward them off ... shoo them away!]

Allen R. Cast, 727th [NCOIC ORDERLY ROOM]

I want to again express my appreciation for your good work. I read each issue with great anticipation and fond recollections.

I vividly recall the accident John Foster described in the fall issue - the crash on take-off when the nose wheel collapsed. He related that one man survived - badly burned, but did return home. Corporal Leonard L. Bryan (727th communications Section) was the man who drove a jeep right up to the burning and exploding aircraft and rescued the burned man. As I recall, the victim had been blown out of the plane, Bryan rushed up and effected his rescue. Bryan was subsequently awarded a medal for his courageous act.

As Chief Clerk in the Orderly room, I sadly recall the letters of condolences, especially after Ploesti, that we wrote to families of our downed crews.

[Editor ... Thanks for that added information about the crash of the Quisenberry Crew on 5 April '44. It seems that the more we expose some facet of our history, the more details come to light. Now if we could just come up with the location of Leonard Bryan, we could find out even more. By way of Bryan's Army Serial Number, '13114747' - first number indicates he enlisted, second number '3' shows he enlisted from one of the Eastern States; Pennsylvania, Maryland, Wash-

ington DC, or Virginia. Maybe someone out there can help.]

Ralph E. Bachus, 724th [NAVIGATOR: JAMES V. WALLACE'S CREW]

Elated to read that you are going to hold the 2002 reunion in Salt Lake City, Utah. An ideal place and it should be very beautiful that time of year.

I am still looking for information on the 154th Weather Recon Squadron. Do you, or any of our readers, have any additional information?

[Editor ... We'll poll the readership and see if they can help.]

Wesley L. Lindley, 726th [PILOT: AIRCRAFT COMMANDER]

Your choice of Salt Lake City is great. Like many others, I met up with my crew there. Hope this will be a fine turnout. Thanks for your wonderful support of the traditions and memories of our old Group.

[Editor ... I hope the turnout for our 2002 reunion will good, too. We're drawing down close to our last HURRAH and I'd like to see this one top them all.]

Edwin R. Shafer, 727th [MAIL CLERK]

I was delighted as always to receive the newsletter, particularly to learn that Salt Lake City has been selected for the next Reunion. I did a few days in the "Repple-Depple" in Salt Lake City before being "deported" to Wendover. All us Easterners thought we were going to "Westover," which was in Massachusetts. When the train turned West we knew we were wrong!

[Editor ... I guess I hit it just right in working in Salt Lake City as our next Reunion site. Once more you can feel "deported," but under somewhat better circumstances.]

Kenneth R. Collins, 724th [BOMBARDIER: ALFRED M. DONELSON'S CREW]

Thanks to you, Bob, I was contacted by a young fellow in Hungary (Nandi Mohos) who has made a hobby, or study, of downed American aircraft that were shot down and crashed in Hungary.



Nandi Mohos and Ken Collins

After all this time, Nandi, who just got married, came to Florida as part of his honeymoon with his wife and we had a long-last person to person reunion. Up until now we have just crisscrossed with e-mails.

Nandi was a guest of one of the Bomb Groups that had their annual reunion in Omaha last month. While out there he visited the Fantasy Flight Museum and for the first time saw a real-live B-24 and was really impressed by the 'smaller than expected' size of the plane.

To quote from his letter: "To see a B-24 from inside was quite an experience for me. I found it very

small, so now I have to re-evaluate my imaginations. The things I often read in recollections, like, 'I had to go through the burning bomb bay.' or, 'bailing out through the nosewheel-hatch,' gave to me the real infernal and horrible meaning. I have to tell you that as I see after all: only the adroit, capable, brave and lucky men were able to evade from a plane on fire."

In Nandi's explorations at the site where my plane crashed on 22 August 1944, he sent me a piece of metal which he identified as part of the bomb bay of my ship. Evidently he has quite a collection of airplane parts.

Lewis W. Henslee, 726th [NAVIGATOR: WILFRED L BIAS' CREW]

I remember the crash on take-off mentioned on page 7 of the Fall 2001 Ad-Lib. Some of the crew were visiting in our tent the day before. We took off over the burning plane with the bombs exploding.

[Editor ... Of all the "on field" experiences that the 451st endured, crashes at the Base seem to hold in everyone's memory. There were the minor ones, from a collapsed nose wheel to something more serious, like the one on 5 April 44)

Anonymous, 726TH [COPILOT: WHAT'S-'S-NAME'S CREW]

After looking over several previous issues of Ad-Lib, I could not find any record of any tribute to the Editor of Ad-Lib. Soooo - I would like to propose that you list your name--not as a Memorial, but a tribute for the fine work that you have done in the name of the Group over the years. I don't care about my name being listed as a \$ donor - Just put anonymous, if you have to have a listing.

[Editor ... Thanks ILT Anonymous. But rather than sully up the waters of the "High Flight and Memorial Page," would it be okay to show my appreciation HERE? Both your kind words and generous donation do not go unheeded by yours truly.)

Robert "Ken" Barmore, 725th [Copilot: Paul E. Krueger's Crew]

This is the book ["Forever Remembered: The Fliers of WWII"] I told you about. I was interviewed, and have one chapter in it. And YES, the 451st was there, along with mention of Castelluccio. I'm quite flattered to have been picked to be included. I now have an auto-graphed copy by the author, Irv Broughton. PS ... I'm also quoted in Stephen Ambrose book "The Wild Blue."

[Editor ... I should add that "Forever Remembered: The Fliers of WWII" is published by Eastern Washington University Press, should someone be looking for closer verification. And, of course, the book by Stephen Ambrose is well publicized -sometimes criticized by the "purist" of the air war over southern Europe and the 15th AAF. But, from all I've heard, gets the point across about what it was really like.)

Robert L. Henbest, 727th [BOMBARDIER: SAMUEL R. CESSNA'S CREW]

"Achi's" article is great. He is quite a guy. We became friends a few reunions back and still keep in touch.

I just got the "unabridged" tapes (6 of them) of the "Wild Blue," by S. Ambrose from our library. Wonderful listening -- brings back a lot of similar experiences. I

could pull out portions, put them together and it would almost become my story.

Our "National Warplane Museum" (Elmira, NY) has closed --Three million in debt. They are trying to figure out a solution. They talk of selling our flying B-17, "Fuddy Duddy." It would be too bad as it is our showpiece for the museum.

(Editor ... The first part of your letter you related some of the symptoms that may cause you to forgo the Salt Lake City reunion. Since I don't wish to burden the readers [we all seem to be getting to that age that we do have our physical problems] I've omitted that part. The rest of your comments are interesting. Thanks for hanging-in there! Your remarks are appreciated, as well as the generous donation.)

Charles M. Thomas, 727th [PILOT: AIRCRAFT COMMANDER]



When my old 87 model started ailing, I decided to trade for a younger model. I upped to a 96 Olds and decided to put 'DV' plates on the car. And for some unknown reason I liked the number 451. So with that in mind I asked for the license clerk if I had any choice in the number I would get. She said "Take 'em as they come," and by chance, picked up the number 452. I then said, "OH, I kinda wanted 451." She then picked out the next plate, which was #451 and said she must have opened the box upside down. It was a stroke of luck. I was then issued #451. But as to the "FGU," I'm thinking it means "Finest Group Unit," unless you can think of a better meaning for "FGU."

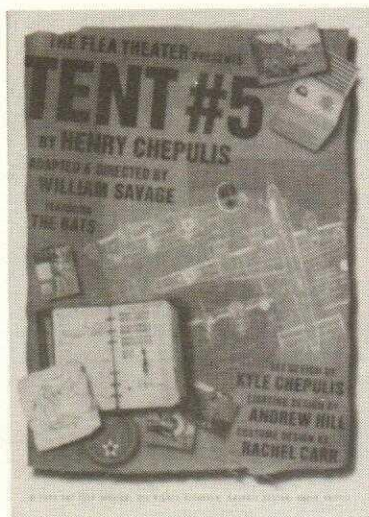
(Editor ... Chuck, I guess we're both cut from the same cloth, I have a devotion to the numbers '451' as well. If I remember correctly, you once made a donation to the organization with a check number '451,' RIGHT? As to FGU - I'll let the membership ponder that one.)

Henry F. Chepulis, 727th [GUNNER: RAYMOND W. FYHRIE'S CREW]

(Sent via E.Mail) Several years ago I wrote a short story about my experiences while on the base at Costalucci (spelling??) while in the 727th Squadron of the 451st, Crew 27. Now it is being made into a stage play that will open in lower Manhattan in a theater called 'The Flea;' an Off-Broadway group scheduled to open in mid-March. It is called 'TENT NUMBER 5;' the number of the tent where Crew 27 lived. (signed) Hank Chepulis - #0881 [never knew I had a number]

(Editor ... What'cha mean 'never knew I had a number!' What's Crew 27, Tent 5, 727th Squadron and 451st Bomb Group signify? ... chopped liver? That '0881' is the number I assigned to you upon enrollment into our 451st organization. Now, if you will allow me to

pull my tongue out of my cheek - I hope your play has a long run and will eventually be on the road so more of your 451st comrades can see it. Keep me informed as to how it goes.)



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COSTUMES BY RACHEL CARR ASSOCIATE PRODUCER ERIK SNIEDZE
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William C. Paddock, 725th [PILOT: AIRCRAFT COMMANDER]

Regarding notification of Hank Giasson's death ... Hank was the nose gunner of the crew and his passing leaves just two surviving members of the crew. They are Harry Reinhart, our radio operator, and myself.

I wonder if the loss of 80% of our crew is consistent with the loss of membership in the association? How sad -- but I am thankful that my crew was together for such a long time and that we had such a wonderful time together after the war. We were truly a "family."

And that reminds me. I have just finished MY book. I mentioned years ago that I intended to write such a book. It is 417 pages long, has 20 chapters and was recently registered with the United States Copyright Office.

The title is, "Not Just During The War Time, BUT FAMILY FOR A LIFETIME." Several of the crew described us as, "Like a family," consequently the name. Now I am searching to have it published. I hope I am successful before God decides to call me into the High Flight.

(Editor ... Your question about attrition of the Group, vs. what your experiencing with your crew, caused me to dig into our roster and see what the count [percentage-wise] may actually be. I find that from our total roster of some 1,940 plus, that is, "found" members [including 60th and SMW guys] we have lost some 685 in death. I guess that would be close to 33%, or 1/3 of our membership since we organized. Digging still deeper into my database, I find that of the 4,875 that are recorded as having, at one time, served in the Group, that we can account for about 1,760 that have joined the High Flight. That's why I'm trying hard to find new members to fill the void. Losing another, [Hank Giasson] ain't helping the matter one bit. My deepest sympathy to your other crew member on the loss, and to the family that Hank left behind. He will be missed by all those that knew him.)

COLONEL LEROY L. STEFEN JOINS "OUR DIMINISHING RANKS"

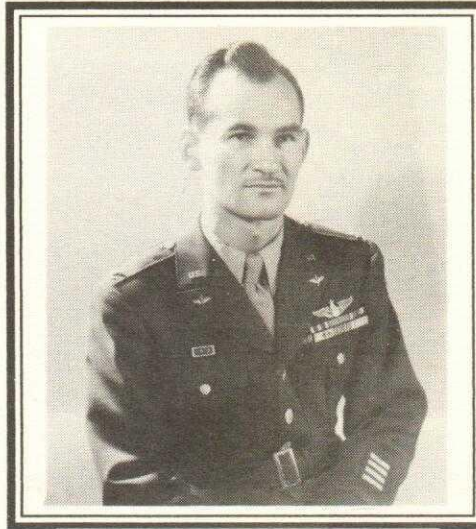
Word just in, but too late to put into our Diminishing Ranks column, was that Colonel Leroy Stefonowicz (A.K.A. Stefen) was killed in a train/car accident near his home in Ormond Beach, Florida on 11 April 2002.

Word first came into this office on the 13th of April from William Deasy (727th), also a resident of Ormond Beach. He gave me a verbal description as to what was written in the local papers. Bill later followed up by mailing me the clippings from the local newspaper.

Next I got an e.mail from Leland Younkin (Operations Officer HDQS) with the sad news. This was followed with a phone call from Burdette McKinnis (726th Squadron Commander). And lastly, an e.mail from Kaye Rasmussen Kelly (dau. of Edward Rasmussen (Operations Officer HDQS), reporting that her father's close friend, Leroy Stefen, had met an untimely death. My thanks to these members for keeping me on top of the situation.

From the news articles sent me by Bill Deasy, it seems that our Colonel crashed through the crossing gates and was struck by the oncoming train. He was killed instantly. It has not been ruled out that Colonel Stefen may have suffered some medical difficulty, rendering him oblivious to his imminent danger.

Leroy Stefen was born in Wildrose, North Dakota on 6 January 1917. He was a graduate of Wildrose High School in 1934, and attended the University of North Dakota from 1935 to



COLONEL LEROY L. STEFEN
 USAF (Ret.)
 b. 6 January 1917 d. 11 April 2002

1937. He graduate from the Army Flying School in 1938. He served 30 years in the Air Force, retiring in July 1967 with the rank of Colonel.

His military career included a tour of B-26 duty in the Pacific Theater, flying 35 combat missions as Squadron Commander. Upon reassignment he was sent to Italy and assumed command of the 451st from December 1944 to September 1945, flying 34 combat missions.

Upon retirement from the Air Force, Colonel Stefen taught Economics at Daytona Beach Community College for 16+ years, retiring in December 1983.

He leaves behind his wife, Dr. Dorothy Stefen, son, Dr. James Stefen and daughter, Judith Stefen, plus many other family members. He will be missed, not only by his family, but by the men that served under him, including this office.



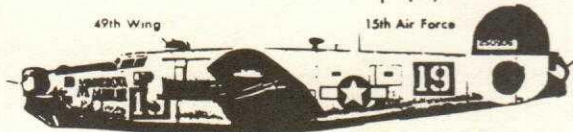
COL. LEROY L. & DOROTHY STEFEN
 SAN ANTONIO REUNION
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