



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

Issue 38

Price \$5 (Free to Members)

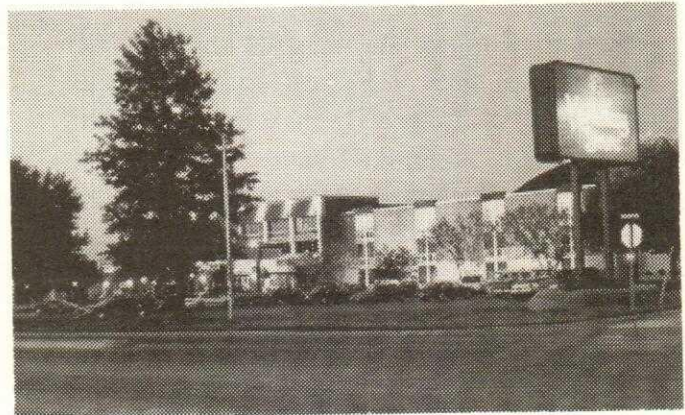
Spring 2004

GET READY -- DES MOINES, IOWA

*We've found a site,
The dates are set.
So pack your bags;
Hit the road - ol' Vet.
(Ala Burma Shave)*

Indeed, this previous attempt at poetry does, more or less, say it all. For those of you that missed the notation at the bottom of the last page of the last Ad Lib [Issue 37], just below the address label, we're going to try it again. Hopefully, even with the loss of some of our stalwart attendees, we can still come up with about the same attendance as we had at the Salt Lake City reunion.

The site selected is the Holiday Inn Airport Conference Center * Des Moines, Iowa [6111 Fleur Drive]. This should prove an advantage to those that will be flying in, as it had excellent free shuttle service between the airport and the Holiday Inn. Airlines that service the Des Moines Airport are;



HOLIDAY INN AIRPORT CONFERENCE CENTER
DES MOINES, IOWA

American Airlines, Delta Connections, Midwest Airlines, Unites Airlines and US Airways.

For those that will be driving, when I mail out the 'Registration Forms' [via 1st Class Mailing], a map with directions will be included; along with an itinerary of our planned program.

The dates of our gathering will be from Wednesday, 6 October 2004 [nothing planned except to relax and see who's there] to Sunday the 10th of October when we will break after Church Services. Plans for the 7th, 8th, 9th are being formulated as we speak.

The rates the Holiday Inn has granted us is \$65 [plus tax], per night, and if possible the hotel will extend those prices for two days prior and two days after at the same rate. Also granted is a 10% discount on meals served at their premier restaurant, the Crystal Tree Restaurant & Lounge.

I hope this information is enough to entice you to start making plans for this coming October. Who knows when it will happen again.

CONTENTS

Reunion Field Orders	3
Operation Procedures for Combat Mission	4
Phil Beckwith, 724th Crew Chief Offers "Memories"	6
Ernie's Journal - 60th Air Service Squadron	8
Grenier Field's "Beacon" Salutes 451st Officers	12
"Sweet Betsy From Pike" With WW-II Lyrics	15
Gold Star Widow & Daughter Visit 1943 Crash Site	16
"Little Friends" 49th Fighter Squadron	19
"Where is the Mop On The B-24" - Comical Lyrics	22
Chatter From The Flight Deck	23
Our Diminishing Ranks - Their Final Fly-By	25
Ceremonial Folding Of The Flag	26
Oswiecim Mission As Told By Evadee, Bob Givens ...	27
Short Bursts And Hang Fires	29

"AD-LIB"

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

Compiled and Published by Bob Karstensen

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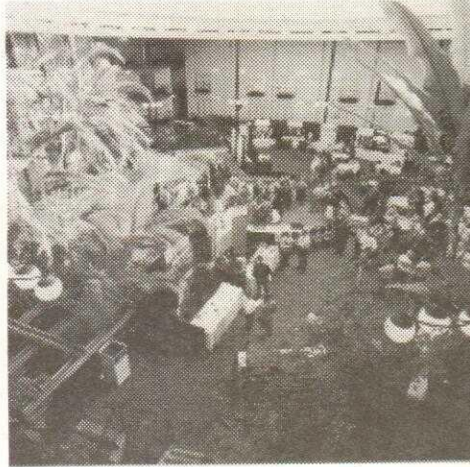
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Just remember

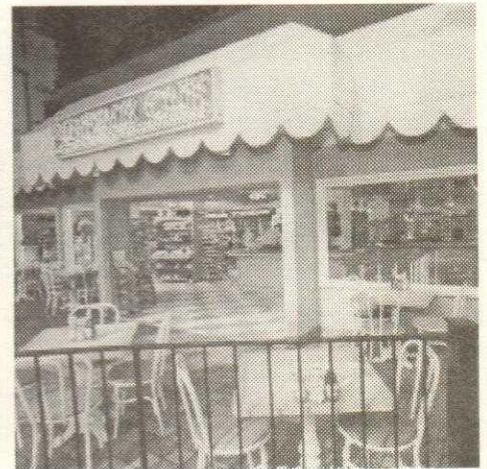
The bugle has sounded its clarion call,
For all to assemble this coming fall.
With spouses and offsprings close by your side,
We'll recall our past efforts with memorable pride.
How many more times will we have to recruit,
The good times and bad, that we had as a youth?
Mark your calendar now and start making plans.
Give a call to that buddy, so he'll be on hand.



BALLROOM



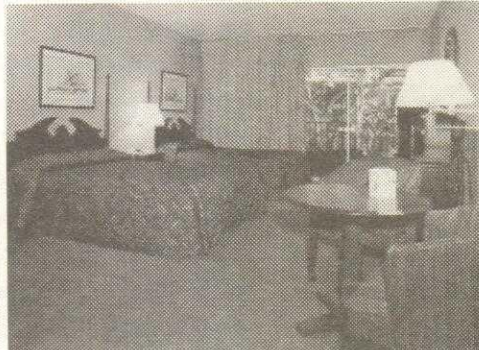
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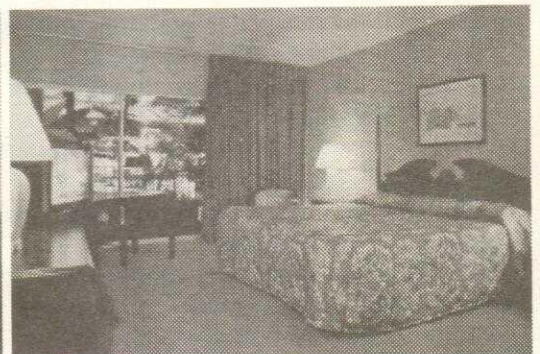
SIDEWALK CAFE



LOBBY



TWIN QUEEN SIZE



SINGLE KING SIZE

CONFIDENTIAL

HEADQUARTERS
451st BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
Office of the Group Reunion Planning Department
APO 520 US ARMY

FIELD ORDER]
NO. 001 A]

ATTENTION; SQDN ADJUTANTS, 724th, 725th, 726th, 727th & HDQ SECTION

TO BE POSTED ON ALL SQUADRON BULLETIN BOARDS

1. a. Notice is hereby given to all Officers and Enlisted Men, who served within the ranks of the 451st Bombardment Group, for a period of time (duration plus six months) as ordered by the Congress of the United States, that a convening of the troops will be taking place. Note Section 2 (Note paragraph 2. [a. & b.]).

b. All troops will carry provisions and supplies for extended field maneuvers. Maneuvers should be considered meaningful, constructive, and friendly.

c. No enemy opposition is expected. (No flak. No fighters)

2. a. Target coordinates: 41° 32' N - 93° 37' W (Des Moines, Iowa)

b. Scheduled time for formation assembly -- 6 October to 10 October 2004.

3. a. Purpose of mission; to re-evaluate our commitment to Fellowship and Camaraderie as established under wartime conditions and supported by strong bonds of friendship developed since the end of hostilities.

4. a. Billeting of troops is being arranged with the:

Holiday Inn Conference Center, Des Moines Airport
\$65.00 Singles/Doubles (Plus Tax)
NO RESERVATIONS ARE BEING ACCEPTED AT THIS TIME

b. Since this is a preliminary notice, and will only serve to alert you as to our REUNION SITE and REUNION DATES, no standard registrations kit is being offered at this time.

c. Further orders will be transmitted from this office at the appropriate time, listing further costs and proposed agenda.

5. a. Call Signs: Reunion.

b. Recall Sign: None contemplated.

c. Aldis Lamp: SOP for 49th Wing.

OFFICIAL:

Robert M. Karstensen, Pres. 451st BG, Ltd.

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55-34

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

19 January 1945

MEMORANDUM)

:)
NUMBER 55-34)OPERATIONSSTANDARD OPERATIONS PROCEDURES FOR COMBAT MISSIONS

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

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

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

R E S T R I C T E D

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

- n. RADIO DISCIPLINE: No idle chatter on radio; It is to be used for command functions and emergencies.
- o. Ball turrets will be lowered when cruising altitude is reached.
- p. Carpet machines will be turned on ten (10) minutes before the IP.
- q. All Pilots will switch to Baker channel VHF five (5) minutes before reaching the IP and guard this channel until after the rally.
- r. Chaff dispensing will begin three (3) minutes before the IP and continue at the rate of three (3) bundles every twenty (20) seconds until clear of flak.
- s. All electrical equipment and radios, except VHF, will be turned off before the IP in PFF Aircraft only.
- t. Goggles will be worn while going thru flak.
- u. Green flares at the IP indicates start of the bomb run.
- v. A single Red flare on the bomb run means, abandoning the target.
- w. Bombing codeword at the IP for the bomb run: Visual - "SHACK" PFF - "WHEEL".
- x. The lead ship will call the rest of the planes one (1) minute after bomb release point on Baker channel and fire a Yellow-Yellow flare.
- y. Bomb bay doors will remain open as long as planes are in flak.

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

By order of Lieutenant Colonel STEFONOWICZ:

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

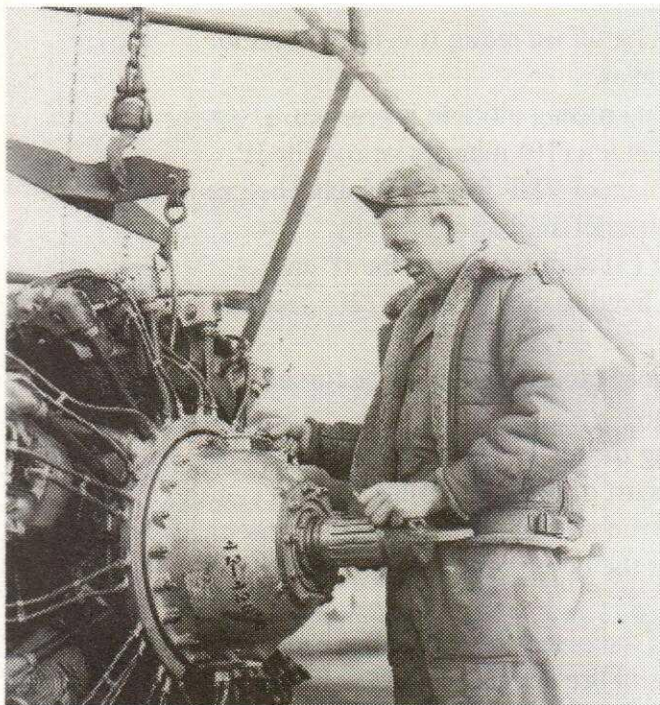
OFFICIAL:

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

DISTRIBUTION: "A"

Crew Chief Beckwith With Tales To Tell

Philip Beckwith - 724th, noting the lack of stories from the Ground Crews, offered me a couple items that may be of interest.



T/Sgt Phillip Beckwith -- Doing His Job

First off: Phil was the original Crew Chief for 'American Beauty.' Later for 'Cocky Crew,' 'Full House,' then an unnamed aircraft - #44-49368.

'American Beauty' #41-29530 - was lost on 23 June 1944 with the crew of Lt. Charles McCutchen. Missing Air Crew Report #10720 lists 1 KIA - 9 POW.

'Cocky Crew' - #42-78274 - was lost on 7 February 1945 when it crashed near Castelluccio Air Base upon returning from mission #168, or having flown a practice mission. I have nothing on record as to the circumstances, who the crew was, nor if there were casualties. Although I do show, in my 'Killed In Action' file, the names of Lt. Willard M. McCollum - Bombardier and T/Sgt James W. Watts - AEG. Both were from the 724th and are listed as having been KIA on that date, but no record as to where, or who was the Pilot.

'Full House' - #44-10621 - made crash landing on the Isle of Vis, 18 December 1944, repaired and returned to duty and was returned to the Zone of Interior [USA].

Unnamed a/c - #44-49368 - Remembered by Phil as being flown primarily by Lt. Ralph W. Doty, A/c survived and was returned to Zone of Interior [USA].

As an addendum to Phil's other considerations [Donations & written inclusions], he writes:

I rode quite a few times with Lt. Charles McCutchen on test hops and rides. I think he knew I liked to fly. I rode once to Lyon, France as Engineer when they were flying supplies up there.

I was very close to the crew of the 'American Beauty.' McCutchen told me he would take me along on their 50th mission, which, of course, I was not supposed to do. They didn't come back from their 49 mission. After that I wouldn't let myself become too friendly with the following crews. I never knew what actually happened to McCutchen's crew until the first reunion in Chicago, back in 1980.

I think the following story on Francis 'Joe' Kluebert, as written up by Carl Heimaster is very interesting. Joe was a good friend of mine, as were the rest of Crew 6.

The following is the write-up that Carl Heimaster sent along with his donation of the A-2 Jacket to the March Airfield Museum:

THE JACKET

This jacket was issued to Francis J. "Joe" Kluebert in 1943.



Carl Heimaster, 724th Wearing Joe's Jacket

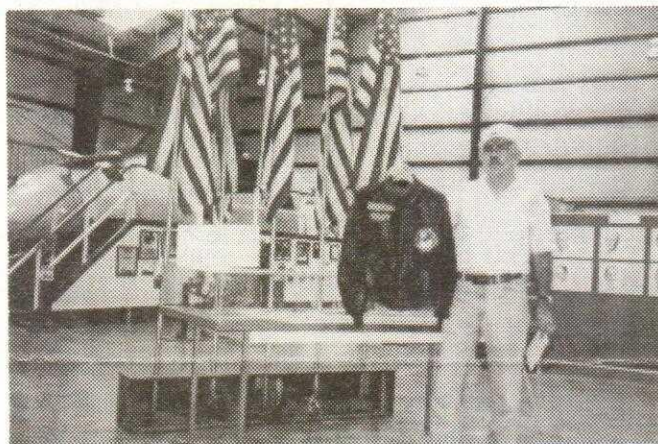
As part of the non-commissioned personnel of Crew 6, we were at Wendover Field, Utah

awaiting for an Engineer and Officers to complete the crew. Waiting at Wendover were; Sgt's Carl Heimaster [Tail Gunner], Robert Henry [Waist Gunner], Henry DiSanto [Radio Operator], Francis Holland [Ball Gunner], and Clyde Allison [Nose Gunner].

Pilot, Charles W. McCutchen was trained for another plane but agreed to come to Crew 6 if he could bring his own pick of 1st and 2nd Engineers -- It was approved. He brought Tracy Manicom as 1st Engineer [Top Turret] and 'Joe' Kluebert as 2nd Engineer. This bumped Allison from Nose Turret to another crew, thus Joe Kluebert joined Crew 6 for our second phase of training.

Shortly afterwards we went overseas to start our combat missions. Enroute to Italy, our new Base, we stopped over in Casablanca, Morocco [North Africa]. There the patch was made by a leather craftsman from drawings of our official Squadron design. The lettering "American Beauty" was done by crewmember, Bob Henry.

Joe Kluebert was the 'good guy' of our crew. He wrote letters to his mother almost every day and attended Mass as often as possible.



Formal Presentation To March Airfield Museum

It was on June 23, 1944, as he approached our plane, he realized he was wearing this jacket. He handed it to our Crew Chief, Sgt Phil Beckwith, who was responsible for our plane while it was on the ground, saying "Keep this 'til I get back." We were shot down that day.

At our 7th reunion of our 451st Bomb Group, on the 17th of September 1992, Phil Beckwith handed me this jacket as he had no one to

leave it to.

Joe was the only one of us that was injured when we parachuted. We were told later he was shot while trying to escape. We never saw or heard further news of Joe.

In researching the fate of S/Sgt Francis J. Kluebert, I find his name listed by the American Battle Monuments Commission [on the Internet], as 'Missing in Action or Buried at Sea.' This is inscribed on the 'Tablets of the Missing' at Florence American Cemetery, Florence, Italy. For whatever reason, his body was never recovered for burial.

To try and put this mystery to rest, I sent an e.mail to a representative of the Department of Defense / Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office, Dennis Friedbauer, with what information I already had. Their Web Site: [<http://www.dtic.mil/dpmo/csd/>]. To my surprise Dennis was already working on this very case, along with others that have crossed his desk. In fact, he had already interviewed the Copilot of 'American Beauty,' Lt. Phillip Topiel by phone, on the happenings of 23 June 1944 mission. The day following our contact, Dennis was heading for Budapest and Moscow for 6 weeks of archival work in regards to cases such as I had described. Hopefully he can offer us more detailed information as to the circumstances surrounding the demise of Francis 'Joe' Kluebert.

When Dennis responded to me he asked if any of our members had similar questions as to a lost comrade. Not that Dennis doesn't have others to work on, but he's taken an interest in our Bomb Group and would gladly dedicate some of his time for us. Pass along your queries to me and I'll pass the worthy ones on to Dennis.



ERNIE CUMMINS' 60th AIR SERVICE SQUADRON JOURNAL

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

14 December 1944

Dear Mabel: Hi Sugar, how's things? It is a wild night here, both outside and inside the tent - rain and wind on the outside, and inside the fellows are panning the hell out of a movie we just saw, all while getting ready for bed.

Sample of what's going on inside - Bob, sorting through his locker comes across a pair of women's panties, khaki colored, the kind issued to, and used by, the WACs. Sooo, having a few sniffers earlier in the evening and feeling happy, he does a little dance holding these panties in place. Al asked where he got them, and were they ever used by

a WAC? Bob declares they are brand new, offers us all a chance to inspect them closely to prove it, and further states that when he gets back to Ohio he is going to have his Dad hang the 'Government Lingerie' in his barber shop window under the placard, "What the well dressed WAC is wearing!"

That is the kind of stuff that makes it hard to write letters. When I sit down to chat with my wife, any distractions has to fall on deaf ears. Well, today's mail had but one letter, a rather oldish one from my favorite correspondent, telling about the shipyard work, plans for a shopping tour and enclosing some airmail stamps. How are the "Free" letters making out, for time on the trip from Italy? Bet almost as fast, huh?

Well, lover, now I'll tell you about my last trip - it took a couple of days rest before I was equal to it, HA. There being an English twist to it, I'm going to write Herb and Dede a longer account, so you can get the details from them. Meanie, ain't I?

I started at four in the morning, with a bright moon lighting the countryside, and proceeded over roads new to me. Had a passenger from another outfit to tell me where to turn and warn me about bad curves, etc.. By ten AM we reached our des-



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

tinuation, and at 2 PM started back with the load. Returning by a longer route to avoid some particularly steep grades, my truck broke down just before dark. The passenger hitch-hiked back to send out a tow truck or a mechanic, and I was stranded for the night in the mountains at a time that was colder than the dickens. The load I carried would tempt an Eytie to steal it if I went to sleep in the cab, so I set off before dark to find a camp if any were near. There was an English outfit down the hill a ways, so I coasted down and parked within a few yards of two of their sentries, all to safeguard the rig.

The night was spent with the English soldiers, and that is the part you find out from your Mom & Pop. Next morning Ray comes along in a Jeep with his tools and in a few hours I was on my way home again -- Through snow this time, and about supper time the trip was over. That night was something special! I'm still laughing! So long for now honey, more tomorrow. Love & Stuff, Ernie

*****COMMENT*****

In December of 1944 I was sent from Foggia across to the western coast with a 40 foot flatbed to pick up a load of dunnage lumber from the docks in Naples. This would normally be a twelve hour round trip, including loading time. Lt. Henshell, who rode as copilot, was a member of the 725th Headquarters outfit that borrowed our transport for the job.

Dunnage lumber is used in the holds of ships to secure cargo to keep it from shifting, etc., and separates layers of shells, bombs, or whatever. It is generally poor quality for building purposes, but any lumber was a rare commodity in that time and place. When we got on the road returning, ropes and log chains secured a large stack of loose

boards, and the highway wound upwards into the ridge of mountains that are the main feature of central Italy. Nearing the crest of a long grade, the truck engine suddenly revved up, and although the drive train still worked, I pulled over to investigate the strange sound from under the hood.

It turned out to be a pulley hanger that had broken and the drive belt lost, and as a result the air compressor had ceased to function. No air, no brakes marked the end of the trip. The time was mid-afternoon and Lt. Henshell hitch hiked back to Base to send out a mechanic and spare parts while I stayed with the rig. Conserving the remaining air in the tanks, I eased down the slope a couple kilometers, reaching the entrance to a British Prison Camp, where I parked near a guard post that was manned 24 hours by M.P.'s, and went in search of a meal and a place to sleep. The English troops wore baggy woolen trousers, and some units sported black berets, the kind General Montgomery displayed to photographers during his desert campaigns.

After checking in with a guard at the gate, in the barbed wire perimeter fence, I was directed to a mess hall up a little hill. The camp being in the mountains, there was no level area of any size. Everything was "up" or "down" from anything else. The cooks took me into the kitchen and served me chicken and dumplings, turnips, chocolate pudding and sweet milky tea. After thanking the cook I asked where I might find an 'Officer in Command.' I was sent across a road and up another hill to a stone building of three rooms. My uniform was fatigue coveralls, knit wool cap [of the kind that fit under helmet liners], and a leather flying jack with no insignia showing.

At the first desk, near the entrance door, sat a Lance Corporal, to whom I explained my breakdown and need for assistance. He disappeared into a second office and summoned me there a few minutes later. At the desk sat a thin gentleman wearing three "pips" and sporting a Ronald Colman mustache.

"Major," I said, "I've broken down with my transport right outside your gate. Is there any chance of a bed here while my mechanics come for repairs?"

"What is your rank?" he asked.

"Sir, I am a buck Sergeant," was my reply.

Picking up his desk telephone, he gives it a crank

and speaks: "Sergeant Major .. There is an American Top Kick here in my office. See to it that he is bedded down and fed."

It could be that the slang expressions for "Buck" and "Top" had confused the Major, but he had suddenly elevated me to First Sergeant, and to be treated accordingly. The Sgt. Major called out a couple of Privates and sent them off to draw a folding cot and blankets, which they wet up in the Sgt.'s own private tent. I couldn't lift a hand to do a thing. Then off to the N.C.O. Club, where I had previously had my kitchen meal, for a round of drinks. When the Chief Cook saw me he protested:

"Why didn't you tell us you were a six striper? We would have served you on china and used glasses instead of tin plates and mugs."

A long discussion with the hosts revealed they were many years in India, Palestine, Singapore, Kenya, Egypt and other Empire stations. Some were veterans of the Dieppe raid, the Dunkirk evacuation, Greece and Crete campaigns, and listed the African battles against Romell among them. Years of hard service earned them their stripes, and they enjoyed whatever privileges afforded them. These "blokes" were older than most U.S. troops and perhaps that was the reason they had been posted to Stockade Duty, well to the rear of the front lines. They had a full glass for both my hands, and after enough sweet Vermouth, powerful Groppi, and smooth Canadian Club, old Ern was feeling no pain.

One fellow, at an old upright piano, hammered out songs as requested. The only tune my soggy mind could think of was St. Louis Blues. But he did know the tune of Pistol Packing Mama, and everyone's favorite, of all nationalities; Lilly Marlene. By time I staggered off to the tent and collapsed, my host was pretty well plastered too. The next morning, when Ray Brackney found my truck and fixed it, he had a harder time getting me in shape to drive than he did with the fractured machinery. That was the drunkest Cummins got during his entire military hitch, and should be blamed on the English regard for superior rank "Bang On, Ruddy Good Show!"

13 January 1945

Dear Mabel: Bet you are disappointed because this came after a few days of no letters. But then you have more sense than Mrs. Adams who thinks Bob is on his way home when there is a break in

the mail service. I haven't written anyone for several days, and to get even with me, I guess, the mailbox has been empty over here, too.

We enjoyed (?) another snow. For a couple of nights it came down steadily and got to at least three inches deep. It was pretty tough getting in and out of camp with the roads sleeted up. But my work was right here at the Base, so I didn't have to fight the elements. This week has seen some changes; more rigid tent inspections, checking our stoves, etc., by the Officers. There was also a "shake-up" at work. Ernie is still doing the same job, so don't worry, Peanut.

Had one rather exciting evening -- during supper a call came into the Mess Hall for the crash truck operators to report to our Dispatch Shack. This turned out to be a new one on us. We went down to a place where the road crosses a river and found six Negro soldiers stranded in their truck where they had driven it out into the streambed to shovel gravel. When I say "in" the truck, I mean "on top," because only a few inches of the cab remained above the water. The rains and snow having swollen the stream suddenly. The only part I played was to direct a pair of spotlights at the scene from my truck parked on the bridge a couple hundred yards downstream. Meanwhile a half dozen other fellows got a rope over to the almost submerged rig and one by one the Negro's tied it around their shoulders and jumped, or dove, into the water. Believe me, the current was swift because once they hit the water all we saw was a wave where their heads split the surface as the guys on shore pulled 'em in like a giant fish. Got the guys all bundled up in an ambulance and off to their camp. We then came home pretty wet ourselves. Two days later the water had dropped enough to tow their truck out. I reckon those boys will learn to swim before they go driving around in riverbeds again.

Honey, your inventive husband has "thunk up" a new system to get the stove lit these early mornings. It is so cold it would freeze 'em off, even with long woolen underwear! Finding it impractical to move the stove from its location in the center of the tent, I moved my cot out from one corner, making it an easy stretch to the controls. What calls for delicate adjustment is our fuel valve. Only because the damned thing has to heat up the whole tent and still not roast me in bed.

Sure hope some mail comes soon, especially

those written after Christmas and New Years, when you have more time at home by yourself. Being practically snowed in, and not having any recent questions to answer makes this one sort of dry. You know I want to know how the job is doing at the Yard, and how Mom is getting along without her old work, plus the news about those Holidays.

Got to hit the sack now honey .. good night dear ..All my love and thoughts are with you every minute.

Ernie

*****COMMENT*****

One winter evening the 451st returned from a mission that had taken them across the Alps into Germany itself. "Homeland" target were heavily defended and a certain percentage of losses were expected. Knowing that we count the ships that circled the Base to see how they had fared that January day in '45. Two planes left the formation and landed first, shooting flares for the wounded on board. Another stayed aloft after the main flights had landed. It continues to circle with one engine dead on the left wing. The sky had a heavy overcast but we had about a 2,000 foot ceiling and the sun was slanting under from the west, leaving the ground in shadow from the mountains and lone plane in bright sunshine silhouette against dark clouds.

On a straight pass over the field, the ship spilled men out of its belly. Nine parachutes opening close together and one a little later, the pilot having left the controls after his crew had all departed. Damage to the ship had been such that a landing would have surely resulted in a crack-up. So the choice was made to set the automatic pilot and abandoned the plane, with the plane perhaps reaching open water before the gas tanks ran dry.

We scurried around picking up the men after the landed, three actually coming down on the airfield itself, the others not far away. We took the chutes to our shop for drying and repacking. Just about the time we thought the excitement was over for that day, the unmanned plane made another appearance.

This happened when I was on my way to the mess hall for supper when I heard the overhead roar of engines that made me look up. There was our feathered prop friend buzzing merrily to the north, having made a wide circle because the two right wing power plants had probably overcome the single left engine. It was getting dark and the plane

was a distinct hazard to all the area. Some talk was heard of getting the P-38 'hot shot' fighter over to shoot the tail off the "Phantom B-24," but snow started to fall making any air attack impossible. I ate my spam with macaroni and cheese, topped it off with raisin pudding and returned to my tent. Pretty soon, out of falling snow came the sound of those Pratt & Whitney engines again. This time a lot lower, but again heading north. We sat around in a sweat over what the ship was going to do, trying to follow, by ear, where it was in the white sky.

After about four passes, and many skipped heartbeats by people on the ground, the plane didn't come back. We slept knowing that somewhere out there in the snow was another wreck that we would have to salvage when the weather improved.

Snow fell all the next day, but on the second morning it was clear. The ship was discovered in a farm pasture just over a hill from our camp, perhaps two miles distant. It had made a perfect belly landing with the wheels retracted, of course, but having mashed into the soft ground with very little damage, except to the props. A guard was put on the wreck, but the locals had already done some salvage work of their own, draining gasoline for the black market and cutting sections from the tires to use as shoe soles. We let the mechanics work on the skeleton for a few days, getting instruments and parts. Then the wings were cut off and we got the main fuselage up on a 40 foot flat bed trailer. To reach the road it required four trucks winching each other, but finally we headed for the Foggia salvage yard.

My helper on this trip was a pint sized driver we called Wee Willy, and every time we came to wires strung over the highway he climbed up on top of the plane and walked the wire back over the entire length of the aircraft, while we crept under at a snail's pace. In Foggia itself, there was a "one way" truck route bypassing the city. There were M.P.'s stationed as traffic cops at intersections directing drivers to various places. To reach the salvage yard we would have to make a hard right turn from the incoming two lane highway to the truck route. The rear wheels of long semi's, track in diminishing radius and cut corners short, so the towing vehicle must start its turn well out in the oncoming traffic lane. With the long overhang of the B-24's tail on this trip, I doubted we could get around the corner. We parked a half block short and

walked up to the M.P. to explain the problem. He insisted we try and held the traffic back when I put the truck on the left sidewalk, knocking down two small trees and swung way out into the intersection to start the turn. The tail brushed the wall of a building, and on the second try came up against a balcony that graced a second floor window.

The M.P. finally let us go downtown on the main business street, and an hour later, after fighting many wires and suffering loud insults from pedestrians, the carcass was dumped. Another proud bird was put to rest.

(Editor ... After transcribing this part of Ernie's Journal I became curious as to the veracity of what he described. As we all know, many strange and almost impossible things can, and did, happen while in a combat area. This may be one of them. As Ernie told me, when he offered me his journal, some of his 'comments' were fleshed out from letters that he had sent to his wife, Mabel, some years after separation from the Service. In the past, when he brought up the crash of "Hey Moe" (14 November 1944), I found strong evidence as to just what happened. In this case there is no specifics as to Squadron, date (just January), nor that days target.

In January 1945 the 451st flew seven scheduled combat missions: On the 4th to Trento Rail Installations, Italy; 5th to Zagreb Rail Installations, Yugoslavia; 8th to Linz Marshalling Yards, Austria; 15th to Vienna Locomotive Factory, Austria; 19th to Brod Railroad Bridge, Yugoslavia; 20th back to Linz Marshalling Yards, Austria; and lastly a split mission on the 31st -- 'Red' to Graz Marshalling Yards, Austria and 'Blue' to Moosebierbaum Oil Refineries, Austria.

On 15 January we lost two aircraft: 'Jane Lee' #42-94877, Piloted by 2Lt. Maurice R. Brown, 724th -- 4 POWed - 5 returned to Base - Missing Air Crew Report #11397.

Second aircraft: 'Whistling Anne' #44-49747, Piloted by 1Lt George J. Bukon, 724th -- crew of 12 -- 2 KIA - 10 POWed - Missing Air Crew Report #11288.

On 31 January we lost [unnamed a/c] #44-49460, Piloted by 1Lt Lloyd O. Boots, 724th -- crew (if I recall previous comments) crash landed in Yugoslavia and were returned to Base. Missing Air Crew Report #11830.

So, my fellow warriors, it's up to you to fill me in on what you remember about the 'Phantom A/C')

"The Beacon," Grenier Field, NH Reveals Postwar Stories of Interest

Through the consideration and generosity of Frank J. Lather [Former Major, 727th Squadron Commander] I have been sent three original copies of 'The Beacon' [circa: 1 September 1945, 13 October 1945 and 9 March 1946]. These issues dealt with the 'goings-on' at Grenier Field, Army Air Base, plus interviews with some of our former 451st Staff Officers that were based there after returning from overseas.

The first 'front page' story, 1 Sept. 1945, had to do with Major Burdette J. McKinnis [Squadron Commander, 726th], Major Beverly V. Pearson [Executive Officer, 726th], Major Edward H. Besse, [37th Service Group], and Captain Albert F. Ogg [Adjutant, 726th, misspelled throughout the article as 'Ogden'].

One entry to this article was Major Edward H. Besse, though not Based at our overseas Bases, he was part of the organization that serviced the three Groups in the 49th Wing.

The second paper, 13 Oct. 1945, contained the biography of Colonel Leroy L. Stefonowicz [451st Group Commander]. My plan is to rewrite these biographies into this article. But since I've already done Colonel Stefen [anglicized from Stefonowicz] in Ad-Lib, Issue 31, I'll abstain from posting it now.

The final paper, 9 Mar. 1946, had the story of our newspaper contributor, Major Frank Lather [727th CO].

The following is what was written into the

Grenier Field Air Base, "THE BEACON," on 1 September 1944:

15th AF OFFICERS UNITED HERE

Formerly Stationed in Italy, New Adjutant, Ass't Adjutant, Supply Officer, and Squadron 'A' CO Maj. Burdette J. McKinnis, Adjutant: Capt. Albert F Ogden [*Ed ... Misspelled in the article - hereafter referred to by corrected name of 'Ogg'*], Assistant Adjutant; Major Edward H. Besse, Supply Officer; and Major Beverly V. Pearson, Commanding Officer of Squadron A -- these are men who have done their bit overseas, helping in their assigned ways to write "finis" to the climactic 1944--1945 phases of the European war. Three are newcomers to Grenier Field. Only Major Pearsons is one of the "old timers" of this field, having assisted in building Squadron A area. The "raison d'etre" of this group introduction, however, is the fact that all four of these officers worked in the same area in Italy. three of them being from the same squadron. Major McKinnis was at one time Commanding Officer of the 726th Bomb Squadron, with Major Pearson as his Executive Officer and Captain Ogg as Adjutant. Major Besse helped service the 726th as a member of the 37 Service Group. To round off the association, these 15th Air Force men returned to the U.S. on the same boat.

NEW ADJUTANT

Major McKinnis' hometown and birthplace is the town of Aurelia in Iowa. He attended Buena Vista college, Storm Lake, Ia. to study business administ-



MAJ. EDWARD H. BESSE, JR.



CAPT. ALBERT F. OGDEN



MAJ. BEVERLY V. PEARSON



MAJ. BURDETTE J. M'KINNIS

ration. After farming for couple of years, he enlisted in the Army in January, 1940, volunteering for service in the Hawaiian Islands, where he remained until March, 1941. There, he worked in line maintenance, in engineering and eventually went to the aero-engine technical school at Hickam Field, Pearl Harbor. After this training he was sent to Wheeler Field, Hawaii, where he spent two months helping to setting up a school. At this time his appointment came through for Air Corps Cadet training in California.

What one might call the second phase of Major McKinnis's military career began now, with primary training at Santa Maria, California. Attendance at basic school at Moffet Field followed, and advanced training was completed at Mather Field, Cal. The graduation took place in October 1941. From there he was assigned to a navigation school as pilot in charge of pilot training until 1943. He then left to assist in organizing the navigation school in San Marcos, Texas. Besides handling pilot training, he took a course in navigation in order to obtain his navigator's rating. In April 1944 he began B-24 training, and in October he left the U.S. for European service.

The Major arrived in Italy in November and was stationed at Casta Luce (*sic Castelluccio*) with the 451st Bomb Group, part of the Fifteenth Air Force. Among the jobs that he held there were those of Flight Commander, Operations Officer, and Command Officer of the 726th Bomb Squadron. The end of 1944 marked the disintegration of Axis offensive power, which our Italian based bombers helped to accelerate. Major McKinnis' outfit took part in bombing oil installations in France, Germany and Austria. Running out of oil targets, they took over the destruction of communication centers, etc. "It was interesting while it lasted," said the Major, "but it was pretty routine by the time I joined the outfit. About the only really interesting activity, history making one might say, was our three day contribution to the air support for the 5th Army in Northern Italy, very near Bolzano. Another gratifying mission centered on Muldorf, where about eight or nine hundred railroad cars were completely wiped out on their sidings." The Distinguished Flying Cross was awarded.

Major McKinnis has been back in the U.S. since June. It didn't take him long to rejoin his wife and children (he has a boy and a girl) in California, and

to start off for a 30-day rest in the mountains. The family is now with him in Manchester.

NEW ASST. ADJUTANT

Gernier's new Assistant Adjutant, Captain Albert F. Ogg, worked with Major McKinnis in the same outfit overseas. From Knoxville, Tenn., he attended the University of Tennessee, where he majored in entomology, with bacteriology and chemistry on the side. He finished his studies by gaining a BA degree in entomology in 1931. It was at this time that he received a reserve commission in the Army. During subsequent years he was a manager of chain grocery stores.

BRONZE STAR

Active duty began in 1942 with the Southeast Training Command at Maxwell Field, Alabama. Later, after an eight month assignment at George Field, Illinois, where he engaged in QM work, he joined the 451st Bomb Group at Dyersburg, Tenn, in June, 1943. From there his organization started phases in training as a heavy bomb outfit and finally sailed for Naples Via Oran. Captain Ogg remained the Squadron Supply Officer, in the 726th Bomb Squadron during his 18+ months of overseas duty. He received the Bronze Star medal. The 726th received 10 Battle Stars during its career.

MAJOR PEARSON

Major Beverly V. Pearson comes from Washington, Penn. A graduate of the University of Pittsburgh and the Carnegie Institute of Technology, he directed his studies towards engineering and metallurgy. He worked for the Frick Coal Co., Uniontown, Penn., as maintenance engineer, but later he returned to Washington to take the job of night foreman in the bar mill of Jesop Steel Corporation. Major Pearson enlisted in the Pennsylvania National Guard, becoming a S/Sgt in 1935. By 1938, he was commissioned 2nd Lieutenant, NGUS. He entered Federal service with the 28th Infantry Division in February, 1941 and graduated from Fort Benning Infantry School, Georgia, and Edgewood Arsenal Chemical Warfare School, Maryland, in the same year.

GRENIER LIKE HOME

The Major left his Division in July, 1942 to join the 919th Air Base Security Battalion and found himself stationed at Grenier Field for nine months. With the disbanding of the battalion, he became a casual in 1943, and received orders for overseas duty on January 1, 1944, Par. 1, Special Order #1.

After touching Augusta, Sicily, he debarked at Taranto, southern Italy and reported to the reple-depple of Bari. He was assigned to the 451st Bomb Group, to remain with them as Executive Officer until returning to the States. After a furlough and a stopover at Dow Field, Major Pearson was assigned here to take over Squadron A. Surprisingly, there were still members here of the original 919th Company. He returned to the same Orderly Room, which contained some of the same furniture in use at the time of his departure. He summed up his reaction to a U.S. it was in the following manner-- "I was surprised at the number of restrictions put on since my going away. I couldn't get used to the shortage in cigarettes, meats, etc., but I was certainly glad to get back. When I was assigned to Grenier Field to the area which I had helped build up, it was like coming home."

MAJOR BESSE

(Editor ... Although little is known of Major Besse by most of us 451st'ers, I'll include his biography for the benefit of our 60th Air Service Squadron members.)

Major Edward H. Besse, Jr., Service and Supply Officer, has traveled extensively in the U.S., and found himself seeing a lot of North Africa before he found himself more or less established in Italy. The Major was born in Portland, Me. He went to high school in San Antonio, Tex. When he married, he made his home in Portland -- Portland, Oregon. For nine years before the war, he was employed as claim agent by the Pacific Greyhound Company, in Portland, Ore. It was during this time that he received a reserve commission in the Army, 1934 to be exact. He began active service in 1941 and was stationed in McChord Field, Tacoma, Wash., where he worked in the Quartermaster, Transportation and became Commanding Officer of the Company. Moving to Paine Field, Wash., he joined the 34th Service Group which shipped for overseas service in December, 1942.

CASABLANCA

The North African service began with the landing at Casablanca and duty there as Assistant Group Quartermaster Officer. In time, Major Besse was transferred to the 62nd Service Group, in Algeria, as Group QM Officer. Four months were spent there at a town named Telergma, after which he joined the 37th Service Group at Souk el Arba, Tunisia, part of the 12th Air Force. It was summer

there, the terrain low and flat with the weather on the warm side--135 degrees during the day. In December, 1943 the Major was transferred, along with his outfit to the 15th Air Force, and was sent to Foggia, Italy, where he remained for the duration. His group serviced three air fields of the 49th Bomb Wing. When the 37th was broken into three new type service groups, Major Besse became Commanding Officer of the 775th Air Material Squadron, part of the new 525th Air Service Group. In June, both the 525th and the 451st returned to the U.S.

Asked how he felt about being back, he said, "It was good to get back to the wife and family. It took a long time to realize I was back here again." With his wife and daughter in Manchester, the Major is trying to find a place for them in town.

The following was gleaned from the 9 March 1946 "THE BEACON:"

MAJOR LATHER

As a college man, Major Frank J. Lather once had high hopes of being a doctor, in fact he completed two years of pre-medical work before the flying bug hit him. Then the arts and sciences of healing were set aside because of the urge of the wild blue yonder was the greater.

In all probability, the Major would have made a good doctor, but that's problematical. History shows he was a good pilot, not only because of the job he did, but because he liked doing it.

It was in June 1941 that Lather, as a student, enrolled as an Aviation Cadet at Randolph Field, Texas, and after the rigid pre-war training course was commissioned a 2nd Lt.

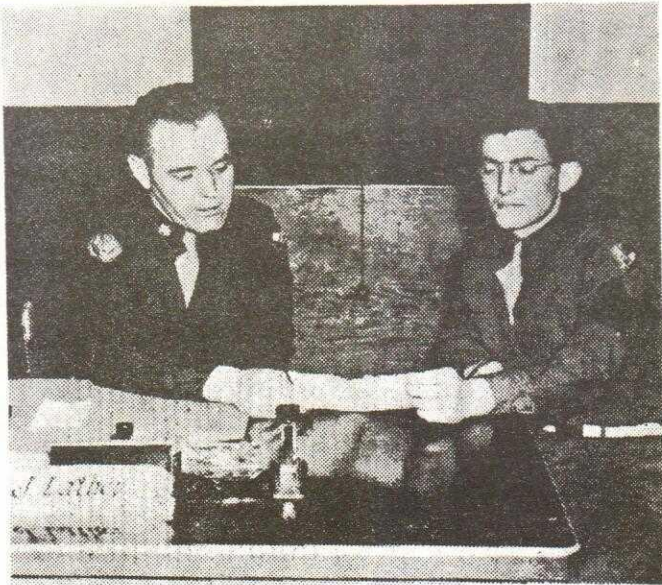
Transferred to San Angelo, Texas, as a pilot instructor on Basic Training, the then Lt. Lather helped check out future pilots for the Air Force. He was promoted to 1st Lt. in April, 1943, and a year later made Captain, and during that year he became an instructor in 4-engine ships, notably B-24's.

Not believing in George Bernard Shaw's erroneous axiom that "Those who can do; those who can't teach." Major Lather went overseas in September 1944 with the 451st Bomb Group to put in wartime action his experience as an instructor. He was made Major on the last day of 1944 and became Operations Officer of the 725th Bomb Sq. Later he became CO of the 727th with headquarters near Foggia, Italy.

After 26 bombing missions and 10 months of

ETO life with frequent flights over Vienna and the oil fields of southern Germany, Major Lather returned to the States, landing at Dow Field, Bangor Me.

SQUADRONS G'S C.O. AND TOPKICK



Major Frank Lather, CO of Sq G With His 1st Sgt.

Following his leave, Major Lather came to Grenier Field as Executive Officer of Sq. B under

the ATC. When the 1st Air Force took over this field, Major Lather became CO of the Sq. G which is made up of men assigned to administration and training.

Wearer of the ETO ribbon with 5 battle stars, the DFC and the Air Medal with 2 Oak Leaf Clusters, he also wears the pre-Pearl Harbor ribbon (American Defense), the American Theater and the Victory ribbons.

Major Lather makes his home in Chicago, Ill., and has already been before the board which, in all probability, will make him a Regular Army officer. He hopes to make the Army his career.

(Editor ... As an epilogue to this Grenier AFB article, I should note that two of the five previous named officers are still with us. They are Major Lather and Major McKinnis. Those among the departed are: Colonel Stefonowicz; born 6 January 1917 - deceased 11 April 2002 ... Major Besse; born 15 July 1909 - deceased 21 March 1976 ... Captain Ogg; born 19 May 1908 - deceased 24 January 2000 ... Major Pearson; born 24 September 1912 - deceased 9 September 1992. May they always be remembered.)

THE FOUR FIFTY FIRST

(Sung to the tune of 'Sweet Betsy From Pike')

Do you remember, the Four Fifty First? T'was born with a grumble and a terrible thirst. The air crews were gathered from States far and near, And so were the Ground Crews, Americans dear.

Now if you remember the Four Fifty First, You'll surely recall, it was damn near the worst. The flying was risky and bombs they did roam; The Nav's had their problems just getting back home.

Most Gunners were red faced from too much to drink; Their eyes could not focus and their brains would not think. The Flight Engineer and the Radio Man, Were ever devising a new bail-out plan.

Then Colonel Bob Eaton, he 'shook up' the Group; Took only a jiffy to reach every troop. "Y'all snap to attention when you see my face! This goes without saying, anywhere on the base!"

When the Group finished training, and flew 'Over There,' The crews were all ready to take on 'Mein Herr.' They battled and fought him until they did win, But not all their comrades came home to their kin.

Do you remember, the Four Fifty First? T'was born with a grumble and terrible thirst! But the history books tell us, it may be recalled, That the Four Five One Bomb Group was the best of them all!

(Taken from the Musical Program that was performed at our first Group Reunion in Chicago in 1980. Music by MediCare 7-8 or 9 out of Champaign, IL. Revised lyrics by Bob Karstensen).

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

Trip Delayed/Interrupted 60 Years Is Finally Completed

I guess there will always be a time when one would look back and say, "I should have done that!" Whether it be a class/family reunion, a visit with the folks, or, as in the situation described in the following letter that I received from Mrs. Kay Williams Starbach, a journey fulfilled.

5 November 2003

Dear Mr. Karstensen,

On October 25, 1943 I lost my husband. I was 19, he was 23. He was a B-24 pilot stationed at Fairmont Army Air Base. I was on my way to be with him for the short time he had left until the 451st left for overseas.

At Union Station in Chicago I was paged and instructed to call Major Rohrs at the Air Base. Major Rohrs informed me that two bombers had collided over Milligan, Nebraska and that my husband's plane was on of them.

I left Union Station on the train to Fairmont. The awful news did not sink in until I was at Ottumwa, Iowa. Then I realized he wouldn't be waiting for me at the train station in Fairmont.

The Red Cross took care of me until a train was going back to Cincinnati. Our baby (for which I've thanked God many times) was only six weeks old.

This past October 25th was 60th years since this happened. I have so many times wanted to complete my journey, to see where it happened, just to visit the Air Field and to walk where he walked.

My daughter gathered all the information she could that would help us. The people in Fairmont were so generous of their time and effort, even before we arrived. They had so many memories to share of the young men stationed there.

While visiting their Museum I saw your newsletters regarding the 451st Bombardment Group, I'd really like to subscribe to your newsletter, and if possible get a list of survivors from those days. It would really interest my daughter and I to know if someone remembers Lt. James H. Williams from Cincinnati. He was a special young man, but weren't they all?

Any information you could send me, I would be most grateful.

Yours truly

(signed) Kay (Williams) Staubach



Kathryn and James H. Williams
(circa 1943)

Since receiving this letter, and later communications, I felt an obligation to share this with you.

I received two newspaper articles dedicated to Kay and daughter Karen Edelmans's pilgrimage. One of the Hastings Tribune [Reporter, David Carew] from Kay and the other from one of our members, James H. Williams, 725th (note similarity of names). Jim sent a copy of the Lincoln Journal Star [Reporter, Rebecca Svec]. Both articles were so poignantly written that I'd be hard pressed to add anything to them, other than add some facts. But I was impressed with the first paragraph of Rebecca's article.

MILLIGAN -- Each fall, when the leaves landed in a puddle under the maples in her Cincinnati village, Kay Williams Staubach would feel a melancholy weight settle on her shoulders.

It wouldn't lift without a phone call to the train station, inquiring about departures to Fairmont, Nebraska.

She had been on such a train once: October 25, 1943

For a few hours it cut the miles between the 19-year old mother in Cincinnati and her first husband, Lt. James H. Williams, training at Fairmont Army Air Field.

She learned en route that he had died in a plane crash.



Lt James H. Williams

AS I delved into what research material I had at hand, I uncovered quite a bit of information. On the day of the incident, 25 October 1943, a four aircraft practice mission for the 724th Squadron was scheduled. Taking part in that formation were: Pilots: Lt. James H. Williams [a/c #42-7673 - Crew Chief, CPL John W. Eskew], Lt. Verne G. Johnson [a/c #42-64423], Lt Charles L. Brown [a/c #42-7657 - Crew Chief, PFC Lonnie M. Kelly] and Lt. Roger S. McCollester [a/c #Unknown].

On this mission Lt. McCollester was in #1 formation position, Lt. Brown in #2, Lt. Johnson #3 and Lt. Williams in #4. For whatever reason Lt. Brown dropped out of formation and Lt. Williams attempted to secure that position. This is normal procedure for the number four ship to replace the number two ship automatically if the latter falls out of formation. With Lt. Williams barely in position, Lt. Brown tried to regain his former position and collided with Lt. Williams' aircraft, putting them both into a spin that resulted in crashing just north of Milligan, Nebraska.

Total lives lost on both aircraft was seventeen. One life was spared when Lt. Melvin Klein [Copilot on Lt. Williams' a/c] was thrown clear, after being knocked unconscious, and managed to release his parachute for a safe landing. His eyewitness account, at time of interrogation reads thusly:

I, Melvin Klein 0-750618 2nd Lt., AC, 724th Bomb Squadron Fairmont Army Air Field, Geneva, Nebraska, being duly sworn deposes and says that on the afternoon of October 25, 1943 at approximately 1920 hours Greenwich time a formation of four ships was flying in a diamond formation at 20,000 feet. the pilot of 42-7673 located behind the lead ship moved into the right wing position after 42-7657 had dropped back out of that position. 42-7657 at this time was out of my vision. We were just about flying in the right wing position when the accident occurred. At this time I heard a dull crunching sound and we immediately went into a tight spin, I tried to help the pilot with the controls but with no result. I reached for the alarm bell and at that time was thrown violently against the center pedestal and knew no more. Upon coming to I was in the clouds and pulled the ripcord and made a successful descent.

(signed) Melvin Klein 2nd Lt., AC.

The 'Accident Reports -- 44-10-25-1,' from which my information comes from, lists the following crew members, and their fate.

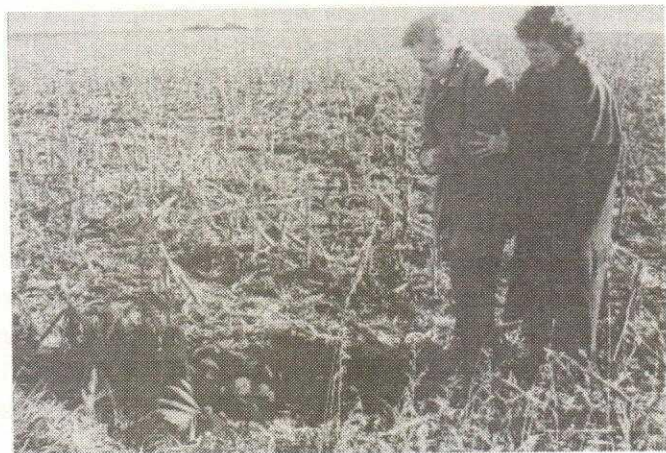
From a/c #42-7673: 2Lt. James Harold Williams, Pilot - Fatal; 2Lt. Melvin (NMI) Klein, Copilot - Injuries Minor; 2Lt. William E. Herzog, Navigator - Fatal; 2Lt. Kenneth S. Oroway, Bombardier - Fatal; SGT James H. Bobbitt, AEG - Fatal; SGT William D. Watkins, AAEG - Fatal; SGT William G. Williams, AAEG - Fatal; SGT Wilbur H. Chamberlin, ROG - Fatal; SGT Edward O. Boucher, AG - Fatal; SGT Olsolo Galindo, Jr., AG - Fatal.

And from a/c #42-7657: 2Lt. Charles L. Brown, Pilot - Fatal; 2Lt. Clyde H. Frye, Copilot - Fatal; F/O Archille P. Augelli, Bombardier - Fatal; SGT William C. Wilson, AEG - Fatal; SGT Albert R. Mogavero, AAEG - Fatal; PFC Andrew G. Bivona, ROG - Fatal; SGT Arthur O. Doria, AAEG - Fatal; SGT Eugene A. Hubbell, AG - Fatal.

Included in the 'Accident Report' were 'Statement of witness.' One reads thusly:

I, Mrs. Fred Kubicek, Milligan, Nebraska, being duly sworn depose and says that on the afternoon of October 25, 1943 at approximately 4:30 P.M. I was in my house when I heard an explosion like thunder that shook the windows, I then rushed out

of the house and saw splinters of big chunks of metal sliding down at a steep angle. When the big pieces landed there was an explosion (this was apparently ship 42-7673). After this I saw another plane, Plane 42-7657 coming out of the clouds and moving north towards my farm. It seemed to be gliding silently. I watched it go over my straw pile on my field and then the nose dropped down and the ship went into a spin made about three turns in the spin then came out and dropped straight down and landed in my neighbor, Mike Stech's back yard. Then there was a explosion followed by black smoke and then flames started to spread all over.



**Kay Williams Staubach and Daughter, Karen Williams Edelmann, Visit Crash Site And Lay Memorial Flowers
(Photo by Rebecca Svec / Lincoln Journal Star)**

This tragedy was the second to befall the 451st while in training. Fifteen days previous, 10 October 1943, a/c #41-29181 piloted by 2Lt Cecil C. Burr, 726th [Accident Report 44-10-10-4] encountered some form of structural failure while on a high altitude practice bombing mission. A/c crashed near



**Kay Views Artifacts At Fillmore County Museum
(Photo by Dave Carew / Hastings Tribune)**

Wayne, Nebraska taking crew of six to their demise.

They were:
2Lt Cecil C. Burr, Pilot - Fatal; 2Lt William E. Harnish, Copilot - Fatal; 2Lt Melacio M. Apodaca, Bombardier - Fatal; SGT Wilfred F. Wood, AEG - Fatal; SGT Paul Zukowski, ROG - Fatal; S/SGT Alfred C. Dublin, AG - Fatal.



**Mother & Daughter Share Precious Moments At Museum
(Photo by Dave Carew / Hastings Tribune)**

This incident was written up in Issue 31 [Summer/Fall 1999] to commemorate the placing of a permanent stone marker at Wayne, NE, denoting that tragedy.

These two disastrous training missions have almost been forgotten by those not immediately involved. It took Kay Williams Staubach and daughter, Karen Edelmann, to bring it back into focus with their memorable trip back to the place where it happened. That, and the write-ups received from the Hastings Tribune and the Lincoln Journal Star really fleshed out the story.

Since first making contact with Kay and Karen, I have had the pleasure to bring Roger McCollester and Karen together to discuss the happenings of that day/mission. I'm sure that Roger gave Karen a much more in-depth overview of the circumstances that took place that day, moreso than any written record could.

From 10 October 1943, when the 451st suffered its first losses, until 25 April 1945 when it recorded its last, the 451st lost a total of 425 airmen. Many were laid to rest 'over there,' while many more were brought back home and buried nearby to family and relatives. I still continue to search for burial plots for those remains that were returned at the request of the family.

"LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON (Continued 13th Installment by Dr. Royal C. Gilkey)

The next day, 18 September 1944, the Squadron mounted another escort mission to Hungary. More specifically, our P-38s were to furnish close escort to the rear of the formation of heavy B-24 bombers from the 55th Wing, protecting them over the target, which was a north-south railroad bridge at Budapest, and shielding their withdrawal. Taking off at 0800 hours (8 a.m.), 13 of our P-38s headed for a rendezvous over Yugoslavia. Two "Lightnings" experienced mechanical difficulties and were forced to return early from the mission. The other 11 made rendezvous at 44°30'N 16°30'E, the time being 0940 hours (9:40 a.m.) and the altitude, 19,000 feet. From 25,000 feet, our pilots saw the target below them at 1100 hours (11 a.m.). they escorted the bombers to the fringes of the Hungarian capital and, to avoid flak, left them momentarily, intending to pick them up later as they emerged from their bomb run; but the "Big Brothers" were not to be found, so our fighters stayed around in the general target area flying at 25,000 feet for 30 minutes. They then left in the hope of picking up the bombers en route home. That didn't work out either. Although they saw-sawed back and forth, our P-38s never located the heavies and finally returned along the briefed course, crossing Yugoslavia's coast at 43°44'N 15°56'E and flying directly to base from there. All eleven pilots landed on their home runway at 1305 hours (1:05 p.m.) and received sortie credit. As observations, the pilots were unable to see any bomb hits on the target. East of the targeted railway bridge, they did notice oil smoke spreading over the area. Budapest's defenders sent up heavy barrage-type flak, but no bombers were observed to have been lost. On an airdrome just south of Czegled (47°09'N 19°48'E) were seen a large transport believed to be an Me 323 and five other single-engine

enemy aircraft. They were sighted from 26,000 feet at approximately 1050 hours (10:50 a.m.). The weather was CAVU throughout the mission. The eleven pilots who had completed the mission got sortie credit. The two early returns received none. One pilot who had started late could not catch the formation and so came back with nothing to show for it.

A mission, that was on tap the next day, 19 September 1944 was called off and a "stand-down" declared. The cancellation meant there would be no operational flying. Instead of the usual bustle, quiet seemed to be the watchword of the day. Routine duties were performed. It was a kind of lackluster interim, except for the showing of a film billed as "The Phantom Lady," starring Ella Rains (with Franchot Tone and Alan Curtis) at the post theater. Movies were the one thing enabling the soldiers to throw off the war for a little while. They offered a distracting relief from the fighting going on every day. Some films shown at the Post Theater were better than others, but all offered a diversion that was valuable in itself.

On September 20, 1944, there occurred a significant formal change in the Intelligence Section. An entry in the Squadron diary on that date announced that " 2nd Lt. Royal C. Gilkey replaced Captain Howard F. Wilson as Squadron S-2 Officer." This meant that the total responsibility for the handling of intelligence matters in the 49th Fighter Squadron would fall upon Lt. Gilkey's shoulders. He had had through training for this because of his experienced predecessor's valuable example in handling the chores of combat air intelligence. Captain Wilson had been with the 49th Fighter Squadron as its Intelligence Officer from the days of the "Torch" landings in northwestern Africa on 8 November 1942, gaining experience in the requirements



Wartime Insigne of the 49th Fighter Squadron

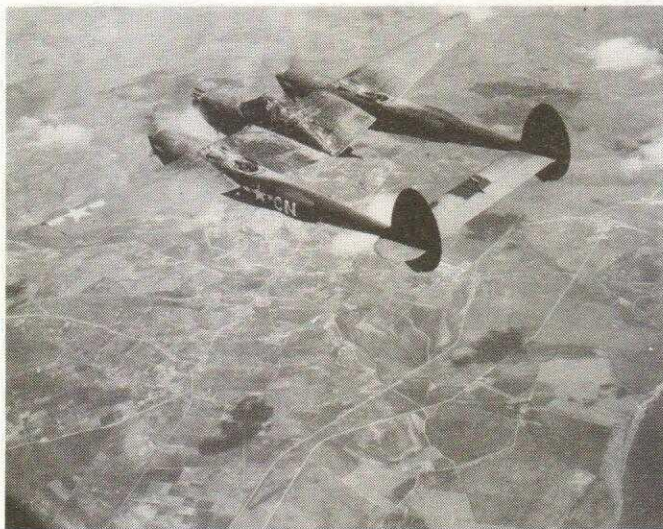
of combat aviation throughout the Algerian and Tunisian campaigns. He continues as Squadron S-2 while Allied forces invaded Sicily (10 July 1943) and then Italy (3 September). The invasion of Southern France (called "Operation Anvil/Dragoon") that was launched in mid-August (15 August) 1944 found him engaged in air intelligence during the forays by our fighters from the island of Corsica (Corse). In all this, he became a veteran of combat air intelligence. It was the good fortune of the young officer who succeeded him to have absorbed the necessary skills from his chief by the time of his elevation from an Assistant S-2 to the Squadron's I.O.. The ease of Lt. Gilkey's transition to the top of the line in Squadron Intelligence must be attributed to months of service with Captain Wilson as his dedicated assistant. His goal was to do his master credit by following in his footsteps, avoiding all pitfalls in the process.

The Squadron's mission on September 20, 1944 entailed escorting six Groups of the 5th Wing's heavy B-17 bombers to Hungary's capital Budapest where the objective was to destroy the city's railroad bridges. The fighters' assignment was to provide general escort on penetration to the target, protection during operations over it, and cover in withdrawal. The Squadron sent 18 P-38s aloft at 1025 hours (10:25 a.m.).

Three returned early because of mechanical difficulties. Flying second in the Group, 15 "Hangmen" reached the target area at 1250 hours. (12:50 p.m.) at an altitude of 27,000 feet. At 1300 hours (1 p.m.), they withdrew, their altitude then being 26,000 feet. In general, our flyers adhered to the briefed route, but diverged from it at $47^{\circ}15'N$ $17^{\circ}37'E$ in the target's direction. Thence, the P-38s flew along the southern outskirts of Budapest and picked up the bombers on their withdrawal from the city at $47^{\circ}14'N$ $19^{\circ}20'E$. The return route was

generally followed, but the fighters left the bombers at $43^{\circ}48'N$ $16^{\circ}12'E$ over Yugoslavia's Dalmation Coast and headed home. All 15 landed at 1500 hours (3 p.m.).

With reference to the bombers, here's what happened. They arrived early at the rendezvous point, so our pilots could not locate them until the bombers were withdrawing from the target area. The fighters picked them up at 1305 hours (1:05 p.m) while flying at 27,000 feet over a place designated by coordinates $47^{\circ}14'N$ $19^{\circ}20'E$. From there, they stuck with the bombers to a point of departure west of the course at $43^{\circ}48'N$ $16^{\circ}12'E$. Departure occurred at 1405 hours, the altitude being 23,000 feet. The bomber formation was good but scattered at times. No aerial resistance was encountered, but the defenders of Budapest threw up plenty of (barrage-type) flak. Also, flak arose from Szekesfehervar ($47^{\circ}14'N$ $18^{\circ}25'E$) and Zalezanto ($46^{\circ}54'N$



"LITTLE FRIEND' OVER TARGET AREA

$17^{\circ}13'E$). At 1230 hours (12:30 p.m.), our pilots saw fire mixed with black smoke arising over Gyor ($47^{\circ}42'N$ $17^{\circ}38'E$). From 19,000 feet, flames were seen at a town on Zolta Island ($43^{\circ}24'N$ $16^{\circ}16'E$). A bomber called about being on one engine at 9,000 feet over $46^{\circ}47'N$ $19^{\circ}00'E$ and on a 280 degree heading, causing fighter assistance to be dispatched. Another bomber was experiencing trouble. It was a B-17, one of

whose engines had cut out 9,000 feet over $46^{\circ}47'N$ $19^{\circ}00'E$ at 1310 hours (1:10 p.m.). Despite its being a CAVU over the target, our pilots found themselves unable to report on the results of the bombing, except to say they noticed black smoke arising over north and south Budapest. All who completed the mission (including a couple of spares) received sortie credit. The narrative mission report bore Royal C. Gilkey's signature over "ROYAL C. GILKEY, 2nd Lt., A.C., Squadron S-2." It pleased him to see this because of realization that at last he

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

was a full-fledged Squadron Intelligence Officer.

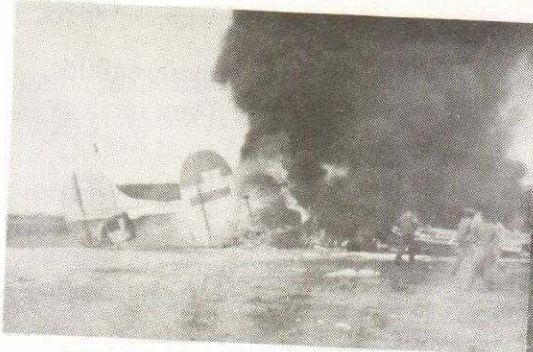
The next day's mission was to give close escort to the two leading Groups of the 304th Wing heavy B-24 bombers during their penetration to the target--this time the Tisza railroad bridges in Hungary; to cover the bombing itself; and to protect subsequent withdrawal. Accordingly, on 21 September 1944, 17 Squadron P-38s took to the air at 0919 hours (9:19 a.m.). Two had to return early. The other 15 reached the target area at 1130 hours (11:30 a.m.), their altitude being 21,000 feet. They were unable to locate the bombers in the target area. This caused them to turn, so as to pick them up at 47°30'N 22°20'E. From there, they provided escort for the heavies flying on the return-route as briefed. This calls for more detail to gain understanding. It was at 1146 hours (11:46 a.m.) that the fighters, flying at 22,000 feet, picked up the bombers, the place being 46°30'N 22°20'E. At the briefed rendezvous point, the P-38s were unable to make contact with the bombers, which were contacted only as they were returning from the bombing. The "Lightnings" then escorted the heavies to a point near Mljet Island (4241N 1742E), their altitude being 6,000 feet and the time 1346 hours (1:46 p.m.). The Squadron's P-38s then returned to base, landing at 1422 hours (2:22 p.m.). When in the target area from 1130--1135 hours (11:30--35 a.m.), our pilots saw a span of one of the bridges knocked out by bombs. The approach to another bridge was also hit. Over the target area, barrage-type flak was encountered; and at Szolnok (47°10'N 20°11'E), southeast of Budapest, anti-aircraft guns were firing. Bombing on the Danube was apparent from smoke over Novi Sad (45°15'N 19°50'E) observed from an altitude of 16,000 feet at approximately 1100 hours (11 a.m.). That was west of the Tisza River, whose confluence with the Danube occurred downriver from Belgrade (Beograd). The 15 fliers who completed the approximately 1,050-mile mission received sortie credit, for which the pair of early returns did not qualify. Colonel Daniel S. Campbell (San Antonio, Texas) led both the Squadron and Group, bringing the "Hangman" contingent back to base without loss.

On September 22, 1944, the Squadron's pilots flew another long mission to Munich (Muchen) in southern Germany. This time their position in the Group was last. Their job was to fly top cover for other P-38s dispensing chaff for the 55th Wing

bombers out to attack buildings at Obersiesenfeld within Munich's industrial complex. They rendezvoused 18,000 feet over the Adriatic Sea at 44°28'N 13°50'E, the time being 1045 hours (10:45 a.m.). Our pilots (minus three early returns -- two because of mechanical trouble and one as an escort) accompanied the bombers all the way to the target. Flying at 29,000 feet, they reached the target area at 1245 hours (12:45 p.m.) and remained over it for five minutes, exiting at 1250 hours (12:50 p.m.) 30,000 feet up. Just south of the target area (48°02'N 11°27'E), the P-38s took their departure from the bombers at 1255 hours (12:55 p.m.) and headed homeward. The Squadron's 14 P-38s reached base, touching down at 1448 hours (2:48 p.m.) after a long 1,100-mile mission. As to the bombing results, our pilots reported a cloud of brown smoke from the direction of the target. Unfortunately, 7/10s cloud cover with tops estimated at 10,000 feet obscured vision over the target, rendering impossible clear observation.

Without enemy air resistance, the biggest source of concern was flak. Over the target area, there was plenty of it. The P-38s encountered more of it over northeast Italy at 45°48'N 12°14'E. Other observations were made by the pilots. A white ship was seen steaming eastward in the Gulf of Venice (at 45°32'N 12°45'E). Two stacks on the ship were emitting smoke. From 19,000 feet, the pilots made the sighting at 1110 hours (11:10 a.m.). Though no red crosses could be seen on the vessel, the pilots thought it might be a hospital ship. What looked like dust caused by bomb-bursts was spotted from 19,000 feet at 1120 hours (11:20 a.m.), the coordinates being 45°48'N 12°14'E. There were smoke-screens over Traunstein (47°53'N 12°39'E) as well as in the target area at noontime. Radio security was good. In fact, there was no radio contact with the bombers. The 14 Squadron pilots who completed the 1,100-mile mission received sortie credit. Those down early did not. With no enemy aircraft to contend with and only moderate flak, the returning pilots were in good spirits.

(Editor ... It should be noted that the escort missions, as narrated by Dr. Gilkey, that took place from 10 September 1944 to 22 September 1944 did not involve any of the 49th Wing [451st, 461st & 484th Bomb Groups]. From 10 September until 22



461st Bomb Group A/C Fire At Bron Airdrome



'Gang Bang' Busted Wing



Busted P-47 After Collision

September we were engaged in flying eight Supply Missions to the Bron Airdrome, Lyon, France in support of General Patton's Third Army. For our Group, these were Missions #119 to Mission #126. Although it was considered a non-hazardous effort to fly into Southern

France during that phase of the war, several aircraft were lost by the Wing. The 461st lost at least one on the ground at Lyon, due to fire. The 451st lost one due to ground-collision with a P-47 that was attempting to take-off down wind.)

WHERE IS THE MOP ON THE B-24

(Tune - "Who Broke The Lock On The Henhouse Door")

In this school, we must know
All about planes
And what makes them go.
But there's one thing we don't know,
Where they keep the mop on the B-24.

(CHORUS)

*Where is the mop!
I don't know.
I've looked high, and I've looked low,
Still there's one thing we don't know.
Where the hell's the mop on the B-24.*

We mop the barracks.
We mop through a phase.
We mop latrines 'till we're in a daze.
Still there's one thing we don't know,
Where they keep the mop on the B-24.

(CHORUS)

They have supercharger buckets
And prop wash too,
Generator brushes for the whole darn crew,
Automatic pilots and bomb bay doors,
But we can't find the mop on the B-24.

(CHORUS)

Roll down your sleeves,
Pull down your cap,
We won't ever fight the Jap.
For when the battle begins to roar,
We'll be looking for the mop on the B-24.

(CHORUS)

The Pilot bailed out,
The Copilot too.
The Gunners took a powder,
And so would you.
But there sat the Engineer on the floor,
Still looking for the mop on the B-24.

(CHORUS)

I've asked the instructor,
They don't know.
I've even looked it up on the big T.O.
I've looked everywhere,
But I'll look some more.
'Cause there has to be a mop on the B-24.

(CHORUS)

By PFC Julius Engram Class 19 -- May 1943
Kessler Field, MS ?



CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

JUST TRYING TO HELP

As I've told you before ... I get requests for information about our Group. It comes, either in the form of regular mail, or over the Internet in the form of e.mail. And it runs the spectrum from 'seeking personnel' to 'clarifying incidents.'

My most recent, and most poignant, came from a Mrs. Marie B. Elder, via the US postal system. It concerned the activities of a Sergeant David C. Messer who came into the 724th Squadron sometime prior to October 1944 as a replacement, probably as a gunner as that was his MOS.

Mrs. Elder writes: Sgt. David C. Messer - 14165959 - born 26 February, 1924 in Erwin, NC. He joined the Army Air Force 28 October 1942, at age 18. He was with the 466th Bomb Group, 785th Bomb Squadron in Alamogordo, NM, before he was sent overseas to Norwich, England. There, he was stationed at Attlebridge. He received his Air Medal 18 April 1944. On 8 May, his pilot, Lt. Musgrave, was killed on a training mission with the PFF system. The enlisted men did not go on that mission. David was a Ball Turret Gunner. Some time after that the remaining crew was transferred to the 44th Bomb Group, 66th Bomb Squadron at Shipham, England. I have been told that he flew only two missions there. On 23 October 1944 I received a letter from David saying that he was in Italy--station "Castelluccio." He was there until the end of the war.

It was two years ago I found out that David had died in a B-36 Bomber that crashed and burned on 25 May 1955 near Midland, TX. At that time he was stationed in Roswell, NM.

David had a daughter, who was six at the time of his death. She contacted me seeking information on her father. She was never told anything about her dad. Since then I have been trying to help her in any way I can. Most everyone who could have been of help has passed away. We sure would appreciate any help. We would like to know about possible missions, any medals, was he ever wounded, his job

- if he wasn't flying any more. Just anything, about her dad, his daughter would like to know.

(Signed) Marie Elder

Since receiving this letter I have scanned every Shipping Order that you guys have sent me. Nowhere could I find the name of 'David Messer.' So ... As in the case of Ralph H. Lyle (Check this issue for 'Short-Bursts and Hang-Fire' - response contributed by Robert L. Reid) I'm reaching out to you guys to fill me in on what I don't have. There must be some 724th crewmates / tentmate that can recall David Messer. It would really be nice to put closure to this haunting question.

ANOTHER HAUNTING DILEMMA

Sad news about the 15th Air Force Association. With their most recent issue of their newsletter; SORTIE, the word is that they are shutting down for lack of, or declining, membership. Sad indeed to see some of our brotherhood organizations pulling the plug. Plans are, for the 15th AF Association, to function until the end of 2004 before they completely, and formally, disband.

Reading this in their 'SORTIE,' caused me to reflect on our own 49th Wing postwar makeup. We, the 451st, started up on 1978, incorporated in 1979 and have been relatively active ever since.

The 484th, under management of Sigmund 'Bud' Markel, started up a couple years after us and included the 461st within their original charter. Now the 484th has also folded its wings and has basically dissolved their charter. Though, I must admit it's hard to put down a bunch of dedicated ol' warriors, and some are still carrying on under the leadership of a dedicated offspring [A Dick Olson from Westminster, CO], son of one of it's current members.

Later, from the basis of the 484th/461st connection, the 461st spun-off as a separate entity and were/are presided over by Frank O'Bannon.

I've also heard of other Groups, such as the Bombardiers, Inc., 'slipping the bonds of actuality,' but I have been more concerned with us -- those of us from within the 49th Wing. At one time I even

sought out 49th Wing Headquarters personnel [out of Bari, Italy] on the Internet, but with minimal results.

I have to imagine by now you're wondering if I'm going to tell you that we're doing the same; pulling the plug. As far as I'm concerned, the answer is NO! With your patience, approval and support [funding and stories], I'll stick around so we [as the last two survivors of the 451st] share that proverbial "The Last Man Bottle Of Brandy. You name the place - I'll be there!

BUT; ON THE OTHER HAND

Though we may bemoan our fate, as vanishing airmen from the past, there is an element out there that won't let our efforts and sacrifices be forgotten. That element is the committee for setting up an 'Air Force Memorial Foundation.' What I gleaned from the Internet reads like this:

The Air Force Memorial will honor the millions of patriotic men and women who distinguished themselves in the United States Air Force and its predecessors, such as the Army Air Corps. The Memorial will be constructed on a promontory overlooking the Pentagon, and includes three stainless steel spires that soar skyward. The key element of the Memorial include a "runway to glory," inscription walls, an Honor Guard sculpture, and an open glass Chamber of Contemplation, all landscaped to create a memorial park and parade ground

overlooking the nation's capital.

Congressional legislation signed in 2001 allowed for location of the Memorial at the current site. Plans call for ground breaking to begin in the latter part of 2004 and construction to be completed in 2006.

This Memorial will:

**** Recognize the aviation pioneers of yesterday.

**** Serve as a tribute and source of pride for those serving their Country today.

**** Help inspire future generations to serve the nation proudly in the Air Force "blue."

**** Ensure that the airpower lessons of the 20th Century and beyond are not forgotten.

As is the case with many of these projects, funding from the general public is welcomed. Many large corporations, and wealthy personages have already signed on. Me, not being of the latter, did make a modest contribution and in return received handsome lucite memento and embossed membership card [credit card size] with membership number inscribed.

For those wishing to know more .. their address is:

Air Force Memorial Foundation 1501 Lee Highway Arlington, VA 22209-1109 Ph. 703.247-5808
E-mail: afmf@airforcememorial.org

15th Air Force Veterans Here for Reassignment

(Transcribed From The Dow Field, Bangor, Maine Paper)

Fifteenth Air Force veterans of campaigns in Africa and Italy are being processed at Dow Field this week for transfer to U.S. bases of the North Atlantic Division. A majority of these members of the 451st Bomb Group and 525th Air Service Group wear ten battle stars on their ETO ribbons and have been awarded three Distinguished Unit Badges for their part in flattening Ploesti, in Romania; Markersdorf, in Austria, and Regensburg, in Germany, and posses numerous other decorations.

About 2,000 officers and men of the Groups will be processed here for assignment to Dow, Presque Isle, Grenier, LaGuardia, and Washington National Airport--all NAD bases.

The first shipments of men arrived here in two troop trains Saturday, boarded at Ft. Dix, N.J., following their rotation leaves.

Elaborate preparations have been made on the main base and in the Union Street area so that an individual can be processed in a week. Classification is being

handled by an NAD Headquarters team, here from Manchester. The Personal Affairs office and Information and Education office of Dow are handling details coming under their functions.

While here, the Groups will operate as units, handling their own administration. Facilities on the main base are open to them, with shuttle buses connecting the two locations. The men received passes, and buses to town directly to their area.

Acting in command of the Staging Area is Pacific-ETO veteran Col. LeRoy Stefanowicz, CO of the 451st Bomb Group.

Col. Stefanowicz is an old-timer at combat flying, with 15 months in the Pacific, including Fiji and Guadalcanal and 16 1/2 months in the European Theater of Operations.

The following reassignments to the five ATC bases. 15th Air Force veterans eligible for discharge will be released under quotas allowed the North Atlantic Division.

OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

REPORTED SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Branecki, William A., 727th - 15 January 2002
 Carty, Lafayette M., 726th - January 1988
 Catalano, Alfred F., 626th - 17 November 2002
 Christensen, Gates P., 724th - 18 October 2003
 Clark, Andrew G., 724th - 29 December 2003
 Conti, George, 727th - 29 March 1996
 Coyle, James J., 724th - 3 October 2002
 Drumm, James E., 724th - 25 October 2003
 Fox, Roger T., 727th - 5 October 2003
 Givens, William R., 726th - 3 September 2003
 Gunnell, Alan K., 726th - May 2003
 Hardaway, Morton W., 724th - 3 April 2003
 Harvey, Lawrence M., 726th - 25 October 2003
 Hoptay, Michael L., 726th - 22 February 2004
 Ikerd, Edard L., 727th - 15 May 2003
 Keilman, Jerome H., 727th - 9 December 2003
 Keller, Archie F., 724th - 28 December 2003
 Moore, Hugh M., 727th - 4 October 2002
 Morse, Llewellyn D., 726th - 7 November 2003
 Moser, Ray G., 726th - 16 December 2003
 Peterson, Orville L., 725th - 9 July 2003
 Piirainen, Archie, 727th - 12 January 2004
 Plude, Thomas M., 726th - 3 August 2003
 Reeves, James, 26 February 2003
 Reizner, Raymond R., 60th - 20 October 2003
 Richardson, Sidney N., 725th - 18 November 2002
 Rossi, David J., 726th - 28 October 1993
 Schaidt, William F., 725th - 8 August 2002
 Schauer, Clarence H., 727th - 23 December 2003
 Smith, Russell E., 725th - 6 July 2003
 Young, Kendall S., 727th - 19 February 2002

SPECIAL MEMORIAL TRIBUTE OFFERED IN THE NAME OF:

Crew #49, 726th - William Slater, Eugene Stevens, Edward Tormey, Laverne Stout, Jim Clynes - From Harold Bennett
 Gates P. Christensen, 724th - From Eugene Olenik
 James J. Coyle, 724th - From Robert Carringer
 Arthur J. Barker, 727th - From Ora 'Pete' Arnold
 Robert E. Barnd, 726th - From Wife, Marion
 Walter J. Flannelly, 724th - From Son, Robert & Family
 William D. Fry, 726th - From Donald Walker
 Arthur L. Gallagher, 726th - From Sedgfield Hill
 Paul G. Johnshoy, 724th - Wesley Nelson
 Paul G. Johnshoy, 724th - From Alan Wolfley
 Verne G. Johnson, 724th - From Dau. Kay Kasprzak
 Maurice R. Kelly, KIA, 725th - From Robert Barmore
 James J. McAuvic, 725th - From Harry Fomalczyk
 William Mattes III, 725th - From Walter Cienski
 David C. Messer, 724th - From Marie Elder
 Lew Morse, 726th - From Lyle 'Pat' Kleine
 Thomas M. Plude, 726th - From Harry Rohde
 James Reeves, 725th - From Harry Fomalczyk
 William C. Slater, 726th - From Wesley Rink
 William C. Slater, 726th - From Winson Jones
 Edward H. Stresky Crew, 727th - From Ora 'Pete' Arnold
 Robert L. Taylor, 726th - From Wesley Rink
 Harry T. Waite, 727th - From Donald Schaffner
 Henry Zoldowski, 724th - From Perry Davie

---x--x--0--x--x---

REMEMBER

A donation of \$50 or more to the 451st Bomb Group in the memory of a deceased comrade (or Family member), as an alternative to flowers and other memorials, is an option for all members to consider.

CEREMONIAL FOLDING OF THE FLAG

Have you ever been present at a very formal military burial of a US veteran and wondered about the 'Folding of the Flag' ceremony? There is a significance to the folding, after removal from the casket, prior to presentation to the family.

This ceremony was dutifully and beautifully performed by the 'Eagle Elite Drill Team' when we held our Y2000 reunion in St. Louis. But to listen to the solemn cadence of the wording and the progression of the thirteen folds can easily escape you; Thus I'd like to offer you the wording in printed form.

But first off; Did you know that at military funerals, the 21-gun salute stands for the sum of the numbers in the year 1776?

FLAG FOLDING CEREMONY

The flag is the symbol of our national unity, our national endeavor and our national aspiration. The flag tells us of the struggle for independence, of union preserved, of liberty and union, one and inseparable, of the sacrifices of brave men and women to whom the ideals and honor of this nation have been dearer than life.

The first fold of our flag is a symbol of life.

The second fold is a symbol of our belief in the eternal life.

The third fold is made in honor and remembrance of the veteran departing our ranks, who gave a portion of his/her life for the defense of our country to attain a peace throughout the world.

The fourth fold represents our weaker nature, for as American citizens trusting in God, it is to Him we turn in times of peace as well as in times of war for His divine guidance.

The fifth fold is a tribute to our country; in the words of Stephen Decatur, "Our country, in dealing with other countries, may she always be right; but still our country, right or wrong.

The sixth fold is for where our hearts lie. It is with our heart that we pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

The seventh fold is a tribute to our Armed

Forces, for it is through the Armed Forces that we protect our country and our flag against all her enemies, whether they are found within, or without the boundaries of our republic.

The eighth fold is a tribute to the one who entered into the valley of the shadow of death, that we might see the light of day, and to honor mother, for whom the flag flies on Mother's Day.

The ninth fold is a tribute to womanhood; for it has been through their faith, love, loyalty and devotion that the character of the men and women who have made this country great have been molded.

The tenth fold is a tribute to the father, for he too, has given his sons and daughters for the defense of our country since they were first born.

The eleventh fold in the eyes of a Hebrew citizen, represents the lower portion of the seal of King David and King Solomon, and glorifies, in their eyes, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The twelfth fold in the eyes of Christian citizens represents and emblem of eternity and glorifies, in their eyes, the trinity of God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

The thirteenth fold, when the flag is completely folded, the stars are uppermost, reminding us of our national motto, "In God We Trust." After the flag is completely folded and tucked in, it takes the appearance of a cocked hat, ever reminding us of the soldiers who served under General George Washington, and the sailors and marines who served under Captain John Paul Jones, who were followed by their comrades and shipmates in the Armed Forces of the United States, preserving for us the rights, privileges and freedoms we enjoy today.

There are some traditions and ways of doing things that have deep meaning. In the future, you'll see flags folded and now you will know why.



A PAGE FROM 2LT. WILLIAM R. "BOB" GIVENS' DIARY

Several years back I received, from 'Bob' Givens, the following diary of his experiences related to the December 26, 1944 Oswiecim Mission into Poland. I held-back on publishing it for lack of a picture. But, as I made plans to put his story into the Ad Lib, I called his home to request a picture of himself at that time in his life. Sad to say, Bob had passed away on September 3, 2003. In speaking to his wife, Ida, she volunteered to send me a photo that I could use. Thanks to the kindness of the family, we see the 20 year old 726th Navigator as he was back then.



2nd Lt. William R. 'Bob' Givens

2Lt. William R. 'Bob' Givens' Diary

726th Bomb Squadron, 451st Bomb Group (H),
APO 520, New York, New York

December 17, 1944

Joined the 726th Bomb Sqdn today. It is located at an airfield close to Foggia, Italy. We sleep in tents. Our tent is in bad shape.

December 24, 1944

Have been working on our tent the past week. It shows some improvement. Went to church today. Enjoyed the Christmas Carols.

December 25, 1944

It doesn't seem like Christmas. We worked on the tent all day. My name is on the Board to fly a combat mission tomorrow. I talked to the Sqdn Navigator and told him I did not have any maps. He said I wouldn't need any maps. We would be flying Number Three in formation and would follow the lead plane.

December 26, 1944

Took off at 0755 hours in plane Number 47 with pilot 1Lt. Edward Nall. Bombed Standard Oil Refinery in Oswiecim, Poland. Dropped our bombs

as 1224 hours. We were hit by flak at 1324 hours. Our plane (position 3 and plane in position 5) out of the seven in the formation were hit hard. The Germans had moved anti-aircraft guns on flat-bed rail cars to new, unmapped locations. Our number 1 and 2 engines were knocked out by flak. Our Bombardier, 2Lt. Walter Tuchscherer, bailed out first from the nose position. I bailed out second, at 6,000 feet at 1352 hours. I landed 15 miles east of Balaton Lake in Hungary. I landed in a frozen farm field and was knocked out by the hard landing. When I came to, I hid my parachute. I heard

farm animals in the distance and walked towards the sound. In 20 minutes I came to a farm yard where Walt had landed in a tree. He had broken his ankle when he landed in a tree. Cpl. George Ahrens, our Radio Operator, walked into the yard after I arrived. Russians came to the farm, took our .45 pistols and interrogated us. After we convinced them we were Americans, they took us to Mezoszilas where we spent the night in a Hungarian home.

December 27, 1944

Did nothing until 1800 hours. Russians took us on two ox carts to Tamasi. It took us until 0200 hours to get there. It was a cold and rough ride. It was especially hard and painful for Walt. We slept until 0600 hours of the 28th in a private home.

December 28, 1944

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

December 29, 1944

Walked 20 km and rode the last 5 km to Simon-

tornya. They set Walt's ankle. We had a nice place to stay, Hungarian private home, with good food. Walt didn't want me to leave him. He was in a large barracks with Russian soldiers, both men and women.

December 31, 1944

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

January 1, 1945

The rest of the crew came to Somontornya. They had been staying with a Catholic Priest.

January 3, 1945

Russians take Walt to Szekzard to hospital.

January 6, 1945

We leave Simontornya by truck. Crossed the blue Danube River on a barge and rode truck to Kunzentmiklos. The Danube River is not blue, but dirty brown.

January 7, 1944

Rode in boxcars to Kecskemet. We thought we were on a train to Bucharest, Romania, but found out it was going to Budapest, Hungary. We got off the boxcar fast. We spent the night there.

January 8, 1945

Had a good turkey dinner and spent another night in Kecskemet. We met an Englishman, his wife and son.

January 9, 1945

Rode passenger train to Szeged. Averaged 7 miles per hour. Good food there. Slept in hotel. Really good bed. Ate a good turkey dinner for 35 cents.

January 10, 1945

Ate ham, eggs and pancakes for 35 cents. Rode truck to Timisoara, Romania. It was a long cold ride. Slept in private homes. Romania is better off than Hungary.

January 11, 1945

We start another long slow train ride.

January 12, 1945

We arrive in Turna Severin, Romania. It has really been bombed.

January 13, 1945

We arrive in Craiova, Romania at 0400 hour. Went to Romania police who put us in private homes to sleep. We get up at 1030 hour and go to

town to eat steak dinner.

January 14, 1945

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

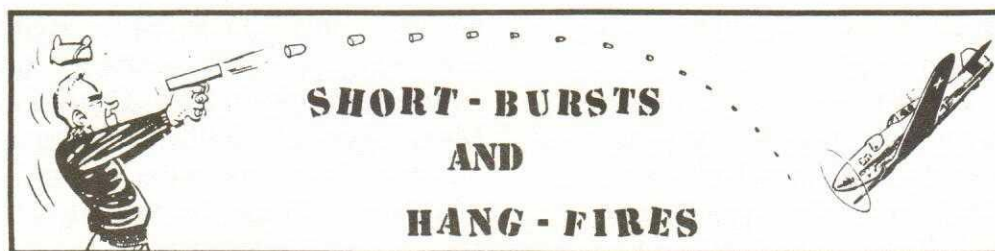
We meet about 300 other U.S. airmen in Bucharest who had also been shot down. In separate groups we flew in cargo planes to Bari, Italy. We were interrogated, deloused and issued new clothes before going back to the 726th Squadron at Castelluccio.

A little background on the crews that Bob Givens was associated with: The original crew that Bob came overseas with are listed as follows: Quintus C. Ruetz, Pilot - Deceased; John H. McKibbon, Copilot; William R. Givens, Navigator - Deceased; William R. Ritter, Bombardier; William J. Kryl, AEG; Bert B. Ordenstien, ROG [aka Orden]; Joseph Z. Kuryloski, AG - Deceased; Charles M. Strobe, AG; Joseph W. Lucas, AG - Deceased; Daniel P. Dobay, AG - Deceased.

The crew that he evaded with were: Edward E.D. Nall, Pilot - Deceased; Elvin L. Sims, Copilot - Deceased; William R. Givens, Navigator - Deceased; Walter A. Tuchscherer, Bombardier; Lawrence O. Broadwater, AEG; Vincent P. Hanley, ROG; Kenje Ogata, AG; George W. Ahrens, AG; James P. Locke, AG; Richard L. Sanderson, Cameraman

I take special interest in this 9 hour mission as we [Captain Henry G. Rollins crew] flew deputy lead for the 724th Squadron. Due to the intensity of the 200 anti-aircraft guns pointing at us, we absorbed over 100 holes in our ship, knocking out a major part of our hydraulic system. The lead a/c was hit so hard that it aborted into Russia with Captain Stanley Jackson, Pilot [left seat] and Major Douglas Sanford [Sqdn CO - flying right seat]. I have it in my journal that on our return we circled Castelluccio Air Field for more than a half hour so we could make a 'no-brake' landing. Everyone, that could, made a mad dash to the tail section so it would scrub the ground and slow the plane down.

That was a more-than-memorable mission to those that took part in it.



**Robert L. Reid, 725th [CHIEF CLERK:
ORDERLY ROOM]**

RE: Sgt. Ralph H. Lyle

Sgt. Lyle reported to me as a 501 clerk at the 725th Squadron in Italy. He was a former mortician and civilian pilot from Colorado and wanted to "FLY." His age of "40" deterred him from A/c flight training, but after constantly requesting flying I persuaded T/Sgt Obier, from Photo Section, to take Lyle under his wing so he could fly as a photographer.

During my vacation to Colorado in 1960 I was not able to locate him.

(Editor ... Thanks, Bob, for clearing up one of the questions posed in the last Ad Lib. Without being aware of Lyle's age, I was at a loss as to how he came into the Group. Apart from being a 'pack rat' when it came to bring home some 190 prints from the Photo Lab, he was also one of the replacement Clerks in your section.)

**Alan May, 727th [GUNNER: CLAREMONT
D. BROWNELL'S CREW]**

Regarding Dick Hayford's POW benefit article .. An affirmation of the VA's efforts towards reevaluating Ex-POWs. I was called to Philadelphia, tested and upped from 20% to 80% and now established as 100% disabled. A very welcome reevaluation.

We were shot down April 5th 1944 enroute to Ploesti. Lt. Brownell KIA. Ship was "Big Boober Girl," 727th Squadron. Six of us made it out before she blew up.

(Editor ... Glad to see you taking advantage of the POW benefits as laid out by Dick in the recent article. But as to the mission that put you in that predicament, perhaps our readers would like to know who survived and who didn't. The MACR shows that Pilot Claremont Brownell and Copilot Dale Smith didn't make it off the flight deck and Gunners Harry Noll and Harold Wahl didn't make it out of the waist section. The lucky ones were Navigator Robert Berg, Bombardier Samuel Cad-

wallader, Gunners Keith Westphal, Walard Harding, Harold Shireman and yourself. Of those we have accounted for, three are deceased; Sam Cadwallader, Harold Shireman and Walard Harding. Robert Berg has not, as yet, been located. You and Keith Westphal are the only two that are currently on our mailing list.)

**Lewis H. Williams, 727th [PILOT: AIR-
CRAFT COMMANDER]**

I've enclosed a little something for stamps, printing, etc. I had to chuckle when you said, in the recent Ad-Lib, that we were in the autumn of our years. I'm pushing 84. I think I am in the winter years.

I pulled my file of Ad-Libs to add volume 37 (I have them all) and I began to reminisce. I thought of all the people in the 451st that I had encountered over the years while on active duty.

First: while I was advisor to the Chilean Air Force in Santiago, Colonel Donald Jones (451st Group Headquarters) stopped by for a visit. He was in the Caribbean Air Command.

Second: When I attended school in Chanute Field, Illinois, my roommate was Bill Robins, Copilot on "Saint Peters Ferry," who was flying on my Wing when they were shot down on 5 April 1944. Later I met Bob Blaschke, Bombardier on "Saint Peters Ferry," at a POW meeting.

Later I had a B-52 Command in SAC and I went TDY to the Pentagon. There I ran into General Eaton, Leland Younkin and some Sergeants from the 451st. A friend of mine told me that "Eaton had half the 451st working for him."

While assigned to Turner AFB, one of the satellite units, the Base was commanded by my old Operations Officer (727th) Kendall Young (M/General).

While on duty in Omaha, SAC Headquarters, I visited a different kind of 451st. A Titan Missile Squadron. The Commander was a friend of mine. He showed me a plaque on the wall of his office commemorating the deeds of the 451st in WW-II.

He said they were proud of the designation.

Bob, you're doing a great job - Keep it up.

(Editor ... Thanks Colonel Williams [if I may be that formal], both for the donation and for the mentioning of the 451st contacts that you had since your hasty separation from the Group on 5 April 1944. Your a/c, "Jolly Rogers," took quite a beating that day over Ploesti. You lost (KIA) four of your crew that day. Since then three others have joined the High Flight. Now there's only three of you guys left to carry on the tradition of the 451st.)

**James H. Williams, 725th [NAVIGATOR:
ALBERT D. SHERMAN'S CREW]**

Once again you've published another fine edition of Ad Lib. It's enjoyable reading. Your description of the recent Fairmont reunion, 2003 version, was most interesting. I'm sorry I missed it. Even though I had no connection to the Fairmont experience, it is a part of history of this region of Nebraska, as well as the 451st Group.

On page 25 of this issue (37) of the Ad Lib is a picture of a crew labeled, "Believed to be the crew of Lt. Albert D. Sherman." Please remove any doubts, it is a picture of Al Sherman's crew -- and my crew. I'll identify the members for your information.



Kneeling, L to R: Sgt's Aldo Conti, Ball Gunner - Joseph Ladoue, Tail Gunner - Tommy Badgett, AEG & Upper Gunner - Edward Moore, Armorer & Nose Gunner - Fred Scherrer, Waist Gunner - Paul Lutane, ROG & Waist Gunner.

Standing, L to R: Lt.'s (Edward Lassiter - Did

not stay with the 451st. He received emergency leave shortly after the picture was taken and was replaced by Edward Blair, Copilot - NOT SHOWN) Myself, James H. Williams, Navigator - Albert Sherman, Pilot - Alvin Reise, Bombardier.

(Editor ... Thanks for clearing up the 'photo mystery' on the Sherman Crew.

The inclusion of the article from the Lincoln Journal Star on the pilgrimage of Mrs Kay Williams Staubach to visit the site of her late husband, Lt. James H. Williams, who was killed in the midair collision over Fairmont in October of 1943, helped me greatly in putting together what I presented on page 16.

John Dayton, 727th [COPILOT: ROBERT D. MACK'S CREW]

Your story regarding Ed Doherty's crew was really interesting. He flew in my Flight many times and was a very good pilot.

The Copilot, Jim Casperson was from my late wife's hometown of Iroquois, S. Dak. He was an interesting guy and I remember he had a pet dog over there, and when the dog got ill, he fed him a drug from the "pharmacy" that made him very dizzy. Nothing more pathetic than a dizzy dog.

(Editor ... Ah, such memories. Nothing like recalling a 'dizzy dog' from among all the other memories -- good and bad.)

John Hulser, 727th [GUNNER: WALTER D. ROSS' CREW]

Read the article on Ed Doherty in the last Ad Lib. He was our Pilot on our 1st mission. Our regular Pilot, Walter Ross, flew as Copilot. We were shot up quite badly by flak on this mission, but made it back to Vis. Ross was killed by flak. I met Ed at the Omaha reunion and I was sorry now to see he had passed away. Please excuse the hand writing, but arthritis had not been too friendly.

(Editor ... Indeed, that February 14, 1945 mission to Moosbierbaum was memorable in many ways. But, by that time Ed Doherty had already done the 'ditching bit' on November 20, 1944 and was truly a seasoned Pilot.

As an 'aside,' there's nothing wrong with that arthritic hand that writes the check, John. Along with all the rest of the guys that help keep these newsletters coming with donations and written memories ... I wholeheartedly thank you).

John Estabrooks, 725th [ROG: CAMERON PEARSON'S CREW]

I hope the enclosed donation helps a little with "our" publication. I keep in touch, to some extent, with the other two remaining members of my air crew, Cam Pearson and Bob Strang. They seem to be holding their own.

I recently spent some time around, and in, "The Dragon And His Tail," which flew into Pittsfield Airport (Mass.) for a few days. A lot of 451st people have made donations to maintain that plane, as seen by the names on the fuselage of the aircraft. It now seems to be more difficult to climb around in, than it once was.

(Editor ... Donation and comments were, are, and always will be, truly appreciated. Regarding the difficulty in getting around IN the aircraft. Remember the movie ... "Honey, I Shrunk The Kids." Well now we have to say ... "Hey Guys, They've Shrunk The plane.")

George Pavlakis, 724th [COPILOT: ROBERT A. NAGEL'S CREW]

I continue to enjoy the Ad Lib and have enclosed a check to help you in the fine work you are doing in memorializing the 451st.

I was a bit confused to read the account by Ernest Louvar in the last newsletter. I'm certain that Vail's crew was shot down while on a run over the submarine pens in Toulon France on one of our earliest missions.

I was the Copilot with Bob Nagel's crew flying off the left wing of the lead airplane .. Vail was off the right wing. We had dropped our bombs and were leaving the target when I saw Vail's aircraft get a direct hit by the anti-aircraft fire. The left wing broke off as it fell and no parachutes were sighted.

Is it possible that some of the crew survived? Verne Johnson and I discussed this several times during our reunions. If I am wrong, it would be nice to know what the true story is.

(Editor ... Where your confusion may stem from is that Copilot E. Louvar and Bombardier James E. Fleming were replaced on that mission by Major Theodore Willhite and Lt. Edward J. Antonik. Major Willhite out of Group and Lt. Antonik from Clifford Kester's [724th] crew. An extra Enlisted Man, Sgt Jack L. Beatty [probably a photographer], was also onboard .. making it a crew of 11. The MACR for that mission shows all were KIA. While visiting in France, some years ago, I visited their graves at the Rhone American Cemetery at Dra-

guignan, France.)

Donald Zemanek, 724th [GUNNER: JOHN O. WINDEN'S CREW]

I was happy to see the picture of Louie Lopez and Jimmy Ortega in your last issue of Ad-Lib. They were great buddies and remain friends. You are doing a great service. It is appreciated by many of us from whom you seldom hear. Keep up the good work.

(Editor: Don, I hope to be able to fulfill this thirst for bygone memories of what it was like to have served with the 451st. As long as the brain doesn't get spongy and my fingers can still manipulate the keyboard -- I'll hang in there!)

Harold Studer, 725th [MECHANIC/CREW CHIEF]

I have enjoyed all the Ad-Libs I have received through the years. You have done a fantastic job of writing and researching all the data from the record keeping you have done.

One of the first ground crews I worked with was with George Frisbee, he was the Chief.

I couldn't remember his name until I saw it in the Ad-Lib in regards to the display of equipment that he and his son had collected and set up at one of the reunions.

About all I can remember about my time in the 451st was that John Talbert was our Line Chief and John Watson was our Flight Chief. Lt. J.W. Ramsey was the Engineering Officer. Later he made Captain. I seem to remember from 1 or 2 of the later Ad-Libs that Ramsey had passed away.

I see another reunion will be coming up. I'm sure going to try and make it this time -- God willing.

(Editor ... Thanks for the briefing on your remembrances of duty in the 725th Squadron. It's good to hear from you 'Line Men' and to include your words into this monologue of memories.)

Bob Karstensen, 724th [GUNNER: HENRY G. ROLLINS' CREW]

I'd like to interject something that's been brewing inconspicuously, and probably without much exposure, over these past years, but certainly worthy of your consideration. That is the fact that our B-24 Liberator has not been given the exposure it deserves. For some years there has been an underground swell for our 'Liberator' being placed on one of the United States Postal Service's stamps. To date nothing has come of it.

(Continued on page 33)

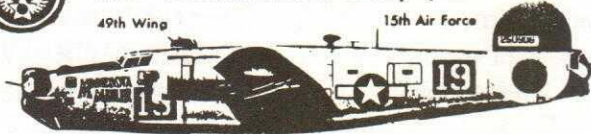


FORMER MEMBERS OF THE

451ST Bombardment Group (H) WW II. LTD.

49th Wing

15th Air Force



GROUP HEADQUARTERS 724th 725th 726th 727th Squadrons

Date

Chairperson
Dr. Virginia Noelke
Citizen's Stamp Advisory Committee
USPS
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20260-2435

Dear Dr. Noelke,

Government postal services around the world use their nation's postal stamps to honor some aspect of their history, and the United States Postal Service is no exception. It is with their honor in mind that we request the issuance of a U.S. postage stamp honoring a great aircraft of the Second World War, the Consolidated B-24 Liberator. This stamp would honor those hundreds of thousands of crewmen who served on these aircraft, and the thousands who gave the ultimate sacrifice while in service to their country.

The Consolidated B-24 Liberator holds a special place in the history of American aviation. The B-24 Liberator was built for war at a time when the United States desperately needed the most advanced combat bomber aircraft that it could produce. She fulfilled every mission she was asked to do, including some when was never designed to do. She was, and still is, the most mass-produced multi-engine aircraft in the world.

The B-24 Liberator is truly one of the great aircraft in American history, with well over one million Americans having some direct involvement with her during World War II. That generation is leaving us at an ever increasing rate, so time is of the essence.

We, as veterans of the **15th AAF, 451st Bomb Group (H) WW II** and recipients of three Distinguished Unit Citations, respectfully ask that you give this request your full attention and consideration.

Most Sincerely,

Signature

City

State

I propose that you make a copy of the previous-mailable letter (no page number on letter for obvious reasons) and mail it to the address shown. Perhaps we can somehow make this come to pass before we've all joined the "High Flight."

**Harry Fornalczyk, 725th [NAVIGATOR:
MARK P. ROBINSON'S CREW]**

When I arrived at the 451st Bomb Group with Mark Robinson's crew, I was there only 4 or 5 days before I found my name on the board as a replacement Navigator. I did not fly with my crew that day, but was assigned to another crew and plane. In the 10 missions that I flew, only one mission did I fly with my original crew. All my other missions I had flown with strange crews and have no idea who they were since I have no records of any of my missions. I never received any of my personal belongings when I returned home. Oddly, the only time the Robinson Crew flew together, we went down in enemy territory and were captured and became POW's.

(Editor ... A little history of your last disastrous mission, for those of us that would like to know. It took place on 26 March 1945, and the target was the Strazhof Marshalling Yards in Austria (Mission #222 for the Group). For all your previous qualms about flying as a replacement Navigator with other crews, this was one time that your entire 'original' crew took part in this memorable mission. And of that crew: Robinson, Pilot; Reeves, Copilot; McAuvic, Bombardier; Peterson, AEG; Kiser, ROG; Johnson, Gunner; McCorkle, Gunner; Shea, Gunner; Yerkes, Gunner -- I find that 7 have died (the latest being Orville Peterson); I (Conley R. Shea) has yet to be found. Yourself, and Damon G. Yerkes are still among the kicking.)

**Burdette 'Mac' Mckinnis, 726th [PILOT:
SQUADRON COMMANDER]**

I noted that our next reunion will be in Des Moines, IA this year. If so, that's near my old home town. I'll look forward to stopping by and seeing my High School classmates in Cherokee, CO

I enjoyed the W.C. Owens' article very much. He flew as Copilot on my crews first mission. As I remember it, we hit an oil refinery in Blechhammer Germany. We lost an engine over the target and one on the way home. We landed on the Island of Vis, off the coast of Yugoslavia. A C-47 picked us up and brought us back to Base the next Day.

(Editor ... As usual it will be nice to see you

again, this time in Des Moines. I'll keep a light on in the window for you.)

**Lindley Woodford, 60th Air Service Squadron
[SHEET METAL WORKER]**

I enjoy reading the Ad-Lib publication and trying to remember names, faces and facts. In Issue 37 you had a article about the crash of Goosey Lucy. I witnessed this crash and swear I saw something that looked like fire on one of the tails. I have no idea what it was, as no fire could be there, but I did see something. I had just returned to my tent after breakfast and was drinking a cup of coffer and watching the planes take off when this crash occurred. When the explosion occurred I hit the deck with coffee all over me. Later I saw a vertebrae hanging over the armor plate of one of the seats, no flesh, just bone. I had assumed that all were killed, but this article says that three were saved. I do remember one person running away from the plane and he turned around and headed back to the plane when he heard screams. Just then the explosion (bomb) happened and he was killed. I saw his badly burned body later. This man gave his life in an attempt to save his friends.

I did go to Foggia, a few days before, for a physical to become a gunner. Two office Sergeants also volunteered. When I saw this crash there was no way I would become a gunner. The other two did go and I believe both were shot down.

Early on, as we lined up in Tunis, on our way to Italy, we were standing in line to receive weapons. The soldier in front of me, aware of what was going on, asked to change places with me in line as he saw that every 15th man was issued a Thompson Machine Gun. I was eager to have that gun so I changed with him. All I ever did with that heavy (13 lbs) gun was to set it on single fire and shoot into a small creek to watch dead minnows float to the top. The gun had two straight magazines, one with 15 rounds and the other had 30. If I ever had to use it there was no way I could ever get more bullets. I finally took it to the Supply Sergeant to trade for a carbine. He was a bit surprised, but pleased to trade.

One day, during the winter snow, my feet were wet and I went to the office to try to get some boots since I had none. I saw our Captain Watson come storming out of the CO's office, slamming the door on leaving, all red faced and steaming. Then I heard the CO call out, "Captain Watson, come back here

and close the door like a gentleman." I tried hard not to smile or laugh. I tried to look like I had heard nothing.

It seems the Colonel from Headquarters was coming for an inspection visit and Watson and the Adjutant did not tell the CO, and when the Colonel showed up, the CO was still in bed at 9 o'clock am. He was a little upset! I did get a pair of flight boots to wear, regardless.

In the Winter 1997 issue of the Ad-Lib, page 33 is a picture of our section. I'm standing, third from the left [I think]. This is the first time I'd ever heard of us being called "Tin-Tappers." I'm enclosing several photos. You can do what you want with them.

Donald Weissend, 724th [ROG: ADAM E. METZ'S CREW]

Thanks again for another great issue of the Ad Lib #37; I always hope that each issue is not the last one.



This past summer, July 19, I had the very great pleasure to take a 15 minute ride in a restored AT-6, a Christmas gift from my son and daughter-in-law. Warbird Adventures, Inc. operates the two planes and they tour various cities, usually in the summer here, and fly out of our Geneseo Airport. Geneseo Airport is a privately owned airport a few miles away. In the enclosed photo I am in the front seat, the pilot in the back seat of the Army plane. Their Navy version joined us (with a passenger, also), and we flew in formation, then made a couple of passes across the field, much to the delight of my family watching below.

Perhaps you have heard of this organization. I believe they are headquartered in Kissimmee, Fla. They have cameras mounted on each wing tip, the

tail and in the cockpit - with sound so you can communicate. You can buy stills and also movies of the whole flight taken from all different angles.

(Editor ... Don, I know the feeling. After hoping a ride in the B-25 Mitchell Bomber out at Fairmont, NE last spring, I know just what you experienced. I enjoyed all but the deafening noise that those Pratt & Whitney engines put out).

William Coles, 60th Service Squadron [ENGINEERING]

We miss Ernie Cummins out here in California. There's only a few left to tell any stories to. I'm not much of a letter writer by trying to remember things that happened, I counted most on Ernie for dates and happenings.

(Editor ... Bill, if it weren't for all the data I've compiled over the years, I'd be at a loss for answers to a lot of questions and comments.)

Gordon M. Snyder, 727th [GUNNER: HAROLD T. THOMPSON'S CREW]

It is good to hear from you. It will be great fun to have the reunion in Des Moines, Iowa. However, I don't know how much help I will be for you in the planning. Doris and I are getting a little old; I'm 91 and Doris is 88 . . . I guess we're all getting up in years .. Ha.

(You're right, Gordon, we're all approaching senior citizenship age. I guess that's why I'm trying to make these get together something of interest, not only in offering 'new scenery,' but the chance to reminisce with old friends before that time is lost.)

Robert E. Johnson: [ASSOCIATE]

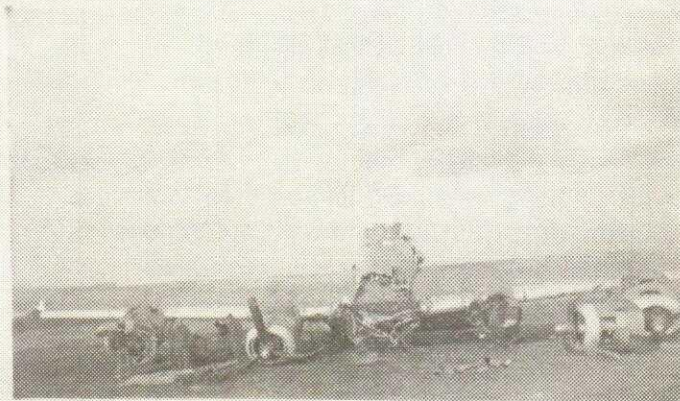
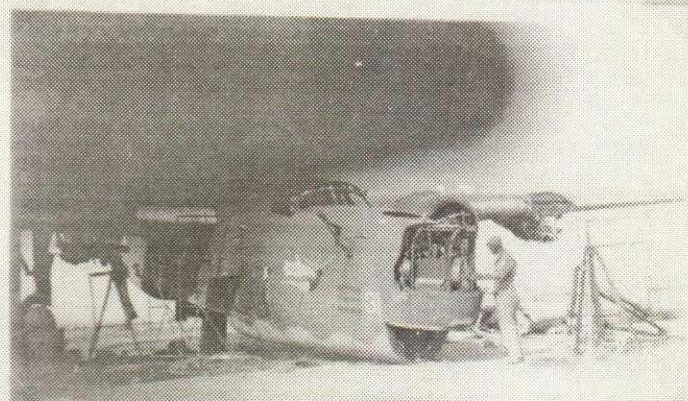
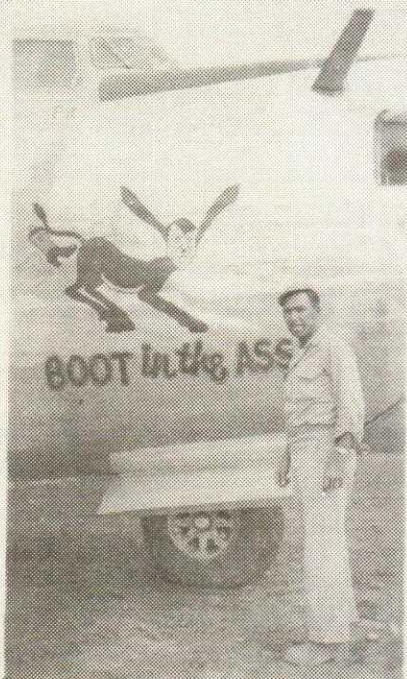
Please be advised that Archie Piirainen (#439) passed away at his home on January 12, 2004. Enclosed you will find a copy of his Obituary.

He was the recipient of ten medals during his 20 year career in the U.S. Air Force. American Legion Post #24 conducted military honors with the prayer, taps and rifle salute at his memorial service.

Several friends spoke about him -- he was a patriotic hero to those who knew him. Your poem, "Final Flight" was read aloud at his service.

(Editor ... It is indeed sad to lose Archie. He could be counted on to be in attendance at our reunions. Ever since the first one in Chicago, he made them all, including Salt Lake City. Not only was he a believer in the happenings of the 451st, but he will be remembered for the craftsmanship of the 'Bolo Ties' that he donated to us with the intent of adding a little extra to the 451st treasury).

A Page From Lindley Woodford's 60th Service Squadron Photo Album

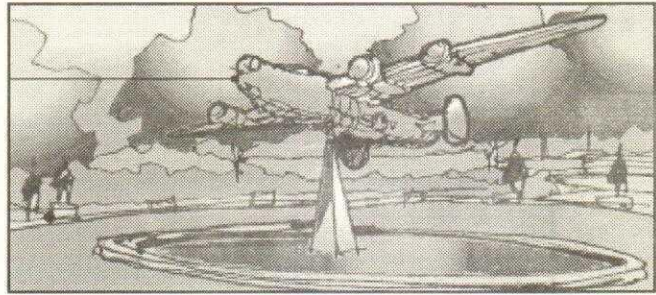


B-24 Nose Art.
 Rongo by Hitler.
 Three B-24's in our graveyard. Used for spare parts. Too damaged to repair with our facilities. Burned out plane was Goosey Lucy. Crashed on takeoff with load of 1000 lb. Bombs. Pilot and several others killed.

B-24 Memorial SAN DIEGO

B-24 Liberator Club/ B-24 Memorial
1672 Main Street, Suite E-124
Ramona, CA 92065

(760) 788-3624 • b24club@earthlink.net



We are raising funds to build a **B-24 Memorial** in its birthplace, **San Diego, California**, to honor those who built, maintained and flew the B-24 and the PB4Y-1 & 2. The memorial will be a bronze B-24, with an 18 foot wingspan, identical to the one located at the USAF Academy in Colorado Springs. The memorial will be placed in front of the Veterans Memorial Center, as the centerpiece of the Veterans Memorial Gardens, located in San Diego's historic Balboa Park. We ask you for your contribution by being part of this worthwhile project. Please note: A receipt will be mailed for every contribution as required by the IRS to make you eligible for an itemized deduction under Sec. 501 (c) (3) of the Federal Tax Code.

Name: _____ Rank: _____ Branch of Service: _____

Military Unit or Company (BS/BG/AF): _____ Check if you wish included: POW; MIA; KIA

Your Name (If Different From Above): _____

Street/City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Tel.: _____ Email: _____

Write in amount of donation and check one: \$ _____ Check (Payable to: **B-24 Memorial – San Diego**)

   Credit card # _____ Exp. date: _____

\$500.00 or more: Name to be placed on B-24 Memorial in Veterans Memorial Park. Complimentary one year membership to Veterans Memorial Center.*

\$100.00 or more: Name listed on Donor Honor Roll, on permanent exhibit inside Veterans Memorial Center. Complimentary one year membership to VMC.*

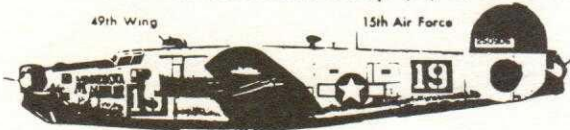
\$50.00 or more: Complimentary one year membership to Veterans Memorial Center.*

Less than \$50.00: I just can't afford to be a big contributor, but I'd like to help.*

*All donations will receive a one year membership to the Veterans Memorial Center in San Diego, future home of the bronze B-24 Liberator Memorial, and a six month subscription to the *Veterans Journal* (San Diego County Edition). Memberships and subscriptions to commence upon dedication of Memorial.



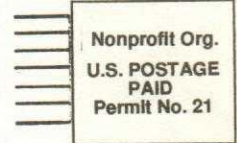
FORMER MEMBERS OF THE
45ST Bombardment Group (H) WW II. LTD.



GROUP HEADQUARTERS 724th 725th 726th 727th Squadrons

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Marengo, Illinois 60152

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John Stawitz
MOS RUD
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