



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

Issue 39

Price \$5 (Free to Members)

Winter 2004/2005

## Des Moines Reunion Smaller: But Still Rewarding

### REUNION REVIEW

With an attendance count of just below two hundred and fifty, at our largest event (Saturday Banquet), we fell about a hundred short of our largest event at the Salt Lake City Reunion. Seems that each two year separation brings this sort of a drop in our attendance. I guess there's no way to avoid it. Reasons seem to be: Advancing years .. Illness in the family .. To far to fly, or drive .. Little interest in the chosen area .. **AND THE BIG ONE: *I don't think I'd know anyone there!***

All these, except the last, are valid reasons NOT to attend. Advancing years we have no control over, other than just trying to stay healthy. Illness, both on the part of the member, or of a family member, give cause to bypass such events. In rare cases, if

it's a spouse that can't be present, another close family member comes into the household to take on the obligations of 'caretaker,' thus allowing the member to fulfill his wish to attend.

Those that don't trust their ability to negotiate the complexities of air travel, or fear the long drive to get to the host city, they sometimes call upon the youth within their family (sons, daughters or grand children) to accompany them on this worthwhile excursion. Most times the accompanying offspring gets as much a kick out of being there as does the one they are escorting. Its their chance to check out the caliber of buddies that served with Dad/Grandpa and to substantiate stories oft-told.

As to the idea that the host city would be of little interest and would offer nothing in the way of amenities, such as we've enjoyed with past reunions, then you haven't experienced the laid-back warm hospitality of the folks of Iowa. Although we had a different form of "Military Involvement" the change was still gratifying. And the local citizens, from the Holiday Inn staff to the people we met in our various activities, really made us feel at home.

Regarding the last deterrent; "***I don't think I'd know anyone there!***" That is the one that bothers me most. I find it's not necessarily the fact that we have to find a lost tentmate / crewmate (although that would be great), but just the fact that we can relate to some incident that occurred while we were overseas. From that small beginning, places and names are exchanged and plans to meet again are formed.

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

Compiled and Published by Bob Karstensen

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No membership dues are assessed  
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The publishing of the AD-LIB; the seeking of new members; and all efforts towards the preservation of our 451st heritage is funded by donations and contributions. Checks may be made out to the

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**Tax Exempt Contribution #36 307 0772**

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Sorry ... I seem to pontificate and the purpose of this 'Lead Story' is to let the non-attendees learn what those of us, that took part in the reunion, experienced.

**Thursday (First Day):** Registration in the hotel Lobby, wherein each registered member drew his packet with identifying Name Badges, Meal Tickets (Thursday Iowa Styled Buffet and Saturday Banquet), Saturday Tour Tickets (If previously signed up).

A memorabilia Sales Table with T-Shirts, Caps, Wall Clocks, Watches (Men & Lady Styles), Purse Size Calculators, Pocket Pal Diary, etc. The Sales Table was capability staffed by Art and Carol Morin (727th), with the Garrison's (726th) & Haggerty's (727th), filling in. A welcome item for our Sales Table was a number of lithographs brought in by Gordon Snyder (727th) that depicted his version of the 23 August 1944 Markersdorf, Austria mission. These have been offered in the past, but Gordon was generous by donating, to the Group, what prints that weren't sold at this reunion. Anyone interested in obtaining a print, let me know.

Gordon may be remembered from some of the art work he did while serving with the 727th

Squadron. A number of B-24 within his Squadron bore his handy work: e.g. Sloppy But Safe, Gang Bang, Fickle Finger, et cetera.

George R. Frisbee, son of the late George Frisbee (725th), again brought his array of aviation artifacts from World War II (High altitude flying paraphernalia: Parachute & Harness, Mae West, Helmet & Goggles, Sheepskin Boots, et cetra.) Along with those he had numerous Manuals and Technical books on the B-24. George, with his generosity, has been a real asset to our last three reunions. George always goes to great effort to have something that can be raffled off, so's to garner some \$\$\$ for the 451st Treasury. On this occasion George assembled a model B-24 (with a wingspan of about two plus feet) The winning ticket was drawn on Saturday Night with the winner being, Harold McWilliams (727th). George's effort brought in more than \$320 for our Treasury.

'Sedge' Hill (727th), with his son, Mike, held down the 'Book Sales Table' throughout the reunion. Both gathered more information about the Group from their interviews with various members. Mike is now working on a book about the aircraft of the entire 49th Wing (451st, 461st & 484th). Mike displayed the various books that he's been involved with, both in writing and publishing.

Sedge tells me that he still has a few "Fight'n 451st" books left over from the reunion. Should anyone require a copy, contact me and I'll put you in contact with Sedge.

Another late Friday entry into our "Area Of Interest" (Sales & Artifacts) section was Don West. Don traveled from Fairmont, Nebraska, the last Training Base of the 451st before deploying overseas, to offer his thanks to the 451st for showing the value of the old Fairmont Army Air Base as an historical asset to his community. This was back in 1990 when we conducted our sixth biennial reunion in Omaha and bused our 600+ attendees out to Fairmont for a day. Don brought some pictures to view and printed memento to share. Later on Friday evening, after our 'Wine & Cheese Appreciation Hour,' Don addressed our Group as to what is currently happening out at Fairmont. Don is head-honcho of the Fillmore County Historical Society and a dedicated servant to his community.

**Thursday Evening**, which called for our 'Iowa Styled Buffet' and 'Country Barn Dance Theme  
(Continued on Page 4)

# 451 Bomb Group Reunion Des Moines Iowa Oct. 2004



Bob Karstensen opening the activities of the Group Ball



Bob Karstensen Offering Opening Remarks For The 451st Saturday Evening Banquet

Major General Ron Dardis, Adjutant General Of The Iowa National Guard, Addressing The Members And Guests Of The 451st Bomb Group

Party' sort of disintegrated into thin-air when the engaged troupe of 'Square Dancers' never showed up. We did have a fine buffet, as planned, and would have had an abbreviated program had it not the talent of 'Master Orator,' L.M. "Bud" Jenkyns (Associate Member) It was he that took 'ol' Bob K's' chestnuts out of the fire. On very short notice (from the time it took to publicly apologize for lack of dancers, to my passing his table), he volunteered to fill the void with one of his historical speeches on: "Memories of Colonel David Humphreys, Aide and Secretary to General George Washington." It was professionally and beautifully presented, plus gratefully accepted.

**Friday Morning** had us filling four tour buses to take us out to Camp Dodge (home of the Iowa National Guard) to enjoy a catered lunch. We were welcomed to Camp Dodge by W/O Wesley Bender who gave us a synopsis of the operation and purpose of the Base.

From our lunch setting at the "Rec Hall" we were split into two segments: two buses went to the "Camp Dodge Training Area," where we saw the operation of 'Teaching' the maintenance of military equipment to troops of the National Guard, Army Reserves and active Army Units from all over the nation. A very complex, but interesting briefing was given us by active members of the Guards.

The other two buses took us to the "Iowa Gold Star Museum," a short distance from the "Rec Hall." This proved to be totally interesting, as well as provocative, to some members of our group. Seems that a photo was on display that originated out of our overseas photo section, but was incorrectly captioned. The curator was gently taken to task for the error, and promised to make amends.

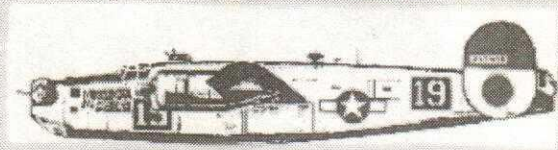
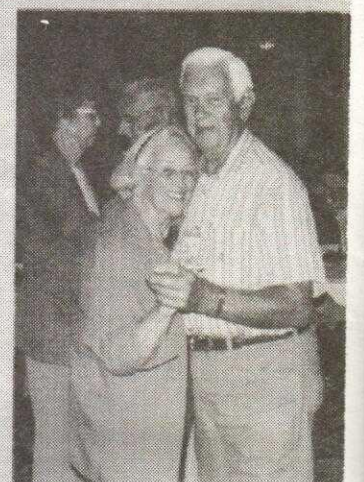
At the conclusion of each of the site visits, the buses flip-flopped so all of our attendees got a taste of what had been seen by the other half.

**Friday Evening** we all gathered in the main ballroom and enjoyed a "Wine & Cheese Appreciation Hour." Prior to the 'Presentation of Colors,'



Speaker, R. Wesley Bender Army N. G.

Army N.G. Luncheon.



**We toured the Town and country by day  
and danced away the night with some wonderful  
luncheons in between**

Don West made a brief address on what was happening out at the old Fairmont Army Air Base.

The Colors (American Flag & our Group Flag) were presented with the accompanying bugle call of: "To The Colors," by our resident trumpeter, John O'Connor (724th).

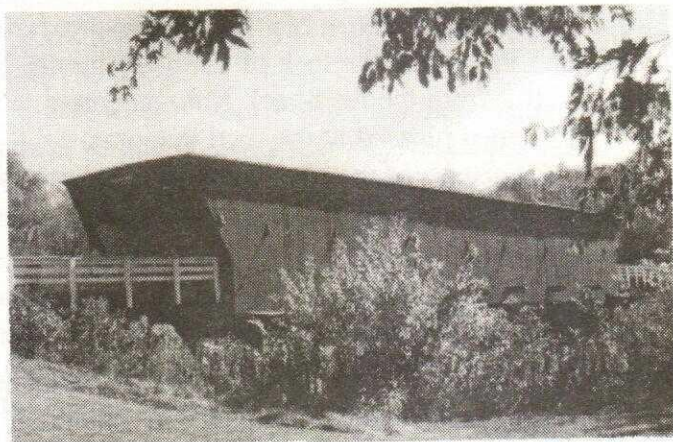
This was followed by the 34th Army Band, out of Fairfield, Iowa, giving us an hour plus of great dance music. During one of the breaks in their program, Ms Tiffany Spinner of the Greater Des Moines Convention & Visitors Bureau, made a presentation of the Iowa State Flag (flown over the State Capitol Building on 23 August 2004 to commemorate our 3rd Distinguished Unit Citation). Lt. Colonel Robert Kacena, Retired (Hdqs) accepted the flag on behalf of the 451st.



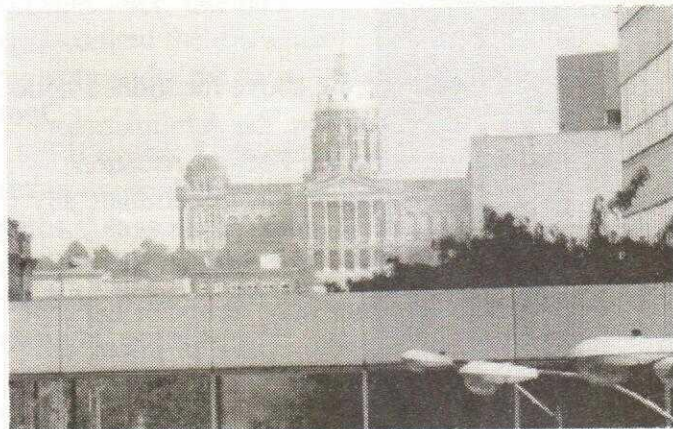
**34th Army Dance Band In Concert**

At the conclusion of our Friday Military Heritage Program, the Colors were withdrawn with the playing of "Taps" (with echo) by John O'Connor and one of the Army Bands trumpeters. This always proves to be a beautiful and dramatic conclusion to our Friday program.

**Saturday Morning** saw three buses line up in front of the Holiday Inn loading for a tour of the Madison County Covered Bridges & Festival.



**Bridge Made Famous From The Movie  
"Bridges of Madison County"**



**Iowa State Capitol  
As Seen Above One Of Des Moines' Skywalks**

Another bus became the conveyance for some of our members to see the historical sites of the City of Des Moines. A glitch in timing proved be troublesome to some of the members; to which I apologize.

**Saturday Evening** saw the gathering of members, spouses, offsprings, and special guests for our Gala Banquet. Robert Kacena (Hdq), again took on the role of Master of Ceremonies. Invocation by Neil Kacena started our program, followed by Robert's 'Pledge of Allegiance' and a 'Toast' to our departed comrades. The Toast was emphasized by having a small table, just in front of the Heat Table, set with one chair, one table setting and an empty wine glass. Robert then introduction of the Head Table which included his wife, Margaret Kacena, Major General Ron Dardis (Adjutant General, Iowa National Guard), Colonel Neil Kacena (Retired), and myself, Bob Karstensen.

A dinner of Roast Beef, or Pecan Chicken, was served according to the diner's pre-selected choice.

After the dinner, I (Bob K.) was called upon to make some opening remarks. As I've done in the past, I welcomed all and then polled the audience to see how many were offsprings; how many were widows of our members and who were first timers. When called upon for the offsprings to stand, it seemed like every table had a few.



**LTC Robert Kacena (Retired)  
Fulfilling His Role as Master of Ceremonies**

M.C. Robert Kacena, after giving the resume of our Major General Ron Dardis, then called upon General Dardis to enlighten us as to his current duties. It should be noted that General Dardis was at one time, an active Air Force member. He likens himself to what he calls a "Blue Suiter," meaning

he once was "Air Force" and "one of us."

The General paid tribute to us, as veterans that served with distinction during the heat of World War II. He followed up those comments with a description of the Iowa National Guards and how their duties are being used in the war in Bosnia and Iraq. It was a very enlightening speech that certainly shed light on what the Military of Iowa were facing.

With the Benediction by Neil Kacena, we adjourned to follow-up the evening with dancing by the "Waukee Little Band," augmented by our trumpeter, John O'Connor, who always enjoys 'sitting-in' on occasions like this.

It was at this time that George R. Frisbee conducted the raffle for the B-24 model; which Harold McWilliams won.

Dancing held forth until the playing of "Good Night Ladies," when everyone concluded their



**Members And Guests -- From California To Massachusetts, And Texas For Good Measure**  
L to R Standing: Barbara Weber--MA, Robert J. Anderson--MA, Marie Longenecker--TX, Dede Moss--CA, Milo Sanchez--CA  
Seated: Ed Longenecker--TX, Audrey Eagles--MA, David Eagles--MA

evening.

Our Sunday Church Services never came about. Our resident lay-preacher, William Jackson (726th) was not able to attend due to illness in the family. After being notified that Bill couldn't make it, I attempted to recruit one of the Camp Dodge Chaplains to conduct the Services. I was informed that due to the deployment of local Chaplains, none were available. The hotel, when informed of

this misfortune, volunteered to shuttle our people to the nearest church of their choice and to return them at the conclusion of the Service. Thus, among some of the high points of the reunion, we somehow achieved two failures: No Square Dancers for our Theme Party, and the lack of Sunday Church Services. But from the feed-back I'm receiving, most all seemed pleased at the total outcome.

*(All photos displayed in this article were submitted by Robert J. Anderson (727th) - Thanks Bob!)*

## COVER SHEET TO NEW FAA REGULATIONS

### PROPOSED FAA REGULATION ACT

#### REGULATION 1000

(A) No pilot, or pilots, or person, or persons acting on behest, or direction, or suggestion, or supervision of the pilot, or pilots, may try, or attempt to try, or make an attempt to try to comprehend, or understand any, or all, in whole, or in part of the herein mentioned Federal Aviation Regulations, except as authorized by the Administrator, or an agent appointed by, or inspected by the Administrator.

(B) If the pilot, or group of associated pilots, become aware of, or realizes, or detects, or dis-

covers, or finds that he, or she, or they, are, or have been, begun to understand the Federal Aviation Regulations, they must immediately, within three (3) days notify, in writing, the current, or acting Administrator.

(C) Upon receipt of the above mentioned notice of impending comprehension, the Administrator will immediately rewrite the Federal Aviation Regulations in such a manner as to eliminate any further comprehension hazards.

(D) The Administrator may, at his, or her discretion, require the offending pilot, or pilots, to attend remedial instruction in Federal Aviation Regulations until such a time that the pilot is too confused to be capable of understanding anything

## GLIMPSE FROM THE PAST

From the Albany Herald, Americus, GA

BY: Keith Saliba

It was the bumper sticker that did it. There, in bold lettering strapped across the car's front bumper, Ray Barrett caught a glimpse of his past, of a life long since left behind: the 451st Bomb Group.

Could it be true that a member of his old World War II unit was living at Magnolia Manor, the same Americus assisted-living facility Barrett had called home since June 2002?

He had to find out.

So the 82-year old former U.S. Army Air Corps bombardier began to watch and wait, hoping to discover just who owned the car -- and the bumper sticker.

Barrett eventually narrowed his list of suspects to one man: Donald Ten Hagen, a new resident who had just moved in with his wife, Ruth, a few weeks before.

As it turned out, Ten Hagen had indeed served with the 451st.

But what neither Barrett nor Ten Hagen could've guessed was that they had done much more than merely served in the same unit. The two had been roommates.

For three very cold and rainy months near the end of the war, Barrett and Ten Hagen had shared a muddy tent within the confines of the Castelluccia Airfield in south-central Italy, piloting their B-24 Liberators on bombing runs by day, and sleeping away the exhaustion by night.

Now, nearly six decades later, fate had again united the erstwhile aviators under the same roof.

"It's what I consider a rather unusual crossing of paths," says the 81-year-old Ten Hagen with a chuckle. "We're talking about 60 years here."

Barrett couldn't agree more.

"You just don't expect to meet someone again that you knew 58 years

ago," says Barrett.

The coincidence is rendered all the more striking because neither Barrett nor Ten Hagen are from Southwest Georgia.

Because his wife is from Albany, Ten Hagen, a New York native, chose the area to open a drug-store after the war.

Connecticut-born Barrett relocated to Albany from Florida in 1999 so that he and his wife could be closer to their daughter.

Age and health reasons then brought both couples to Magnolia Manor.

But considering the conditions under which Ten Hagen last saw Barrett, the situation becomes stranger still.

On a cold February morning in 1945, elements of the 451st --including Ten Hagen and Barrett -- took off for a bombing run over an oil refinery near Vienna, Austria.

But long before the big bombers could reach their target, the sky around them filled with deadly anti-aircraft fire from the frozen Austrian countryside below.

Moments later a fiery shell ripped through the nose of Barrett's plane, blasting a gaping hole not 5 feet from where the bombardier was seated.

"All of a sudden there was a loud explosion," says Barrett. "About 90 per-cent of the nose was gone."

Meanwhile, Ten Hagen, copilot aboard another plane, struggled to avoid the burning wreckage of his friend's aircraft.

"We just tried to get out of the way," says Ten Hagen, then just 21.

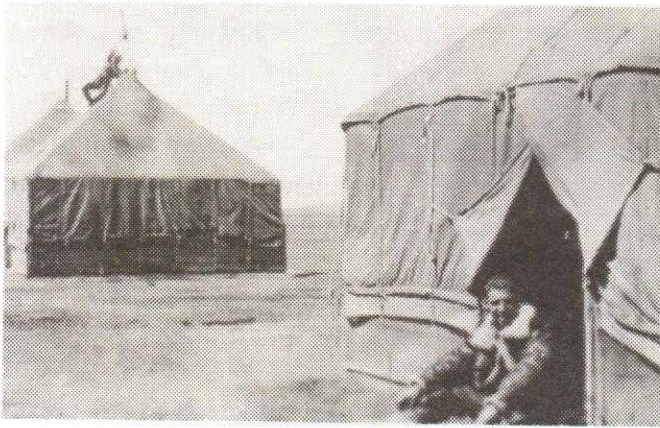
"You're so busy flying, it's hard to concentrate on anything else."

Barrett, who remembers nothing after the shell hit, believes that he was sucked out of the hole, yet somehow managed to pull his parachute ripcord.

He woke up two days later in a German field clinic, shrapnel embedded



726th TENTMATES FROM THE PAST  
Donald Ten Hagen (Copilot) And Ray Barrett (Bombardier) Photo:  
Megan Lovett, Staff Photographer



Lt. Ray Barrett 'At Ease' At Tents Doorway  
(Note Roof Climber On Nearby Tent)

in his left leg and ankle.

Back at the air base, Ten Hagen went about the grim task of packing up the belongings of a man he assumed would no longer need them.

"When you're young, things don't hit you as quick," says Ten Hagen. "But anytime someone goes down, it turns out to be a pretty good friend."

But Barrett was far from the world of the dead, albeit in the hands of the enemy.

Luckily, he drew a kindly German doctor who had earned his medical degree from the University of Chicago.

"He was a very friendly guy who missed the U.S.A. very much," says Barrett. "He told me he thought Americans were a fine people."

The doctor repaired Barrett's wounds, a week later the-23-year-old was loaded aboard a boxcar en route to the storied German prison camp, Stalag 17b.

The only American aboard, Barrett found himself surrounded by 19 Russian POWs.

For three weeks, the men subsisted on nothing more than water and a single loaf of bread each day.

Barrett recalls making a stop in Vienna. A clock tower visible through the slats of the boxcar told him that it was midnight. Nearby, the voices of singing German soldiers wafted from a raucous beerhall.

Incredibly, none of this seemed to worry Barrett.

"I wasn't scared at all," he says. "They were having a good time drinking their beer and I enjoyed the singing."

Despite the cold and hunger, Barrett says he was well-treated by his German captors, both dur-

ing the train ride and after reaching the prison camp.

Luckily, Barrett's stay was to be a short one. On May 12, 1945, he was liberated.

These days, the two old aviators don't have much time for socializing, even after their curious reunion.

Doctors appointments pile up. And in yet another, much more tragic coincidence, both men's wives suffer from Alzheimer's disease and require much attention.

But there is still the occasional story, the shared memory of men who have come through fire together.

Time to remember those days so long ago when it fell to the young men of the "Fighti'n 451st" to take to the heavens each day, braving the black explosions of ack-ack and the whine of preying German fighters to help bring the Nazi juggernaut to its knees.

And for now, that is enough.



Lt. Don Ten Hagen

*(Editor ... Adding facts to this interesting bit of journalism I uncovered this:*

1LT Raymond L. Barrett was flying as lead-element Bombardier with the 1LT Gerald W. Naylor Crew of the 726th Squadron on 7 February 1945, in a/c #44-49216. It was the 186th mission for the Group. Target for that day was the Korneuburg Oil Refinery, just north of Vienna, Austria. Members of the crew and their fate, are as follows:

1Lt Gerald W. Naylor, Pilot - POW [Dec., 5 December 1996]

MAJ Jack Reichenbach, Copilot/Sqdn CO - POW [Dec.7 June 2001]



1Lt Murray Eskew, Navigator - KIA

1Lt Raymond Barrett, Bombardier - POW

2Lt John Robertson, Nose Navigator - KIA

1Lt Stewart Hayden, Radar Navigator - POW

[Dec. 21 September 2000

T/Sgt James Hislop, Upper Gunner - POW

[Dec., July 1978]

S/Sgt Errol E. DeWitt, R. Waist Gunner POW

[Dec., 7 December 1977]

S/Sgt John Jodell, L. Waist Gunner - POW

Cpl John Wilson, Tail Gunner - POW

T/Sgt Joseph Goward, Radio Operator - POW

Not unlike other "Lead Crews" that would lead the Squadron; the Group; or the Wing; and even the 15th AAF itself, the Flight Deck and Nose sections were often made up of quality, tested Officers that knew their duties well. These men were often selected from other crews. Such was the case with Lt. Barrett who was from the Chester Ennis crew, and the others; Hayden from the Cameron Pearson

crew; Robertson from the Wilson Dalton crew; and Eskew from the Edward Nall crew. As my records show, all the EM's were from the original Gerald Naylor crew.

As to Lt. Don Ten Hagen, he was Copilot for the Lt. Richard D. Olson Crew. They were flying in the number five position in the formation, and this eye-witness statement was offered by Tail Gunner, Sgt. Julian B. Mroczenski. "Shortly before bombs-away, Lieutenant Naylor's aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire. As soon as he was hit he peeled out of the formation right under the ship I was flying in. When we left the target he followed us for about five minutes at an altitude of about 15,000 feet and about two miles behind our flight. I lost sight of him at about 1435 hours."

Thus was the ordeal that befell the two men featured in the Albany Herald, during that February mission.

## SILENT SLEEP

Her great roaring engines are silent,  
The guns are pitted with rust.  
Olive drab paint is flaked and faded,  
And her turrets are covered with dust.

She sits and waits for her crewmen,  
Those young men from another day.  
Sixty long years have passed and gone,  
Since they all went on their way.

Where have all those young men gone,  
Those boys she knew so well.  
They took here there and brought her back,  
What stories they can tell.

Some are buried in foreign lands,  
War records tell the place.  
"Killed in Action," the official words,  
Or just "KIA" to save space.

Many came home; the war was over,  
We dissipated like the dew,  
Then separately we all went our ways,  
Back to the lives we knew.

But in every airman's inner thoughts,  
Quiet moments as each day end,  
We hear again those engines roar,  
And the voices of our friends.

Now we're aging and almost all grey.  
Again friends are starting to fall;  
They're going now into that long last sleep,  
That comes one day to us all.

So here's to our fellow comrades,  
Those still here, or passed away.  
We'll remember you as you once were,  
In a distant place and day.

As we stand here now in silence,  
We'll think of you and smile.  
Get ready for that final briefing,  
We'll join you after a while.

*(Adapted from a poem by Lloyd Klar,  
341st Bomb Group)*

## THE ORDEALS AND FATE OF LT. COLLINS P. BYRN

As editor and researcher I am forever seeking answers to questions that pertain to our 451st Bomb Group. One question that has plagued me over the years, ever since I could find no reference to this incident, other than what hear-say I picked up from members along the way, was the loss of Lt. Collins P. Byrn (727th), and his crew.

Parts of the puzzle started coming together when I received a letter from Lalla Byrn Turner (Sister to Collins Byrn), which read in part:

"When talking to a friend about my brother, Lt. Collins P. Byrn, who was a member of your group and was killed in action February 17, 1945, he gave me a copy of your Ad-Lib, Issue #35. In it I found the notation that Marshall D. Word had died in 2001.

Because Captain (?) Word had been a member of the crew, involved when they were shot down over Yugoslavia, December 26, 1944, I had been fortunate enough to keep in touch with him until about the time he died, I suppose.

I have compiled a book of letters of my brother, written from the night he left home to go into Service in 1943, until the night before he was killed. His description of the training at that time, I feel is very historical. And Captain Word was kind enough to tell of their time when they were in Yugoslavia, which I included in the little book I called "**Voices From The Forties.**" If you don't have a copy of this book in your library, I would be happy to let you have a copy."

*Needless to say, I accepted the offer of the book and was both pleased and saddened to read it.*

*Pleased in the fact that I was now privy to how Lt. Collins Byrn met his fate, and, too, that I was, to some extent, following the steps that most of you pilots faced in achieving your Wings. And the pride, both to yourself and your family, that came with that award.*



LT. BYRN CREW

Standing: Collins Byrn, Pilot; Ned Smith, Copilot; Howard Strausser, Navigator; Seymour Fischer, Bombardier  
Kneeling: Alfred Noack, Gunner; Richard Stone, Radio Operator; Lee Brown, Gunner; James Davis, Engineer Gunner; Irving Weinstein, Gunner; Stanislaus Wozniak, Gunner

*But the sadness came when I read Collins' upbeat letter, written on the last full day of his life (February 16, 1945). It reads as follows:*

Dearest Family -

I am afraid I haven't been too good about writing for the past several days. I really have no good excuse, although I was busy a couple of days.

I have gotten good letters from Dad and Lalla today and yesterday. Very good, and thank you. I

also received a letter from Billee W\_\_\_\_. Lalla, please express my appreciation and I will get around to writing her eventually.

I really appreciate all the people at home being so nice. I had a feeling they would, and I am not conceited enough to think it was all for me. I just goes to prove what I've always said, "When people are in trouble at home, you can always depend on the friends there." (Ed. This is in regards to the December 26, 1944 evasion Collins experienced.) There is nothing quite as comforting. I cant write everyone, but I know you can thank them for me.

I want to thank you all for being so nice to my crew's families. It has meant a lot to the boys, and they have told me how much they appreciated it. I know your phone bill must be quite like that of the Pentagon Building, and the wires too. I do wish you would take it out of my money. I am serious about that. I got a lot of that, you know. Along that line, I will be sending home a good deal more when I finally get paid. I haven't had a full pay check since I left Chatham Field. We would have been paid if we hadn't been M.I.A. for so long. Since then our records have been all messed up. I think we should get a good sized check about the end of this month, and I will be able to send nearly all of it home. It should come close to \$500.00. Anytime you all see a good place for the money, just shove it in there. The Curlee stock was nice to get. Of course, I will want some money when I get home.

I flew another mission day before yesterday. Turned out pretty rough again, but they didn't tag our ship. It was up to the place Strauss wrote the waltzes about - Vienna. I can tell you for sure that the Krauts down there were not playing waltzes when we went over. Cheezer, I got my second look at the Kraut buzz-boys, but we weren't hit by them. There were several 109s playing around just below us, waiting for some ship to straggle behind. They didn't come up to us though, because our buzz-boys in the P-51s were really ready. Those 38s and 51s are the most beautiful sight in the world at times like that.

Anyway, we took a trip over the Blue Danube. Incidentally, somebody got a wrong kick there, because it isn't blue. It was just as muddy as the Mississippi. Coming back we could spit on the Russian lines, we were so close. Matter of fact, we flew right over them. Life would be pretty dull if it weren't for little thrills like that.

If you ever get around to sending a box, I could use some lighter fluid and some flints. Also, any old scraps of candy you might otherwise be inclined to sweep in I might use.

Take care of yourself, Pop, Mother, and you too. I am sorry to hear you weren't feeling well. Hope you are much better now.

Love to each and every -

Coll

Then there was this sad letter written by Lalla to her sister on March 5, 1945.

Dearest Sister -

After last Sunday's joy, it seems impossible now to know that Collins was gone when we were rejoining over his fine letter to the Church. The things that keeps going through my mind is, "How did we not know? Why didn't an alarm go off in our hearts the second he died?" But it didn't. We kept on living as though our lives hadn't been permanently changed.

I had gotten the boys ready to go to Sunday School yesterday morning, and sent them to the car when the doorbell rang. I took the despicable yellow envelope without a care. As my brother, C.A. had been expecting a telegram, I took it to him and started down, after the boys. Then I saw C.A. run into Daddy's room, and I heard Daddy say, "Get Lalla." I knew then what it was. They stood with the horrible yellow sheet between them, and there it was:

The Secretary of War desires me to express his deep regret that your son Second Lieutenant Collins P. Byrn was killed in action Seventeenth February in Italy. Confirming letter follows.

J.A. Ulio, the Adjutant General.

What do you do when your world has crashed around you? Certainly C.A. nor I could fall apart as we wished to do. I took one look at Mother standing in the doorway. She knew what the message said just by looking at us. I instinctively said, "I'll go take care of the boys and be right back," and rushed to take the boys up to Mary B.'s for her to take care of for the day. What would we do without friends at such a time?

When I got back, we all knew we had to call you. C.A. said, "Oh, I can't do that!" I thought I could. With all I'd been through the past months, I thought I could do one thing more. Still, I wasn't brave enough to try to tell you, and thought of calling your brother-in-law, Stuart. That wasn't too bad. We told the telephone operator that we had some emergency calls to make and she was wonderful, staying with us until all the calls were made. Then C.A., who thought he couldn't call you, assumed a harder job telling Grandpa, Nell and our Aunts. As we passed on the stairs, C.A. choked out, "Don't tell me lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place!"

All day the house was full of friends. Perhaps I remember most vividly Daddy's friends, two of whom had lost beloved sons. Their grieving with Daddy impressed me deeply. Our neighbor, Mr. W---, just sat in the chair sobbing. His son is in Europe now .... And Nell! She stayed with us most all day - curled up on the couch crying.

Toward evening I went after the boys. I had not told them in the morning what had happened, and Mary B. had been careful all day not to. But when our friends from St. Louis arrived, it brought on a fresh burst of grief from Mother. Then I told the boys what had happened. Son, Marshall, in his sober way said, "Mother, maybe we didn't pray hard enough." That hurt, but I'm sure God knew we had.

Finally the last dear friend had left and the house was quiet. As we went upstairs, I said to Daddy, "Oh, there have been so many people here." And Daddy replied, "Yes, but this house will never be full again."

Both Mother and Daddy have done well during

the day. We'll make it. We have to. As soon as we think we can, we'll call you. We have already thought that we would try to get Mother out to you as soon as possible. As she had been planning to come when the baby is born, she would just come a little sooner.

Again Daddy has called the families of Collins's crew, and all but one had gotten the same terrible message. Maybe some day we will find out what happened. Somehow we want to know.

We've wished you were with us. We know you have made it all right. As with us, you have it to do.

Much, much love,  
Lalla

*In reading Lalla's letter to her sister, I was struck by the depth of sorrow that was contained therein. To say I was not emotionally affected would be an understatement. I was deeply moved. Not only by their grief, but to be reminded that so many other families (425, just within the 451st) received much the same message from our Government. It could break your heart, even at this late date.*



**INSCRIPTION READS:**

**Collins Pitman Byrn  
Lt. U.S. Army Air Forces  
Son of Chester A. and Pauline P. Byrn  
Sept. 18 1922 - Feb 17, 1945  
He Died In The Service Of His Country  
In Action Over Italy**

*Originally buried in Bari, Italy - Now rests in the Maplewood Cemetery, Mayfield, Kentucky*

*But to continue: From Major Marshall D. Word, Lalla received this description of the December 26, 1944 mission in which all participants evaded and returned to Base.*

*(As Recorded By Captain Marshall Word - 727th Operations Officer -- Edited for length and clarity)*

**THE EVASION ORDEAL OF THE "FLYING WOLF" CREW**

The day after Christmas we had an early briefing and learned that we were going to Oswiecim in

Poland to bomb an oil refinery. We had maximum loads of gas and bombs since this was a long mission and supposed to take about ten hours in the air. (Our assigned aircraft was: "FLYING WOLF" a/c #42-78411). We were especially warned not to bomb the prisoner of war camp near Oswiecim. It was not until several months after the war was over that we found out that the prisoner of war camp was really a murder camp for Jews, called Auschwitz, which was near Oswiecim. I remember this mission especially well since that was one from which I didn't get home for a while.

The trip to the target was rather uneventful. I was the Assistant Operations officer of the 727th Squadron and was flying the Baker Flight that day. This is the Squadron that flies high and to the right and a little back of the lead flight, which was called Able Flight. Charley Flight flies a little under the lead flight and to the left; the Dog Flight flies lower than any of the other Squadrons and is directly under and behind Able Flight. This way the Squadrons are separated vertically as well as horizontally and can support each other in lateral fire, or firing forward or up above, so that each Squadron can support the others when the fighters attack, and it has the advantage of being scattered in case of flak. We did a lot of experimenting with formations, and this is the one we eventually determined to be the best for combat use.

This particular day we had to climb out of the undercast to get on top of the clouds, and it was a very cold day. There were about three other Groups that were going to the same target. We were with several other Groups of the 15th Air Force going to various targets in Austria and Germany. Anyhow, on this day, as we were approaching the target and beginning our bomb-run we experienced heavy and intense flak. Our aircraft was hit repeatedly. One battery was hit and exploded, injuring another battery which was close to it and messed up the electrical system. A lot of flak hit the wing tanks and started leaks which didn't seal very well because of the cold temperature. About half way down the bomb run a dud shell went right through the number 3 tank which immediately let all the gas run out of that tank, and we lost the #3 engine which also had the hydraulic pump on it. We couldn't keep us so we had to abort the Flight lead and start dropping down and back under the formation to try to get as much protection as we could from the Group.

We finished the bomb run and dropped our bombs, which helped a lot to lighten the aircraft. We then trimmed it up with the trim tabs and tried to keep up with the Group, but were unable to do so. The #1 engine was running rough so we had to reduce power on it. We threw out about all the emergency equipment we had, and anything else that was loose to try to lighten the aircraft, and we finally got it stabilized at about 9,000 feet, by the altimeter.

The Navigator gave us the course for home. Our radio was out, and the Engineer blew all the spare fuses trying to get the electrical system hooked up so we could transfer gas. After blowing all the fuses and still not being successful in getting any electrical power to the booster pump, we began to wonder if we were going to make it home. The Engineer figured out our gas consumption for the three engines, and with the #1 running on reduced power.

I might mention at this point, that on this particular day, I was not flying with my regular crew. I was checking out a new crew for their first combat mission. Lt. Collins P. Byrn was the First Pilot of the crew. The Copilot stayed home that day. This was in accordance with a policy they had put in to have an experienced pilot fly with all new crews on their first mission. We had been losing more inexperienced crews than anything else, so the powers-that-be decided this would be a good idea.

It was a long cold trip back to Yugoslavia, from where we had been in Poland. Once during the trip we spotted a fighter plane formation off to the west of us. We had to drop down inside the clouds and fly for about an hour. We would have been in sad shape if they had caught us. Our electrical circuits were out so the turrets were almost inoperable, except for manual control. The most efficient guns would have been the waist guns, but they were not too effective if attacked from the tail, underneath, front, above; only from the sides.

As we got closer and closer to Yugoslavia, it became more apparent to all of us that we were not going to make it back to Italy. We started the Auxiliary Power Unit (APU) which put out enough electricity to operate the bomb bay doors. We transfer-



**"FLYING WOLF"**  
As Depicted in Model Form  
Courtesy Rory Hicks

red gas back and forth by gravity as much as we could, but it was apparent that we were out of gas, and all the gauges were showing zero when the engines started cutting in and out for lack of gas. We just had too many leaks in the gas tanks.

At this point we opened the bomb bay door, which was the signal to bail out, and the all started bailing out. I sent Lt. Byrn out to make sure that everybody was out of the back end of the plane and out of the nose section. When he said everybody else was out, I told him to go. After he bailed out I left my seat and started back to the bomb bay, stepping onto a flak helmet someone had left there, fell down, and just at that moment one of the engines came back to life. I went back into the cockpit, straightened the airplane out and put all the engines in idle cut-off. I then headed for the bomb bay again. By the time I got to the bomb bay and ready to go out, we were pretty close to the ground, and I could see bushes going by. I stepped into the bomb bay, fell out and didn't bother to count, because when the tail section went by me I pulled the ripcord on my chest pack and saw a beautiful canopy open above me. At the same time I felt intense pain in my groin where one of the straps had pinched me. I took one swing and started to swing backwards when I hit a big bunch of bushes and rolled end over end.

I was down in Yugoslavia, not knowing where I was, nor for sure where the crew was, except I knew the general direction we were heading when we bailed out. Following the general directions we were given by our Intelligence people, when under these conditions, I started gathering up the chute, which was no easy task in all those bushes. I was looking for a good place to hide it when I saw an old man and a young boy coming down a ridge towards me. They seemed friendly and glad to see me. I started to hide the parachute under some bushes when the old man made it very plain that we should bring it with us. I followed him up the ridge with the young boy trailing along behind. The old gentleman had a military looking cap with a red star on it. I later found out that he was a Partisan. I followed the old man up the side of a ridge and in

back of the ridge to a higher elevation to a bunch of trees. we went into the trees and he then led me up to where we could look down into the valley where the plane had crashed.

We saw a truck approach the crash site and when the truck stopped, about ten German soldiers piled out of the back and started looking around the crash. A German Officer got out to watch them search. You could tell he was a Officer by his shiny black horsehide overcoat and the Officer's cap he wore.

When we decided we had seen about all we could from there, I followed the old gentleman up a little path to the back of the ridge. We wallowed through the snow until we came to a Partisan check-point. There was a big log across the path, and four soldiers, with a machine gun, rifles and grenades, that stopped us. The old man explained to them where he found me. We continued on up the mountain until we found a Command Post which was a little log cabin in the trees, with about 20 Partisans. I showed my identification card that I carried in my escape kit. The old man again explained where he had found me. They took me to a back room where there was a bed, gave me something to eat, then left me alone for about an hour. Some time after dark they brought Lt. Byrn in. They had picked him up in another area and brought him into the place where I was.

During the night they brought in another couple members of the crew including Lt. Howard Strausser, the Navigator, who had a broken foot. He had lost his boot on bail out, and broke his foot on a rock when he landed.

The next day they sent us to another area which was further back in the mountains, it was to another Command Post, where we found the other members of the crew and a Lt. L. Clausson and Sgt. Peter Gastz, both of whom were with the OSS, which was our underground Secret Services in Yugoslavia. OSS means Office of Strategic Services.

Besides the First Pilot of the crew; Lt. Collins P. Bym, there was Lt. Howard S. Strausser (Navigator), F/O Seymour Fischer (Bombardier), Cpl. James A. Davis (Engineer), Cpl. Richard J. Stone (Radio Operator), Cpl's. Alfred Noack, Lee R. Brown, Stanislaus Wozniak and Irving Weinstein (Gunnery). I was listed on the form #1 as ACP (Acting Command Pilot), with Lt. Byrn as First Pilot for the mission.

From the start, Lt. Strausser had a terrible looking foot .. it was black and blue and swollen. He suffered terribly until the Partisans brought us some 'Raki' which is a form of Yugoslav whiskey, which we used as an anesthetic to ease his pain. We had to ration him as our supply was limited.

When we first arrived at the Command Post, the American OSS team helped us find a small cabin back in the trees, which had a little wood stove, but not much else. They also gave us two wool Army blankets apiece, which was all they could spare. We slept with our flying suits on, wrapped up in blankets, and we did fairly well on sleep. As to food, they would bring us some of whatever they had each morning. We would have to make it do for all day. I think being out of cigarettes hurt us worse than being low on food because we were really a nervous bunch of guys.

The first two weeks we were in Yugoslavia it snowed almost constantly. The ceiling was bad and there was no possibility of our getting out on a plane, so the OSS team advised us to stay put until they could set-up a pick-up. The Partisans had a hospital about five miles from where we were located, where there was a female doctor. Sgt. Gastz could speak Yugoslav so he went over to see her and brought her back to check Strausser's foot. She declined to do anything to the foot since she had no anesthetic. She did give him a small bottle of pain pills which lasted four or five days. Then we had to go back to 'Raki' to kill the pain.

After about two weeks, or a little over, we were told that they were going to move us to a place closer to the runway from which we could be picked up. We prepared to move and made a stretcher for Lt. Strausser. They assigned us to a man and his wife as guides. The woman was tall, large and strong. We called her husband "The Gorilla," since he looked like one with his big beard and stature. Anyhow, "The Gorilla" wore two crossed cartridge belt and a bunch of grenades (both American and German) on his belts, carried a German Mouser rifle and two German pistols. His wife carried an American Thompson sub-machine gun and several clips for it. The only weapons that we Americans had were the .45 Caliber pistols that were standard issue for American air crews.

Traveling in Yugoslavia was not easy. Outside of the deep snow, the Partisans had felled trees across all paths, moved rocks in the way and booby

traps set in a lot of places. They had very few mines, so they used them mostly on the roads that were used by the Germans. Booby traps were usually a hand grenade with a trip-wire attached to the pin on the grenade (well hidden, of course). We usually walked off the beaten paths so the going was very tiring.

"The Gorilla" and his wife were very playful with each other. On the day we started out, he, with his wife following, led us out and broke the trail for us. We walked for several hours in a light snow and overcast until we came to a tiny crossroad village up in the mountains. Lt. Strausser was in such pain we decided to rest there for a while, and eventually we spent the night there.

The next day we started traveling again and spent the night in a wrecked house. The third day it was snowing again and we could move in the daytime rather freely and not have to worry about German aircraft. Early that morning I saw a Snowshoe rabbit trying to make his way through the snow. I waited until he stopped and then I busted him with my .45. This worried the guides very much, since they were afraid the noise would attract the enemy. Nothing happened, so we had one big rabbit, which I gutted and skinned so that we could transport it. We had him for supper that night when we stopped.

I'm not sure when it was, but about the fourth of fifth day we had traveled on-foot up and down mountains and finally came to a main road, which we would have to cross to get where we wanted to catch the plane. The road had been built by building a rock wall about 30 or 40 feet high, then putting dirt and rocks behind it to form a roadbed. We had reached the wall and started to walk along side of it to find a crossing place when we heard vehicles approaching from around the bend. We immediately got up against the wall and stayed there. Soon we heard the roar of truck engines and the rattle of tank threads. Every so often we could see the snout of a big gun stick out on the curve and then swing back, so we knew that some motorized artillery was going by. We stood up against the wall for almost three hours. So close to the wall that we were almost covered with snow. We figured that an entire motorized Division had gone by above us.

At one time, during the morning, the whole

Division made a rest stop and some of the troops were relieving themselves and speaking German, just above us on the road. Just why none of them ever looked down, I don't know except that our tracks were probably covered, so there was nothing to indicate anyone was down there. In a few minutes the whole Division cranked up and went on. I hadn't realized how cold I was until we were able to move around. I had no feeling in my hands or feet either. My face was almost frozen, but gradually the feeling came back. All the others were almost frozen, too.

We moved up to the road and crossed it, went into a grove of trees where we found a small lean-to. We were so tired we didn't travel the rest of the day, but got into the lean-to and started a fire to warm up. We continued moving the next day. It was a couple days before we arrived at a little landing strip which ran parallel to a little stream which was frozen over. Since the Partisans did not want to stay near the strip, we moved back into the woods and found a windbreak.

The next day the Germans came over and bombed the strip, blowing several big crater holes in it, and left. The following day we all went to work filling in the holes. Some of the Partisans came out of the hills to help us, and "The Gorilla" and his wife worked very hard. We carried dirt in buckets and used pieces of tree stumps, with handles attached, to tamp and smooth the fill in the bomb holes. Towards evening we had most of the holes filled and tamped, and the next morning we completed the job, but the weather didn't cooperate. It started snowing again. About noon the next day the weather broke. We waited and waited. About 2 o'clock that afternoon some P-51's came sailing across the field. One of the most beautiful sights I ever saw. They climbed up and flew top cover, then a British Dakota came in and landed. The Dakota is the same as our C-47, but is modified slightly for the use by the British.

When the British crew came in and landed, we went running out to meet them. As soon as the engines stopped they asked some of us to get up in the plane and help unload the supplies they had brought for the Partisans. They put down a big ramp and started sliding things down, which the

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

Partisans would grab and run to hide as soon as possible. They unloaded gasoline, rifles, ammunition, British combat clothing, big bales of blankets and boxes of rations, and finally, an American Jeep.

Our OSS team had been without transportation quite awhile since their Jeep battery had given out and they had no replacement. They unloaded the new Jeep with two or three extra batteries, plus spark plugs and other spare parts for the Jeep. At the last minute they waved us on board.

We gave what money we had, our Army .45 pistols and most of the heavy flying clothing we had, plus our boots to the Partisans. "The Gorilla" and his wife were with us until we got on the plane. Although, huge and somewhat coarse people, they were wonderful to us. The woman, on several occasions helped us move Lt. Strausser over rough places by picking him up like a baby and just carrying him. They were more than respectful to us, and very gentle with Lt. Strausser. Our communication problem was solved by Lt. Strausser being able to speak German and our guides both spoke some German. At least enough to get by with a lot of gesturing to help out.

For the trip back to Italy we wrapped up in blankets. The old Dakota (or, C-47) got off all right and the P-51's continued to escort us until we crossed the Adriatic shoreline on the way to Italy. About an hour and a half after we took off we landed at the Bari airport and saw some friendly American faces. As we got out of the airplane they loaded us in a truck and took us to the Field Hospital at 15th Air Force Headquarters. We were given hot showers, had our heads shaved, deloused and issued clean uniforms. Lt. Strausser was immediately put in the hospital and we heard later that he had been sent back to the States on a Hospital Ship. We did not hear from him after that.

I had to go through a debriefing with an Intelligence Officer there at Headquarters, which lasted about half a day. The OSS team had entrusted me with a lot of information, which required the use of a special map, and I relayed to the people at Headquarters what information that had been given me about movements of German units in Yugoslavia. Some information they apparently had, and some appeared to be new to them. I was happy when the ordeal was over and I could rejoin the rest of the crew.

After about three days they let us go back to our Base; the 451st Bomb Group, 727th Squadron.



A Lighter Moment From Stateside Training – Savannah, Georgia  
L to R: Lt. Howard Strausser, Cpl Lee Brown, Lt. Ned Smith, F/O Seymour Fischer, Cpl Richard Stone and Lt. Collins Byrn

*What follows is Captain Word's description of the demise of Lt. Byrn's aircraft and crew.*

On the 17th day of February 1945, Lt. Collin P. Byrn's crew flew a mission to Wels Repair Depot in Austria. Because of flak damage had to go into the Isle of Vis, a small island off the coast of Yugoslavia. British forces had taken the island early in WW II and enlarged the little landing strip to make one almost a mile long and wide enough for B-24's and B-17's to land.

Almost every mission our Group, or other Groups, that had badly damaged airplanes, would land on this little island when they couldn't make it back to Italy. The British had a Squadron there to handle the tower and maintenance of the strip, and we had a detachment there of mechanics and a refueling group. A lot of our planes that went into Vis and those that could be repaired, were sent on home.

When Lt. Byrn's plane was badly shot up they went into Vis and landed. The mechanics apparently had another B-24 ready to come back to Italy that belonged to our Group, so the whole crew transferred into the replacement airplane and took off for Italy.

The crew that day consisted of the following: Lt. Collins P. Byrn, Pilot; Lt. Ned E. Smith, Copilot - He was not with us in Yugoslavia; a Navigator (whose name I do not have since Lt. Strausser had been sent back to the States); F/O Seymour Fischer,



Bombardier; Cpl James A. Davis, Engineer; Cpl Richard J. Stone, Radio Operator Cpl Stanislaus Wozniak, Gunner; Cpl Alfred Noack, Gunner; Cpl Irving Weinstein, Gunner; Cpl Lee R. Brown, Gunner.

*(Two names that Captain Word did not list as KIA, were: Lt. Martin Greenberg, Navigator and PFC Paul D. McCarrell, Photographer).*

We had no record of what happened from this point on, except that the aircraft they picked up at Vis gave them trouble and they were unable to

maintain altitude and hit some low mountains in Italy. It was my sad duty to go with the Chaplain and other men to identify the aircraft and crew. I always felt sad when we lost a crew, and some days we lost several. But I had a very deep sense of loss about this crew because we had gone through so much together. I especially remember Collins P. Byrn because he was a very bright, intelligent young man and had a very good rapport with his crew, and tried to keep their spirits up when the going got rough.

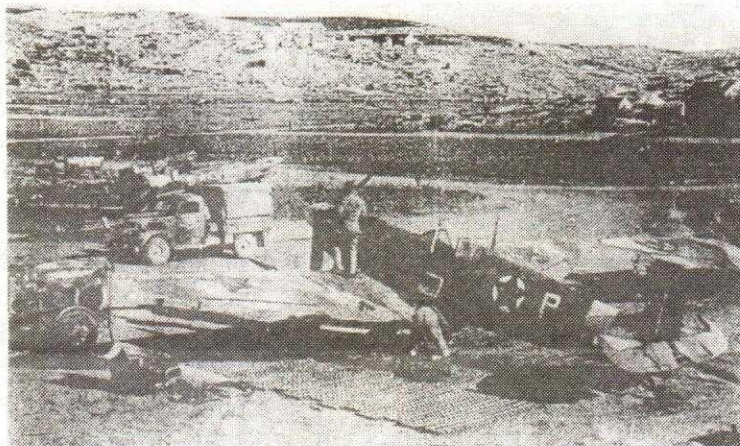
## THE ISLAND OF VIS

### Courtesy of the 460th Bomb Group's Newsletter -- "Black Panther"

The coordinates, latitude 43° 10' North, longitude 16° 8' East, has a special meaning to the 451st Bomb Group air crews. These coordinates define the location of the Isle of Vis (pronounced Vees). Vis played an important role in the history of World War II by providing a safe haven for Fifteenth Air Force air crews returning from missions

to Austria, Poland, Hungary and other targets; some with malfunctioning or badly damaged aircraft, or those not having enough fuel to make it safely back to our base. On one especially hectic day, 37 B-24s landed at Vis. The first use of Vis by the 451st is not recorded in our files, nor the total number of 451st aircraft that sought sanctuary there. But the numbers have to be significant. On many occasions the aircraft would have to be left on the island for repairs, sometimes to be scrapped, or just a stop made to refuel. When an aircraft had to be left behind, crews would sometimes return with a plane from another Group, or be taken to Bari by boat.

While mainly remembered by the 451st as a port in a storm, Vis was much more than just that, and very unusual in a number of ways. It was manned by individuals from the US Army Air Forces, the British Royal Air Force and tech representatives working together for a common cause. Vis was not



VIS

only a place where damaged, or out of fuel, aircraft could land, it was also used as an operational base for Allied aircraft.

Yugoslavia was invaded by the Germans on 6 April 1941, with its surrender on 17 April. An agreement was reached whereby the territory was partitioned, with a new Croat State established under Italian

control. Vis was liberated by Tito's Partisan's in September 1943, and was later used by Tito as a base for directing operations against the German troops in Yugoslavia. The Allies requested, and were given permission by Vrhovni Stab NOVJ (Supreme Command of Yugoslav Partisan Forces) to build and equip an emergency landing strip and base on the island of Vis.

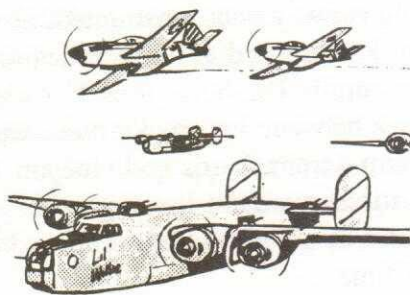
In January 1944, a British Commando Unit arrived on Vis with a radio station for communications with US and British aircraft. In April 1944, a 3,500' steel matting runway was constructed, along with hardstands, defense, and other facilities to service and repair aircraft. The runway on Vis was situated on a flat area between low rocky mountains, bordered by farm homes, barns and vineyards. The accommodations were not luxurious, but adequate. Vis was home to a variety of aircraft and units over a period of time.

In early May 1944 a Squadron of Spitfires was based at Vis for defense. However, German aircraft never reached Vis. Eventually Vis was equipped with salvage teams, first aid and medical personnel, a fire fighting unit, aircraft repair teams, a hospital, heavy truck and bulldozer units for removing crashed planes from the airstrip. From July to September 1944, 215 Allied aircraft landed on Vis, of which 204 were repaired and flown out.

Detachments of the RAF 205th Wing (Wellington and Halifax bombers), Balkan Air Force 254th Wing (Baltimore and Beaufighter bombers) and other units were based on Vis at some time. Notable were the 352nd and 351st Yugoslav Squadrons (RAF) flying Spitfires. As part of the British Balkan Air Force, their operations were limited to flights over Yugoslavia. The Island of Vis will be remembered by many for its contribution to winning the air war in Europe and the Balkans.

Vis is an island of the Dalmation group, located 45 miles west of the Yugoslav coast. It covers thirty-three square miles with the highest point being Mount Hum, near the west end of the island. Today the population of the island of Vis is around 5,000 individuals, scattered among thirteen settlements. The largest of these are Komiza on the west coast and the town of Vis (formerly known as Issa) on the bay of Vis. With the exception of a few springs near Komiza, there is no fresh water on the island. There are fertile valleys of red soil where many vineyards are located; they grow grapes for Viska Vagava, Plavac and white wines. Vis is connected to the mainland by a daily ferry, which runs from Split on the mainland to Komiza, and the town of Vis. The towns and settlements on the Island of Vis are now connected by asphalt roadways. Its main industries are fishing, with fish processing factory at Komiza, citrus farming and wine making.

The main town, known as Vis, is a charming, picturesque village on the north coast of the island.

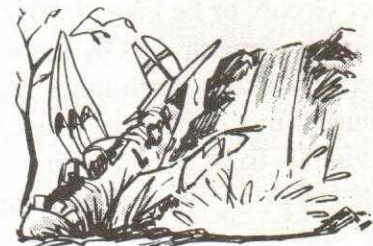


The town and the island are virtually untouched by time. It was not opened to tourism until 1989, so this industry is still in its infancy. With its interesting history, traditional musical and other events that take place in July and August for entertainment, Vis is a great place to spend a quiet holiday. Underwater diving has become an increasingly important part of the tourism; with excellent diving sites off the coast of the island.

The history of the island and the town of Vis go back to ancient times. The town of Vis was founded in the 4th century B.C., by the Greek tyrant of Syracuse, Dionisius the Older. It was then known as Issa. It became an independent city/state, forging its own money and founding its own colonies elsewhere. Later it prospered under Roman rule. From 996 to 1797, it was a Venetian possession. During the Napoleonic Wars it changed hands among the British, French and Austrians, and after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, it belonged to Hungary until 1918.

The colony of Issa was built on the terraces on the northwestern site of the cove. It was fortified in the 17th century by a protective wall along with four towers. Portions of the walls may be seen today. Walls and Mosaics from the baths built in the 1st century A.D. still remain, as do other preserved buildings of the 16th and 17th centuries. These include Gariboldi Palace, the summer residence of the Croatian poet Marin Gazarovic and the Dojmi-Delupis house with its collection of archaeological finds from the Island. Vis is a special place to visit, and a photographer's delight.

*(Editor Note: Thanks to Duane and Betty Bohnstedt: editors and publishers of the 460th Bomb Group's newsletter, "Black Panther," for permission to copy, with slight modifications to the text so as to make it acceptable to our readers. And to Zeljko Bocek, air War historian, living in Sisak, Croatia, whose research and efforts also went into this article.)*



# ERNIE CUMMINS' 60th AIR SERVICE SQUADRON JOURNAL

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

**24 January 1945**

Well, we had another snow here. One morning we awoke to find a couple of inches on top of everything. The next day Johnny Wilson and I were cruising around the countryside in a Jeep during a short but heavy snow-fall; we had "visibility zero" for a time when we couldn't see past the front bumper. The Topkick knew where he wanted to go however, seemed to smell his way across the fields as we were quite a ways off any road. Once we got bogged down once for about half an hour, and another time flooded the engine in a small "lake" of muddy water, delaying us for another half hour. The Sarge sure laughed at me when I fell on my face in the mud .. but even I realized it must have looked comical. I was pushing hard on the Jeep's hood to help it out of the hole it was sunk in, when suddenly the spinning wheels took hold and the damned thing shied backwards, leaving me pushing nothing but thin air. When we reached our destination we found that Sgt. Casey (our ex-neighbor) had failed to arrive with his truck. He used good judgement and returned to camp.

### NOTE

Sergeant Jack Casey was the 60th expert in salvaging any parts that could be reused. From any "totaled out" aircraft, he'd find something usable. In reference to him as an "ex-neighbor," meant his home address was on the same street as mine - San Francisco Blvd.

### \*\*\*\*\*COMMENT\*\*\*\*\*

On one occasion there was a missing ship that went unfound for many weeks. A quiet little Italian peasant showed up at the back gate to Castelluccio Airfield. He had in his possession the dog tags of an American. The guard passed him inside and he went to the Motor Pool office nearby trying to find someone who understood his language. We took



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

him to the Squadron Office and learned that up in the mountains to the west of us was a crashed ship, "Like those out there" (pointing to the B-24s parked on the hardstand). It turned out to be from another Bomb Group, but by checking the dog tags against missing crews, the parent Group was notified and they sent a couple of Officers to our field to accompany the peasant back to the wreck. the 60th ambulance went along with body bags.

It was two days before they returned, as they had some hard climbs to reach the wreckage, which may still lie in that steep

canyon. These out-of-the-way wrecks had one thing in common; the bodies were sure to have been looted of anything usable. They could be stripped of clothing, boots and watches. The parachutes would be gone, taken for the fabric, along with the straps and buckles. Flashlights, emergency rations, life rafts, medical kits, plexi-glass windows and turret domes, and the tires for making sandals, was a popular item. The country's economy had been on a war footing for so long that the people were starved for even a piece of cloth to make a dress or shirt from, and you couldn't blame them for grabbing what they could.

### 8 February 1945

Honey, you don't ever have to worry about me loaning or losing dough. The few cases when I got "stuck" were excusable. For instance Rabbit, who was sent home after his accident. I expect he will send me what he borrowed, but if he can't send it, at least he had a lot of fun while on pass with me, and he can tell his wife and kids that Italy had some good times in it. I feel sorry for that fellow, but with excellent hospital care he can get in the States, perhaps he won't be crippled up. (On 20 November 1944, Ernie reported that Cornelius 'Rabbit' Sanford suffered a severely broken leg).

**13 February 1945**

Dear Mabel: The two money orders came together in yesterday's mail, and the Mail Clerk took 'em in and cashed them for me. The dough is safely tucked away and I'll sure make use of this on my way home, if I can't make the trip we were talking about .. Thank you Peanut.

Well, more work has piled up around here, and I do mean "piled." Today was a pip of a sunny day. It reminded me of the Washington' Birthdays of past years in California when I could always count on fine weather. Gee, I hope it stays clear for awhile.

We have a new building in camp which houses the P.X., our Orderly Room, the Mail Box and a Dark Room for photo work. The old Orderly Room is now the Squadron Supply, so most of our departments are settled in good warm quarters. The next construction involves a new "Day Room," to take the place of our big circus tent affair. Golly, what will become of these buildings after the war?

My tentmate, Albert Kondraski, is standing under the light, trimming his mustache with a double edged razor blade held in his fingers. This delicate operation causes me to look and admire. I use the blade IN the holder, only!

Peanut, I have your letter of the 22nd, telling me of the hike up Tamalpais. I remember where Boot Jack Camp is, having been there several times. And I can tell you were every curve is on the road to Stinson Beach, too. Wish we were heading there next Sunday morning in our little Dodge! Ah me!

Well darling, a quick shave and I'll be off to the movie --Tonight it's "Summer Storm," with Linda Darnell. Good Night baby and keep a lookout for me .. Gotta stay cheerful and wait for the breaks, I guess. -- Love and Stuff .. Ernie

**15 February 1945**

Dear Mabel: There is a big party in the Club for the two years we've been overseas. There seems to be quite a few of the ex-60th men visiting here over these anniversary days. But I limit myself to one Vermouth, so my day was a quiet one.

Remember Peanut, my mentioning a fellow we call Little Willie? Well, he has a brother in a Base near here, a Pilot who just came overseas three months ago. Willie goes down to see the Looney, or

the Officer comes up here, perhaps once a week. Last night, as I was resting after supper, really intending to get started on this letter, and while reading the Stars & Stripes to get the news, Willie pops in and asked me to go with him down to his brother's for a last visit. Tomorrow Willie starts for his 30 day leave at home. But before you cheer honey, he has more time overseas than anyone else in the 60th.

I figured it would be a good chance to stop and see Gabe and Steve, both of whom live "en-route" to the Looney's field. So off we Jeoped at about seven P.M. And what did I learn but that Gabe was in the hospital for a minor operation, and Steve was also in the same hospital with yellow jaundice. It was too late to visit them, so we continued on to Willie's brother. Our visit there was short, as that Group was flying the next morning and the crews were going to bed early. So we decided to look in on the Service Squadron on that field, where some twenty or so old 60th men were transferred over a year ago. We went into their Club, bought a toasted sandwich and coffee, then made a tour of the tents 'til I found the whole gang whooping it up in one of the tents. I talked with a couple of the guys I was with at Hamilton, Rice Field, etc. We talked about "The Good Old States," and eventually came bouncing back home to deliver a dozen messages to other friends of theirs, here in camp. Thinking it over, Mabel, the guys that made up this outfit have sure covered a lot of ground and are scattered around the map, too.

Saw Bob Adams down there and kidded him on HIS Mabel always telling MY Mabel when the mail from Italy was coming in. Also, his promises to be on the trip home "any day," which have been stretched out to months and years.

Well, that is the dope on last night -- I'm taking the day off tomorrow to see Gabe and Steve. I think Ray Brackney is going with me.

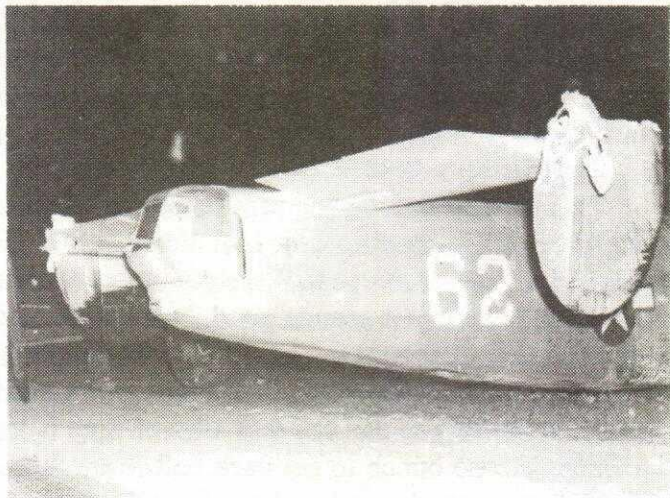
**\*\*\*\*\*COMMENT\*\*\*\*\***

On a February evening I got hooked into an accident that had to be seen to be believed. The planes were landing "downhill," as a low overcast was dripping rain and that approach was further from obscured hills, thus safer to use. The mission

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

had been a long one and it was almost dark, not because of sunset, but on account of the cloud cover. As usual the crash equipment is sitting under the tower and the ships are landing left to right, from our viewpoint. One Squadron gets in okay, and the next is in the circling pattern to hit the strip. The second plane in this bunch blew a tire and swerved slightly to the left, which put the tire off the planking and into the mud. It came to a sudden stop, but nothing collapsed, and the plane sat across from the tower with it's nose off the runway and the tail sticking over the edge. The pilot raced his engines but could not budge the mired left main gear. The tower fired a red flare, so the other circling ships were to wait while we cleared the obstruction.

The Cleatrac got a tow bar on the nose wheel, and we put the C-2 out in front of the plane and unwound some wire cable from the rear winch to tie onto the strut. Before we could move the plane, the airborne ships started landing again, ignoring the red flares. (We later learned they were short of fuel and didn't relish stooing around in a holding pattern. Two of the "landees" kept to the far side of the strip and barely missed the tail of our mired plane. I put a strain on the cable and it started to move, very slowly, with the line of motion at right angles to the runway. The next plane to land does not stay far enough right and his wingtip neatly slices off the top half of both vertical stabilizers on the towed plane. The slicing plane continues down the strip another quarter mile, then he too leaves the planking and occupies the muddy margin, making two damaged, so far.



Possible A/C Involved In Incident

Another aircraft makes a great effort and clears all those messes, sort of weaving between one and the other on the wet slippery surface. But the following pilot is unable to follow that route, and from where I'm standing it appears that his path will either hit the ship that I'm hooked onto, or maybe even go on my side of it, which would put him into the wrecker. Seeing no way to avoid a hard collision, and due to his crew being clustered in the nose section for landing, the pilot elects not to plow head on. So he locks his brakes on one side and full throttled the opposite engines, putting him in a broadside slide. When contact occurred, it was wings first, penetrating the side of the other's fuselage. I see running shapes in the dusk, but can't count how many. Now we have two complete wrecks, as well as a wing job further down the strip.

It is funny how our feet will take your body one direction while your brain is telling them to hasten in the other. I found myself halfway inside the waist window of the second plane, checking to see if any of the crew were still inside. To my shock there was a rack full of 500 pounders hanging in the Bomb Bay, and only then did I realize the mission had been scrubbed and all these aircraft had been skating passed me with their bellies full. The last two Squadrons were sent to another Base, and flew "home" the next day. Which was after we sorted out the junk piles and spliced a few planks on the torn spots of the runway.

The amazing thing about many accidents was they caused no deaths, and few serious injuries, providing no fire resulted. It may be worth noting that never did we have fire fighting equipment for the larger blazes. Planes had engine "snuffers" built in; fuel trucks and wreckers had carbon dioxide extinguishers, suitable for small fires only. If a big one occurred, it simply kept burning until the fuel was exhausted. There may have been Bases overseas with deluxe fire suppression equipment, but I never saw any.

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Once the outcome of the war in Europe was clear, the Washington Brass put into effect their manpower plans to shift the pressure to the Pacific Theater. No longer were combat trained Infantry sent in our direction as replacements for front line losses. In the spring of 1945 all the rear echelon people started a giant swap program with Infantry,

Artillery, Signal and Engineering Battalions, who were under strength. How that affected the 60th was; we lost about 30 men, all of them single and none in the first three grades of rank. What we got in return were veterans from the combat divisions who were recuperating from wounds, or battle fatigue.

As you can imagine, this Infantry duty was not a popular move as far as the rear area lads were concerned. Truckers, bakers, laundrymen, office workers in depots, wire stringers, disc jockeys, bomb haulers; all sent their quotas to the Infantry training camps. What they got back was a strange mixture.

Kennedy came to us from the front lines, via a military hospital in Naples. As a resident of my tent, he was of a stockier build, had bushy hair, with vigorous pair of eyebrows and with a mustache resembling a street sweeper's broom. He limped some, as he was recovering from a broken ankle suffered when a mule fell on him while they were packing munitions into his Division's sector of the mountains up north. The part of his mule skinning job that got to him was bringing the dead from the battlefield, back down the trails to cowsheds and orchards, where trucks took over from the four footed beasts of burden. Some shrink had decided that Kennedy was getting unstable from the strain of lashing corpses onto pack animals, and that was the reason he didn't have to return to the fighting front.

Kennedy had a habit of diving under tables in the Mess Hall, or into a slit trench, whenever the sound of aircraft engines came swooping low overhead. It was self-preservation where he use to live, but common everyday racket, almost unnoticed by us. We put him to work driving a water truck that distributed to the Mess, our showers and to Lister Bags. Once he learned where the water point was near Foggia, he got along fine, and eventually he calmed down enough to ignore planes warming up only a hundred yards away.

One of the old hands that we lost to the Infantry was 'Broken Nosed Dickson,' the professional hobo. At the time the list was made up, but not yet made public, some pal of his whispered in his ear that he was on it. So Dick made his financial arrangements accordingly. From blackjack games of the past month, some three hundred dollars were owed to Dickson, and he saw little chance of col-

lecting after he was transferred. So he quietly borrowed a like sum from others that were not leaving, and when his farewell was taken he switched the payors and payees to each other.

Another transfer we received in 1945 was a very intelligent trooper, but had a serious physical defect. We called him 'Pop,' due to his advanced age, which was enough so that he didn't have to be there at all. He came from New York City, had joined up after his son enlisted, who was somewhere in the South Pacific. Pop wanted to do his part, too.

At 42 years of age, Pop had terrible eyesight. Even with glasses I don't know how he passed a physical exam. In the Motor Pool, where he was sent to work, we would draw him maps and tell him in miles (or Kilos), the distance between road junctions, but he still got hopelessly lost when driving. He missed Unit marking signs, arrows pointing the way to a water point, or signs over doors saying, "Unload here." He wasn't bad company when two men could travel together, but as a solo operator; a total flop. Back in New York he had been a Customs Inspector on the docks for many years. After some examples of his "semi-blindness," we thought about going into the smuggling business after peace broke out, but only if his Customs Mates worked the same way.

**(Excerpt of letter written 17 February 1945)**

We have a generator right in camp, instead of near the shops, and my tent is closest to it. When the engine went bad, it was replaced with another model and this new one has no muffler, so the darned thing sounds like a couple of motorcycles are running under my cot. If we fellows are tired enough, we don't notice it. But some nights the noise drives us all crazy until the lights are turned out. I think I'll catch me a Jeep and tear off the muffler to quiet the beast down.

**21 February 1945**

This furlough home business has some of the old timers all hopped up. But I wouldn't bet a nickel we will get to use that system before the war is ended. In theory it sounds good, but think of the travel time for each man. The fellows who left my tent early in December are not expected back until mid-March. So you can see that a lot of time is lost waiting for one bunch to get back before another group leaves.

Along that same subject; When your brother

gets his chance to come home from the Pacific, I'll bet he doesn't turn it down, as he suggested he might. They all say that, until their C.O. says, "Now is your chance," then they scream for a pen to sign the papers.

We fellows, in this tent, received a letter from Bob Bricker, the cook who is now "Somewhere in Cleveland." He tells us what a swell time he is having at home. We can hardly wait until he gets back. We will have many stories to listen to. Mostly about girls, past drunks, girls, future drunks, home cooking, and more girls.

Well, that noisy generator I spoke about, that sits right outside my tent, has been replaced with a quieter one --Hurray! We are lucky to have lights at all, as many Officer's tents in other outfits are sporting nothing but candles, or oil lamps.

You asked about Gabe Laxalt and Steve Tanner. Funny thing -Gabe phoned from his "office" this afternoon and made arrangement for a meeting next Sunday, He thinks Steve is due to go home, suffering from yellow jaundice and asthma, and is still in the hospital. There was a Red Cross girl from San Francisco, who came from her station, some hundred miles from here, to visit Steve and "Hollywood Kistler," both of whom knew her when we were at Hamilton. She saw Kistler, here in camp, but Tanner had been transferred to another hospital last week. So he did not have the pleasure of having her visit him .. poor soul.

This afternoon, while I was sitting in the crash truck, out by the control tower, sweating out the landings, the Red Cross wagon drove up with doughnuts for the combat men. Of course we "Ground Grippers: always manage to talk the girls out of a couple for ourselves. And since I was feeling hungry, I gobbled a half dozen real quick. It's no wonder I feel stuffed! Also, the Mess Hall had some ice cream for desert - first time in months.

Yesterday was the day for greasing the equipment, so Ray and I got that dirty job out of the way. Rains have been letting us alone lately. It is a relief to work without having mud up to our knees. Harold Crooks is back after several months at another field. Now he is troubled with skin rash and sore teeth, etc. Seems he is never in A #1 shape. When he recovers from one ailment, something else bothers him.

You will laugh at the nickname I've got now. I still don't know why everyone thinks it is appro-

priate. Somewhere one of my buddies was reading a novel with a character named "Lord Cummings," so from then on I was "Lord." Now the rest of the doggies took up on it and in southern dialect it is "Lawd Cummins" for my handle. Maybe the mustache is responsible, Huh? If I ever run across Duke Sloetzer again, I'll pull my rank on him -- Doesn't a Lord hold a higher position than a Duke?

Love n'stuff - Ernie

**8 March 1945**

Darling Mabel: Five P.M. and I'm off early due to a mistake on the Guard Roster. So now it's a fine time to write a letter to Peanut. A telephone summons to eat early chow and to take the first shift was okay, but when I reported for duty there was another guy ready to do it. So now my regular shift tomorrow night will be in effect.

Remember some time ago I mentioned hoisting rafters into place for a new Mess Hall, serving a flying outfit? Well, yesterday a call came in to lift a water tank at the same organization's camp, so over I went. And sure enough there was a four thousand gallon tank to lift onto an overhead rack. When I got back to the 60th, and was sitting in the office, the phone rings once again. The same Major who made the original request, said I did a fine job at the EM's Mess Hall. BUT, unfortunately I lifted the wrong tank, and he still has a truck waiting to be unloaded of it's tank at the Officer's Mess Hall. So over again to do the job I was originally sent for - such a dizzy business!

Last night I was having a pinochle game with Ray and Harold Crooks when a call came in to lift the nose of a plane whose wheels had collapsed on landing. So you see this darned work is varied as the devil, and the times are like "Fireman's Hours," to say the least.

Well, the mail is in and I'm going to check mine and mail this one as well. All my love from the bottom of my heart to the sweetheart of them all - mit smackeroos.

Your Lawd Cummins



# PSALM FOR A NEW ENLISTED MAN

(Author Unknown)

Lo all ye miserable sinners, entering through the gate of enlistment into the land of khaki, harken unto my words; for I have dwelt in this land for many months and mine eyes have witnessed all manner of folly and woe.

Verily I have tasted of the bitter fruit of TS and drained the dregs of the cup of SNAFU.

Grid up thy lions my son and take up the olive drab, but act slowly and with exceeding care and harken first to counsel of a wiser and sadder man than thou.

Beware thou of the Sergeant who is called 'First;' he hath a pleased and foolish look but he concealeth a serpent in his heart.

Avoid him when he speaketh low and his lips smileth; he smileth not for thee; his heart rejoiceth at the sight of thy youth and thine ignorance.

He will smile and his smile will work all manner of evil against thee. A wise man shuns the Orderly Room but the fool shall dwell in the kitchen forever.

Unto all things there is a time; there is a time to speak and a time to be silent. Be thou like unto stone in the presence of thy superiors and keep thy tongue still when they shall call for volunteers.

The wise man searcheth out the easy details, but only a fool sticketh out his neck.

Look thou with disfavor upon the newly made Corporal; he prizeth much his stripes and is proud and foolish; he laugheth and joketh much with the older Non-Coms and looketh upon the Private with a frown.

He would fain to go to OCS, but he is not qualified.

Know thou that the Sergeant of the Mess is a man of many moods; when he looketh pleased and his words are like honey, the wise KP seeketh him out and praiseth his chow and laugheth much at his jests.

But when he moveth with great haste and the sweat standeth on his brow and he curseth under his breath, make thyself scarce, for he will fall like a whirlwind upon the idle and the Goldbrick shall know his wrath.

The Supply Sergeant is a lazy man and worketh not. But he is the keeper of many good things. If thou wouldst wear well fitting rainment and avoid the Statement of Charges, make him thy friend.

He prizeth drunkenness above all things.

He careth not for praise and flattery, but lend him thy lucre and thy liquor and he will love thee.

Hell had no fury like a Shavetail scorned. He walketh with a swagger and regardeth the Enlisted Man with a raised eyebrow; he looketh upon his bars with exceeding pleasure and loveth a salute mightily.

Act thou lowly unto him and call him Sir and he will love thee.

Damned be he who standeth first in line of Chow and short-stoppeth the dessert and cincheth the coffee.

He taketh the meat with a heavy hand and leaveth thee the bony parts.

He is trice cursed and all people, even unto the PFC's, will revile him and spit on him; for his name is called Chow Hound and he is an abomination.

Know thou the Big Operator, but trust him not. He worketh always upon a deal and he speaketh confidentially.

He knoweth many women and goeth into town every night; he borroweth all thy money, yea even unto thy ration check.

He promiseth to fix thee up, but he doth it not.

Beware thou the Old Man for he will make thee sweat; when he approacheth look thou on the ball; he loveth to chew upon thy posterior.

Keep thou out of sight and let him know thee not by name for he who arouseth the wrath of the Old Man shall go many times unto the Chaplain.

**AMEN**



## "LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON

### (Continued 14th Installment by Dr. Royal C. Gilkey)

Another mission to Germany took place on September 23, 1944. Then 13 Squadron P-38s furnished escort on withdrawal for six groups of 5th Wing heavy bombers attacking the Brux Gegius Oil Refineries in Germany. Again, no enemy aircraft were seen; and the flak was moderate. This was a longer mission than the proceeding day, amounting to 1,350 miles. It remains to describe it more particularly. Squadron pilots took off at 0920 hours (9:20 a.m.) flying second in the Group towards rendezvous with the bombers at 5017N 1357E. Rendezvous was effected at 1230 hours (12:30 p.m.), the altitude being 28,000 feet. Our P-38s then escorted the bombers to Caorle on the coast of the Gulf of Venice (constituting the northern part of the Adriatic Sea). There they took their departure from the bombers at 1415 hours (2:15 p.m.), their altitude being 18,000 feet. The bombers were flying a good formation within the groups; but the groups themselves seemed scattered. The fighters maintained a good formation. The route they flew was as briefed, except for the penetration beyond the scheduled rendezvous to a point some 20 miles south of the bombers' target, its coordinates being 5017N 1357E.

No enemy aircraft put n an appearance. There was flak in the target area. More flak was encountered at 1300 hours (1 p.m.), coming from a location pinpointed as 4812N 1402E. From 27,000 feet, the pilots observed three large airdromes, one having as many as eight big hangars plus a concrete runway, in an area around Wels (4812N 1402E). Bomb-dust and gray smoke covered the town that was bombed. A contrail consisting of flack smoke was seen from 26,000 feet in the target area at 1220 hours (12:20 p.m.). One "Hangman" reported seeing, from 28,000 feet, a stream of black smoke going down

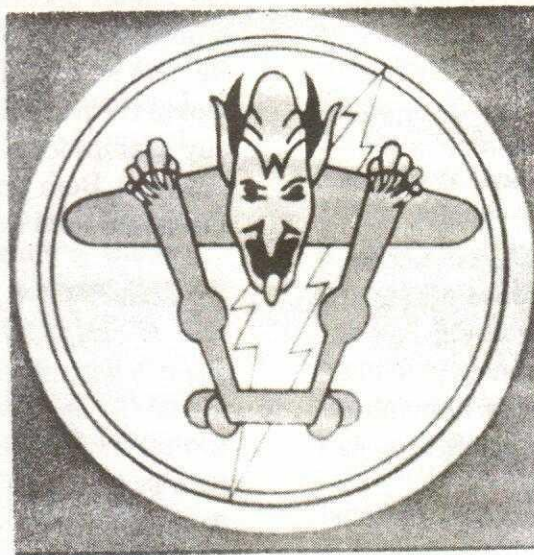
into the midst of the flak over the target. Cirrus overlay the target at 32,000 feet. Cloud cover atop the Alps was 10/10s cirrus at 30,000 feet.

The P-38s made radio contact with the bombers and were told that there would be about a 20-minute delay in bombing. At 1531 hours (3:31 p.m.), 13 "Hangmen" returned to base, each receiving sortie credit.

The 23 September 1944 mission flown by the 49th Fighter Squadron was to be the last on for an extended period. In fact, it wasn't until 4 October 1944 the "Hangmen" would take to the air again on a combat assignment. The lull was the result of stand-downs for the remainder of September. October started out the same way, with no operational flying until October 4, 1944. "Hangmen" Squadron went on with daily routines during this interim. Personnel anticipated the advent of cold weather by readying their warmer clothing. Some were aware that this might well be the end of summer in combat because of noteworthy Allied gains on far-flung war fronts. When would the German and Japanese forces finally give up the ghost in the realization that the jug was up in the face of overwhelming Allied pressure on all fronts? Nobody could say for certain, but there was a growing feeling of optimism in the air. Of course, everybody realized that

hard fighting lay ahead and were bracing themselves for that.

The Squadron diary ticked off the last days of September with laconic entries. On September 24, 1944, it noted that a stand-down was declared for the day. September 25th announced that another stand-down had been ordered. On September 26th, the third consecutive day of stand-downs occurred. Mention was made of the Squadron's being busy with winterization of the shacks housing the soldiers, who also began dragging out their winter clothes from foot-



Wartime Insignia of the 49th Fighter Squadron

lockers and barracks bags. Furs and woolens would be needed all too soon and so were taken out of moth balls. No one looked forward to the onslaught of a harsh Italian winter. The days of "sunny Italy" in summer were receding into memory. Report of another stand-down on September 27th was followed by a rather uninspiring comment, witness: "It is very quiet and dull around here." At least, the entry for September 28th spoke of "Another day of peace." Nobody would want it otherwise. On September 29th, the diarist wrote: The 49th is having a lull. WE haven't flown a mission in six days. Everyone is eager to have something happen." September ended with this comment on the 30th: "Today is very inactive. The planes are non-operational due to weather conditions." The same was true of October 1st. On October 2nd, it was revealed: "The 49th is undergoing its longest period of inactivity while (since becoming) operational. The last day of consecutive stand-downs on October 3rd showed indications of changes in the offing. New flying officers were assigned to the Squadron on that date. One of them, George E. Hochstetler, who would be remembered as the pilot who flew the Squadron's Intelligence Officer, Newly-promoted to 1st Lt. Royal C. Gilkey, to Rome Piggyback in his P-38.

*Editor: While the 49th Fighter Squadron may have experienced a lull in flying combat missions from 24 September 1944 and the first three days of October, the 451st was not as fortunate. On 24th and 25th of September the 451st flew two consecutive missions to Athens, Greece. Mission #127, on 24 September the 451st bombed the Eleusis Air-drome, and mission #128, the following day, we bombed the Sub/Pens, near Athens. It wasn't until 4 October that we flew again. And this time in the company of the "Hangmen" Squadron. What follows is Lt. Gilkey's report):*

On October 4, 1944, Squadron P-38s took off from Triolo Landing Ground, bound for Munich, Germany. They led the 14th Fighter Group in providing close escort to two groups of heavy bombers from the 49th Wing, whose purpose as to bomb Munich West Marshalling Yard. Take-off time was 0918 hours (9:18 a.m.) for the 17 Squadron "Lightnings," one of which had to return early because of mechanical trouble. The 16 remaining "Hangmen" met the bombers as they passed

through the rendezvous point over Caorle. Time and altitude for the rendezvous were 1134 hours (11:34 a.m.) at 23,000 feet. From Caorle on the north-central shore of the Adriatic Sea, our pilots accompanied the heavies to Munich and provided them with close escort on penetration to the target, which was reached at 1205 hours (12:05 p.m.). Flying at 26,000 feet, the P-38s stayed in the target area until 1215 hours (12:15 p.m.), when they left with the withdrawing bombers. They escorted the bombers to a point over the Adriatic's Gulf of Venice at 4500N 1315E. Down to an altitude of 18,000 feet, our planes left them there at 1315 hours (1:15 p.m.) and flew directly back to base, landing at 1420 hours (2:20 p.m.). All 16 "Hangmen" received sortie credit at the end of their 1,050 mile trip. At the interrelation, they called the mission a success, having observed a stick of bombs dropped right on target. The bombs stitched across the targeted marshalling yards, with a few bomb-bursts seen nearby. Both bombers and fighter formations were good. No enemy aircraft were encountered, that there was a lot of flak over the target area. the heavy barrage-type flak there, was intense and accurate. More flak was observed over Trieste just north of the Istrian Peninsula. From 20,000 feet, our pilots saw a big ship riding at anchor (4546N 1333E) and eight other large vessels anchored in Trieste's harbor at 1310 hours (1:10 p.m.). The two groups of the 49th Wing, under escort, flew in good formation, as did the fighters. Target weather was CAVU. Our pilots saw a couple of bombers exploded 20,000 feet over the target area at 1205 hours (12:05 p.m.), without any chutes opening. Poor radio discipline was reported, the B-24s having made contact with the fighters to inform them that in 21 minutes they would be over the target. None of our fighters made any attempt to make radio contact with the heavies, however. Both Squadron and Group were led by Colonel Daniel S. Campbell.

*Editor: Gratefully the two "heavies" that were seen to explode over the target were not from the 451st. That's not saying that Munich wasn't costly to our Group. For on the 23rd of October 1944 we lost a/c #42-51337, with Pilot 1LT James H. Becklund in control. Ten evaded, one became a POW. And, again, over Munich on 16 November 1944, a/c #44-10623 piloted by 2LT Jack G. Holtz, with 11 onboard (2 KIA - 9 POW) was lost.*

## ROAMING WITH THE 451st

On August 16, 1942, I went to the recruiting station at Johnson City Tennessee and was sent to Camp Forrest, Tennessee for induction. About a week later I was sent to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia for all the tests, shots, etc. From there I was shipped to Atlantic City, New Jersey for basic training.

My first impression was "Wow!" All the fabulous hotels and famous Boardwalk!" Most unmilitary. However, when I was assigned to the 13th floor of Haddon Hall and discovered it had been stripped to the bare walls, with just an iron bed on a concrete floor, and we couldn't use the elevator, I decided it wasn't so great. We did all our drilling and marching on the Boardwalk, which was lined with civilian onlookers who cheered us on, so that wasn't too bad.

About a month later, I was on a train bound for Lincoln Field, Nebraska for an 18 week course in Aircraft Mechanics. I made many good friends here, two of whom were Arnold Swift and Jimmie Ralston, who were with me for the rest of the war. On a cold day (-30) January 20, 1943, we were sent to Chanute Field, Illinois for specialist training. My specialty was propellers, which lasted 8 weeks. I was in the first class to be promoted to Corporal upon graduation.

From Chanute we were sent to Salt Lake City, Utah for reassignment and this began my shuttle trips between Utah and Nebraska. A short time later, 8 to 10 days, an order was posted on the bulletin board to fall out in the company street at 8 a.m. There were 42 names on the list including Swift and Ralston, along with mine. The Sergeant formed us up just as a Jeep drove up with a 2nd Lieutenant and a seatful of records. He called out, "Corporal Anderson, step forward." Then he proceeded to tell me that I was in charge of a 42-man



Sgt Jarvis Anderson  
725th Bomb Squadron  
Propeller Section Specialist

(By: Jarvis D. Anderson

shipment to be boarded on two Pullman cars and one Diner for Dyersburg, Tennessee. I got that job because my name was on the top of the list.

When we got underway, I realized this was not going to be a pleasure trip. The Conductor took me in tow and gave me a handful of papers which turned out to be ration coupons for coffee, sugar and meat, which had to be filled out and signed three times a day for each man. Boy, did I get writer's

cramp.

But there was more to come. Since I was about the smallest man aboard, at 160 pounds, some of the larger and rowdier ones threatened and tried to scare me. But my friend, Jimmie Ralston, who stood about 6 feet 2 inches and weighed about 220, came to my rescue. He told them that anyone who tried to lay a hand on me would have to answer to him. That ended the problem.

On the morning of the third day we pulled into Memphis, where our two Pullmans and Dining car were cut loose and pushed backwards to Dyersburg and onto a spur track to the Air Base. I had talked with the Conductor and told him that we had a breakfast meal coming, so we were served there on the spur track. I don't think the train crew liked that decision.

Dyersburg Air Base was home to the 346th Bomb Group, a B-17 outfit commanded by Colonel John Morman, in training for the European campaign. It was most interesting to note that many of the senior NCOs, who trained at Dyersburg, were veterans of the famous 19th Bomb Group of the Pacific war under General MacArthur. They didn't talk much about their ordeal at the hands of the Japanese. I also discovered that Andrew J. Döbernic, a former Chicago Cubs baseball pitcher had made the trip from Salt Lake City with me and we

became good friends, thereafter. He was an Aircraft Electrician, later assigned to the 725th Squadron, along with me.



Sgt. Andrew "Jess" Dobernic  
725th Aircraft Electrician

The original cadre of men -- Ground Crews -- was formed into four Squadrons at Dyersburg and on July 19, 1943, we found ourselves boarding a train for a long trip back to Utah, this time to a place called Wendover. It must have gotten its name from "wind over the desert," because it was blowing constantly. Here we separated into Squadron areas. Captain John P. Davis was Commander of the 725th, and our Mess Sergeant was Carl Nosco, one of the best cooks I can remember. I also remember eating horse meat here, because I helped unload it off the truck. When we were given time off, we would visit across the state line at Elko, Nevada, and some other watering holes in Utah. I began collecting a supply of silver dollars to take home as souvenirs. I bought a money belt and filled it with 30 of them, which added quite a few pounds to my middle. Some pre-overseas furloughs were started at Wendover, but I didn't get mine until we were in Nebraska.

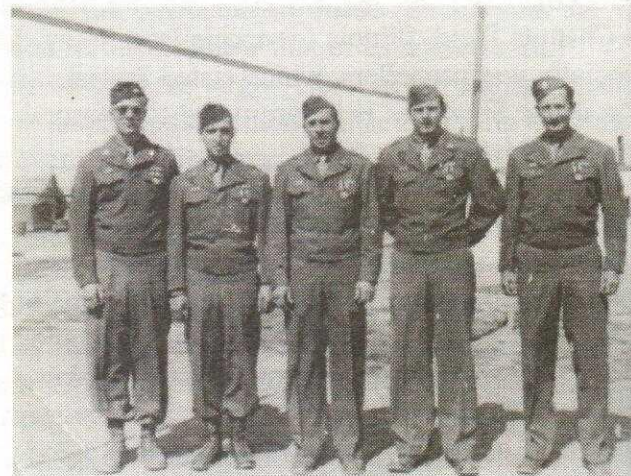
We didn't have very many planes at Wendover, and the ones we had were older models without nose turrets. As I remember, they were painted brown, like the desert. One of them, which had crashed, was still there and used for spare parts.

September came and once again we found ourselves on a troop train headed east. But this time we weren't in Pullman cars. Our coaches looked like leftovers from pre-WW-I, but after a couple of days they carried us to our new destination, Fair-

mont, Nebraska. So I was back in the "Cornhusker State," just about an hour away from Lincoln where I had spent several months at A & E School. This made my teammate, Wilbur Fowler, happy since he lived nearby and could visit home often.

Fairmont must have been a new Base constructed just for us because we were the only unit there -- and we had barracks -- no more tents! I did get my pre-overseas furlough here, a ten-day affair from October 3 to 13, and that was a nice time of year to go to Tennessee and see the changing of the leaves in the Smoky Mountains where I was born and raised. With the war getting into high gear everyone was so kind and generous, asking if I had seen their "Johnny" somewhere. However, it was sad time because all of my friends were gone. So I was glad that my leave was for only 10 days, although leaving my family was sad.

When I returned to Fairmont, I found that we had received more planes, with nose turrets and names and pictures painted on their noses. This was exciting! Since these were new planes, we didn't have very much trouble with the propellers so I was given an additional job, that of servicing the planes with oxygen for their high altitude training. This meant getting out of a warm bed at 4 a.m., taking a six-by-six truck, loading it with several oxygen cylinders and filling all our planes. Always taking care not to get any oil or grease on the fittings. I didn't lose any! Those late October/November mornings were pretty cold, and the oxygen cylinders were cold to handle with frost building up on the fittings.



Recipients of Good Conduct Ribbon  
Louis Rietzow, J.D Anderson, Lawrence Beliel, Arnold Swift,  
James Balch

By the middle of November all 62 aircraft and crews began to leave Fairmont, via Lincoln, by flights of 10 or so daily, and by the end of the month all planes were gone. On the 26th of November the Ground Crews boarded a train and headed for Hampton Roads, Virginia. After a fine Thanksgiving dinner on the 28th we were prepped for overseas shipment; shots, lectures and clothing issues for Europe. On December 1st the 725th and the 726th Squadrons boarded the Liberty ship, USS John S. Pillsbury and steamed out into the cold Atlantic to join an 80-ship convoy to North Africa. Those of us who had never sailed before thought this must be the largest ship in the Navy, but really it was rather small and had a top speed of only 6 knots, due to bad engine rings.

After being in the hold with 200 plus other guys for a few days with no showers, things began to get a little close. So I began to spend most of my time on-deck, watching the bow of the ship go up and down in the stormy waters. When it got too cold, I got under the tarps covering the on-deck cargo. By day the convoy would spread out so that only 15 to 20 ships were visible; but before dark it would close up again for protection.

The trip over was one long 3-week card game in a smoke-filled hold for lots of the guys. They came on-deck for meals twice a day -- if they weren't too sick. We had K and C rations twice each day, heated by suspending the cans in a G.I. tub of boiling water, which was also used for mess kit washing. Some poor guys would vomit into their mess kits, but I never got sick at all.

As our convoy drew nearer to the European coast, the ship's crew began to get BBC reports of the war's progress and we looked forward to these daily broadcasts. For several days the main topic seemed to be the location of the German battleship "Scharnhorst."

Everyone was most anxious to see Gibraltar and even the card games broke up as everyone came topside. The crew told us that it would be in the early morning hours, somewhere's around 3 or 4 a.m. -- and they agreed to wake us. This was the highlight of our 3-week trip. Seeing the lights of this famous place was a tremendous boost to our spirits after seeing nothing but water for so long. We knew our feet would be on land very soon.

On December 23rd we steamed into the port at Oran, Algeria. Scores of natives -- our welcoming

party -- appeared on the dock below, screaming and waving. Our guys responded by bouncing cans of Spam off their heads. Both sides were laughing and glad about this exchange. We off-loaded from the John S. Pillsbury, got our land legs back and then loaded onto G.I. trucks for a short ride back into the African countryside, which we named "Goat Hill."

After pitching our tents in the African mud, it was back to the K rations. This time, however, there was an added benefit -- oranges. We hadn't been the more than 2 or 3 hours before a young Arab boy appeared with oranges and other goodies in their robes. Of course, we had been warned by the Flight Surgeon not to eat or drink anything without it being sterilized. We reasoned that the oranges had to be peeled, so they must be okay. We learned later that these were called "blood oranges" due to their purplish-red meat, which was sweet and juicy. We didn't get sick.

On Christmas Day, 1943, we got orders to strike our tents and go back to the docks at Oran for passage to Italy. I had two Vienna sausages and a handful of raisins for my Christmas dinner. When we arrived dockside we saw a huge wooden ship called H.M.S. Johann DeWitt. It was really an old Dutch ship manned by a British crew, which we recognized right away by the smell of mutton coming from the galley. We boarded and discovered that our staterooms were hammocks suspended from an upper deck and which were nearly impossible to get in and out of without help. Our meals were hot ones but everything was seasoned with mutton grease. Ugh!

Out from Oran we heard on the BBC news that the German battleship 'Scharnhorst' had been sunk in the English Channel by the Home Fleet. This was on Boxing Day (December 26th) and this action seemed to turn the tide of the war in favor of the Allied powers. This news was received with great exaltation.

Two things happened on this ship that were memorable. On the second day, the ship's chef asked for 5 or 6 volunteers for a detail, and I responded gladly in order to get out of that swinging hammock. When we got to the galley we were greeted by a delicious smell. He was baking raisin bread for the crew and needed more flour from below. So we went down three decks and carried 50 pound sacks of flour back up to the galley. Then he had us sit down and he served us hot tea and fresh

raisin bread from the oven, all we could eat. That was one detail I enjoyed.

The second event was not enjoyable, but was certainly an eye-opener. On the ship were 25 or 30 of the largest and fiercest men I had ever seen. They were like seven feet tall and wore long robes with scimitars (curved knives) on their waists. Some said they were Indian, some said Afghans. At any rate, they were being taken to the Anzio area where we were having trouble getting a foothold because the Germans were dug in securely. These night fighters could go in silently and swiftly to these German positions and decapitate them with their knives. This could shorten the war. However, there were two of these men that got into a fight on the ship one night and slashed each other to pieces. Their comrades pitched them overboard without bothering to see if they were dead. I was glad they were on our side.

A couple days later we pulled into Naples harbor, and in trying to dock, got our anchor chain caught on some sunken ship. We sat there like sitting ducks for three days while the Nazis bombed Naples. Finally, we were docked and loaded on an Italian train for a short ride to Ciano College on the outskirts of Naples.

We spent a couple of days at the college and were fed hot meals, the first 'rich' food we had since departing from the U.S. It was so good but resulted in everyone getting the G.I.s, even the Officers, which caused a lot of problems on the convoy to Gioia. To make matters worse, as our trucks climbed the mountains east of Naples, it began to snow and get very cold. I was riding in the last truck carrying personnel and sometime during the night the baggage truck behind us was looted and six of us lost our duffel bags, our back packs, blankets and other gear, leaving us with just the clothes we wore, our gas masks, carbines and helmets. We didn't get replacements until we had been at Gioia del Colle for a week or longer.

Gioia was one big mudhole. It had been a former P-38 fighter base with a short runway. Some British Spitfires were still there, tucked underneath our B-24s, like chicks under a mother hen. There were no shops or hangars -- everything was piled under the wings and covered with tarps. These tarps covered us, too, when we stood guard duty in shifts in the freezing weather. A neighboring Bomb Group had lost a plane on takeoff due to a bomb

being planted in the wheel well. One night I was almost asleep under the tarp when I heard someone stumbling towards me. I grabbed my Thompson Sub and challenged him. Silence. I threw a light in that direction and about 20 feet away stood my First Sergeant, all soused up on vino. I said, "Sarge, you don't know how close you came to being a casualty." He just grunted and went on his way.

Our tent area was on the other side from where the aircraft were parked, separated by the steel matted runway. One morning I realized that a C-47 was just about to lift-off and was having trouble doing so. It got about 40 to 50 feet airborne and then fell off on the left wing and crashed. Several other guys had come up by that time and we all ran over to the plane, which was on fire. Three or four guys went into the plane and started bringing the crew out. Those of us on the outside carried the injured and burned men to a safe distance away, so the Flight Surgeon and Medics could care for them. Those who entered the plane were later awarded the Soldiers Medal. I think most of them were our 725th Sheet Metal men. I didn't get one, but later I did receive a letter from General Eaton about it.

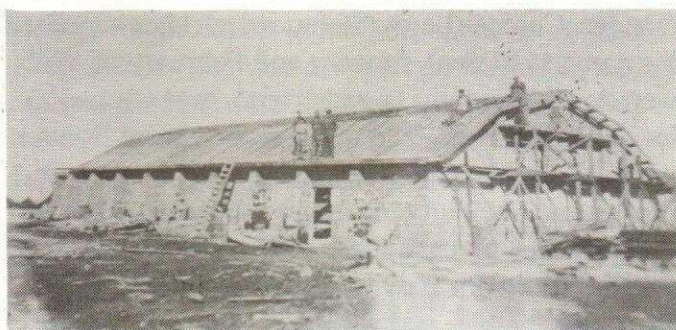
Despite all the terrible conditions we endured at Gioia, there were some great accomplishments, including the raid on Regensburg, for which the Group received its first Distinguished Unit Citation. After the raid, Axis Sally came on the radio saying, "Greetings to Colonel Eaton's boys down there in Italy. We will pay you a visit real soon." We did see a couple of planes, by floodlights over our area, but that was it.

Finally, our Base at Gioia was condemned and we headed south to Manduria, which is located in the heel of the Italian boot. The Group was split up, with the 725th, 727th and Headquarters Section making Manduria their home for about a month. We had a couple bad crashes on takeoff and lost some dear friends. But this was war and General Sherman said it very well, "War is Hell."

We got word to move again around the 8th of April 1944. This time we went to our own Base southwest of the city of Foggia, near a little town named Castelluccio. We were to remain here for the duration. Right away things began to happen to make our new home 'permanent.' Someone found a diesel generator at Bari and before you could say, 'Jack Robinson,' we had electric lights. No more

peanut cans filled with deicer fluid. Scrounge missions in nearby villages and in the valley below the Base found lumber, straw and bricks, and like the 'Three Little Pigs,' we had houses, bunks with straw mattresses and all the comforts of home.

Then someone discovered that Edgar Smith could drive a nail straight. Although listed as an Aircraft Mechanic, he never turned a wrench for the rest of the war. Buildings started to appear all over the 725th landscape and soon, with the help of the Italian laborers, Dooley Hall became a reality. This Mess Hall was his masterpiece. The 725th had the best 'dining hall' and the best Mess Sergeant in the entire Group.



Dooley Hall – Under Construction

Meanwhile, in the midst of all this activity, we were doing our jobs; flight crews were flying, ground crews were working night and day to keep them flying, and the 451st began to make a name for itself. Someone higher up realized that the men needed a break, and thus the Rest Camp at Rome was established. I don't remember the dates for my turn, but the Pilot that flew us up there said he would be back in 10 days to pick us up. However, a rainy spell set in and the airport was so muddy that he never came back, as promised. After 18 days we had seen all of Rome and had no more money, so we hitch-hiked back to Castelluccio. My rest camp diploma, signed by General Ira Eaker, is dated October 1944, but I believe my visit was much earlier than that.

There was a period of time, during the war, that a lot of friction arose between the Army and the Air Force personnel whenever they met off duty. The higher ups worked out a rotation plan that took care of that situation. The Army would send a man for a week of flying duty and the Air Force would send a fly boy to replace him in the fox holes around Anzio. After a few weeks of that arrangement, both

parties were glad to go back to their stations and the fights stopped. After one rough mission, the Army ground pounder was heard to say, "To hell with flying. I'll take my chances in my foxhole!"

What else did we do for recreation? We had volley ball courts scattered around the area and a couple of horseshoe pits, plus the usual baseball diamond. We tried to have a movie once a week. When we couldn't get a new film, we would show our old standby, which was about worn out. The title of it was, "In Ole Oklahoma," and we had seen it so many times we had script memorized. We had a lot of fun, sitting on the bomb crates, and playing the parts on the screen.

Another time we were supposed to have Humphrey Bogart and his troupe from Hollywood put on a show, but it was too rainy and muddy for them to come. Later however, John Garfield did a show at Headquarters, got a Jeep and drove to our Squadron area, sat in the rain and talked to us. I always had a high regard for him doing that. Too bad that he died so young.



USO Show Featuring John Garfield

There were two contests that went on for a number of weeks in our Squadron. One was a mustache growing competition, which of course, went on for several months. The winner of that one was Joseph Anderson, a Photographer/Gunner from Tennessee, but nor relation to me. He was a tall blonde that kept his mustache waxed and twisted until it stood out some 12 to 14 inches. I wish I had taken a picture of him. Another contest was selling chances on a bottle of Coke for the March of Dimes, or something, and would you believe it, none other than Joseph Anderson won that, too!



**Joseph Anderson**  
Gunner/Photographer

What are the odds of that happening? (Since then I have come to know that Joseph had a son named Zane. I have contacted him and we plan to meet in the near future).

There are a couple of other things that stand out in my mind concerning the war that we, as Ground Crews experienced, which I hadn't explained before. First, when Colonel Eaton left the Group after his tour of missions, he was replaced by Colonel Knapp. I think he was only in his mid-twenties, the youngest 'Bird Colonel' I had ever seen. Also, as Group Commander, he had his choice of personal aircraft. His choice was a B-25 and he chose to let our 725th Mechanics maintain it and fly with him on occasion. He was a great C.O.



**Colonel Knapp's B-25**

Finally, I would like to mention our protector - the British anti-aircraft gun crew, stationed in a wheat field on our side of the runway. Sometimes when I was working on a nearby plane and had to wait for my turn on the stand, I would walk over and have tea with them. They got a lot of practice, "loading and firing" their guns, but most of it was for photographs. They were a jolly crew.



**British Anti-Aircraft Crew**  
Stationed at Castelluccio Air Base

After Colonel Knapp's departure, which was near the end of 1944, we got our third Group Commander, Colonel Leroy Stefanowicz (later angelized his name to Stefan). January and February of 1945 were terrible months, weatherwise, thus we had a lot of stand downs. The missions that were flown were led by Mickey (Radar) ships, with unknown results due to cloud cover over the targets. Some of the missions, towards the end of the war, were flown to northern Italy to chase the Germans out. We knew that the end was near, and sure enough on May 8, 1945 it came -- VE Day!

We got word of a Group evaluation inspection and the rumors started flying that we were headed for the Pacific Theater. But, near the end of the month we said good-bye to our planes and Flight Crews, and on June 4, 1945 the Ground Crews boarded the U.S.S. General Meigs at Naples for our return to the good old U.S.A. Compared to the John S. Pillsbury, this was a luxury cruise ship and it took us only 10 days to pull into Hampton Roads, Virginia. I remember the weather was very hot, 113 degrees, as we stood on the deck and waved to the pretty girls below. And there were tears in many eyes on this emotional occasion.

After processing at Camp Patrick Henry, we were given 30 day furloughs and orders to report back to Dow Field, Bangor, Maine. When we reported back there for duty we didn't see any B-24s. This was an Air Transport Command (ATC) Base. We didn't have anything to do but to hang out at the Propeller Inn, sleep and go to a movie in Bangor at night. After a week or so of this, orders began to show up on the bulletin board. Several men, including myself, were reassigned to Presque Isle, Main and found ourselves on rail coaches of the Bangor and Arrostack Railroad rolling through



potato country. We were assigned to the 1380th Base Unit of the ATC, the jumping off point for the northern route to Europe. We were just a few miles from New Brunswick Province of Canada. We didn't have much to do there, so we played baseball, and some who wanted to, volunteered to help in the potato harvest -- for pay, of course.

The only aircraft work I remember doing was making an engine change on a C-54. But it was a special C-54 -- the one and only "Sacred Cow," which had been President Roosevelt's private plane. I suppose President Truman used it also.

As August rolled around the news came about a new kind of bomb. It was first dropped on Hiroshima, and it was called the 'Atomic Bomb.' Just one bomb brought Japan to her knees, but on August 9, 1945 another one was dropped on Nagasaki, which really sealed her fate. The war was over! On September 2, 1945, aboard the battleship Missouri, Japan formally surrendered to General Douglas MacArthur.

On August 21, 1945 I arrived at Camp Devens,

Massachusetts for discharge, but so much was going on that I didn't get that 'special piece of paper and my Ruptured Duck' until October 5, 1945. Thus ended my "Roaming With The 451st," the best Bomb Group of them all.

*Epilogue: During the Korean War, April 1, 1951, I re-enlisted in the Air Force and remained until my retirement in 1968, after a tour in Viet Nam. In all that time I met only one former 451st comrade, that being Colonel Kendall Young, Base Commander of Turner AFB, Georgia, where I spent 4 years.*

*Then last year, 2003, I visited my mother-in-law at Carpenter's Inn in Lakeland, Florida. While having breakfast in the dining hall, we shared a table with some other residents, one of whom was William Jackson. He was a pilot in the 726th Squadron from September 1944 to January 1945. He was Aircraft Commander of "Klunker," and was twice shot down (17 November and 26 December 1944) and both times the crew evaded capture.*

## TIME LOST -- BUT NOT WASTED

By Carl Heimaster

Pearl Harbor -- America at War -- As a 17 year old lad, just out of High School and studying Accounting, I knew I needed to contribute more to the war effort, so I signed up for a Metal Working class. After completing the course I went to Seattle to work for Boeing Aircraft Company, even while there I knew full well that it was only a matter of time when I would be called to serve in the military. In December the notice came, "***Your friends and neighbors have selected you to represent them in the Army of the United States. You will report to the County Court House on January 13.***" Thus began my journey!!

At the Induction Center at St. Louis, the usual batteries of tests were given where I was found to be in excellent health, mentally competent, and as a hobby enjoyed hunting. With that background, the Army decided that the Air Force was the place for me.

Basic training at Miami Beach, Florida was very minimal, just the usual close order drill, cleaning a rifle that had no ammunition and probably had



Carl V. Heimaster

never been fired ... But most of all, how to obey orders! A decision was made by the Army that I was to enter flying status and they sent me to Denver, Colorado, to study Armament; i.e. Bombs, and how they worked -- Fuses, and how they were activated to detonate the bombs.

Passing this phase, I was then sent to Laredo, Texas for Gunnery School. We were taught to shoot all types of hand-guns, rifles, machine guns, both at stationary and moving targets.

This Missouri country boy had never flown in an airplane, so when I was told that the next part of our training would be firing at a target being towed by another plane, I was petrified! The plane was a single engine, two-seater. I was fitted with a seat-type parachute with a safety strap through the harness, riding in the rear seat facing the rear with a machine gun which had stops to prevent shooting the tail off the plane. To compound my apprehension, the gunner before me had become air sick all over the rear seat. This didn't do a thing to settle

my stomach.

There were five gunners assigned to the target sleeve and we each had 25 rounds, and each of us had our bullets dipped in a different color paint so's the evaluate our individual scores. Apparently my score was acceptable, because I received my Gunner Wings.

The Air Force was forming the 15th Army Air Force, eventually to be stationed in Italy. Several Groups were in the process of being assembled in different areas of the United States. I was sent to Wendover, Utah to be part of the 451st Bomb Group, of which there were 4 Squadrons of 16 planes, with 4 Officers and 6 Enlisted Men on each plane. My crew was formed and we were given a B-24, which we named; "American Beauty." But what a great crew! The Pilot and I were the only members that were raised West of the Mississippi, with the others from New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio, and we bonded together like a family. With more advanced training at Fairmont Army Air Field in Nebraska, our Stateside training was completed.

On Thanksgiving Day 1943 we flew our 'American Beauty' to the point of departure at Miami, Florida, and with a full load of fuel we proceeded to Trinidad, then controlled by the British. With a hot meal, a nights sleep, and another full load of fuel, our next stop was Natal, Brazil. Here we spent two days and nights so that the plane would be thoroughly checked before the next long "hop." This would be a ten hour flight across the Atlantic Ocean to Dakar, North Africa. Mostly we saw a beautiful sky and water, but little else.

The crossing was uneventful and boring, so it was a sense of relief when the

wheels touched down. A thorough check of the plane found nothing wrong, so after the usual hot meal, nights sleep, we were up and away to Casablanca, Morocco. Here we settled in at the Air Base while all the other 63 B-24s, taking the same route as we had taken, were finally together.

The Corps of Engineers had proceeded us to Italy and had prepared a field for us, complete with an air strip of steel matting, along with all the support buildings, ammo storage, and fuel depot, all so we could conduct our mission of destruction on the enemy. It didn't take long to get started. The latter part of January 1944 saw us in the air doing what we had been trained to do. Helping to destroy the German "Machine of war."

Our days became a blur, delivering our bombs for two days, resting one, then repeating. Targets of Marshalling Yards, where box cars, oil cars, troop carriers, they would all fall victim to our bombs. Often our targets would be the oil rich fields of the Balkans. Our greatest danger would not always come in the form of enemy fighter planes, but the anti-aircraft fire called, "Flak." The shells would burst all around us, sending flying pieces of steel in every direction. Sometimes direct hits on a plane, or maybe a small piece the size of a walnut tearing through the plane not caring whether it hits man or machine.

Such was the case with our plane, 'American beauty,' for on June 23, 1944.

A piece of shrapnel severed an oil line on the number 1 engine (out-board, left side). All its oil was lost so it had to be shut down. This created an extra load for the number 2 engine (in-board, left side), and after 20 minutes it also failed.



**AMERICAN BEAUTY**

W/ Lt. Charles McCutchen Crew

When your plane is losing altitude and you are unable to climb high enough to clear the mountain ranges, we had no choice but to abandon our 'American Beauty' and leave her to her fate on the side of a mountain. We had no choice but to parachute -- THUS BEGINS ANOTHER SAGA!

Our Pilot called on the intercom to bail out, starting from the rear forward. Being the Tail-gunner, I was the first to "hit the silk." On landing my parachute caught in the top of some trees and I had to stretch on tip-toes to reach the ground. Once free of my parachute, I traveled down a dry creek bed and rounding a bend; there stood a group of German soldiers. I was a Prisoner of War. After 41 missions my fighting war was over, but now the mental war would begin.

That evening our entire crew was crowded into a root cellar where we discussed our injuries and wondered as to our fate. Some time during the night our Nose Gunner, Francis Joseph Kluebert, either was taken, or he left on his own, but the next morning they, the Germans, told us that Joe had been shot while trying to escape. We did know that he had an injured ankle, but we never saw him again so we never did know his fate.

We were taken to the nearest rail-center and loaded in a box-car for our long, long trip from Albania to a Prisoner of War Camp close to the Baltic Sea. There were several stops along the way, including Bucharest, Rumania, where we had to go into an air-raid shelter as the railroad yards were being bombed by our own 15th Air Force's B-24s. The citizens did not take kindly to us. We were spat upon, had rocks thrown at us, they would even jerk and pull our hair, and I'm sure the name calling (which we didn't understand) was not complementary. We were happy to leave! And yet we could understand their feelings, they too were prisoners of Hitler's war machine.

The next stop on our rail journey was Budapest, Hungary, a gathering place for all captured airmen on their way to POW camps in northern Germany. We were placed in solitary confinement for a week, with greasy hot water for breakfast, a bowl of soup and a piece of bread for lunch. For dinner the soup was just a little thicker. The reason for our confinement was to question us, one at a time, about a new American night fighter that was appearing in the sky over German territory. Of course, being part of a bomber crew, we knew absolutely nothing about

it. It was while we were in solitary that we realized that it was the 4th of July! Happy Birthday America!!

Now our box car was attached to several others, and we were now considered a POW Troop Train. We moved rather swiftly north without any other stops. Potatoes, bread and water was provided us while confined to our car. Personal hygiene was conducted through a partially opened door while on the move. Exercise was allowed before the evening "meal," and then it was back into the car to a bed of straw with 20 to 30 others, while the train sped through the night.

We arrived at our destination sometime in the latter days of July. We were met there with the usual "escort," but this time they had "Canines," and I mean big angry, snapping, snarling, biting dogs! The guards would sometimes ease off their leashes enough for the dogs to bite the unfortunate ones in the buttock. Needless to say we were glad to get into the safety of our barbed wire enclosure.

The official name of our camp was Stalag (prison) Luft (air) 4. The camp was laid out in a square divided into quarters. In each quarter there were 13 barracks, plus a cooking building (not to be confused with kitchen) where potatoes were cooked with, sometimes, meat of an unknown origin.

About this time my parents were being notified that I was Missing In Action. Only in the latter days of August would they be notified that I was a Prisoner Of War. It was surely a difficult time for them, as I was an only child and we were a close family.

The Red Cross was trying to get parcels of non-perishable supplies to us. The limited number that was getting through were greatly appreciated, even though we had to divide them, sometimes as many as six ways. They contained powdered milk, instant coffee, chocolate bars, Spam, playing cards, chess sets and cigarettes. The old American custom of barter kicked into play. Cigarettes became our medium of exchange, depending upon supply and demand, i.e. If you didn't smoke you could usually find someone who did and would trade some chocolates for a mutually agreed-to number of cigarettes. These "smokes" would also be our betting money for poker games. Being Non-Commissioned Officers we were not compelled to work, outside the camp area. The Germans had signed the Geneva Convention Treaty about treatment of

POWs and they stood by this agreement.

Time hung heavy on our hands, but it also passed so quickly. Thanksgiving passed, then Christmas arrived and with it we could hear heavy artillery to the east of us, and knew that the Russians were pushing the Germans back. Tension mounted inside the camp as to our fate, and our guards were nervous also as to their fate. Those prisoners who had trouble walking from wounds suffered in battle were transported to another camp where medical attention was better. Each time a group left camp, we wondered where they were going and what would be their destiny. Up until now we thought we were prisoners of war, but now we could see that we were also pawns of war. Starting the last week of January our camp started its evacuation. I left camp on the 2nd of February. We each carried what we thought we could carry and what we thought we would need. Of course we were not told where we were going, or how long the walk would be. Therefore almost everyone discarded items that we had thought we would need, only to find the pace of the evacuation was so fast, and that we were so out of shape that after eight miles we were down to carrying only the bare essentials; blankets, food, nothing else.

When our camp was abandoned there were in excess of 8,000 airmen being moved westerly away from the advancing Russians. We were eventually put into smaller groups so the farmers off the main road could supply us with what potatoes they could spare. I remember one week we walked on a lonely road that had been "hit" with a poor crop and we had only one potato a day for this week. Luckily we entered a small town where we were rested and given some hot food. Two days later we were told that the Americans were headed our way, so we were forced to head in a south-easterly direction, and after a week in this direction we traveled again in a westerly direction.

On May 1st we were told that soon we would be liberated. Of course this rumor was ignored, but sure enough on May the 2nd at 9:30 a.m., a British Tank corp came down the road. After 333 days of incarceration, walking more than 500 miles in three months -- we were free!! A nearby Army Post gave us showers, a tooth brush, clean clothing, new shoes, good food (none of which we'd had for the three months of walking) and a delousing. What a relief to be rid of the lice.

The rest of May is rather a blur, as we were moved from one Base to another, always moving westerly towards the debarkation point called "Camp Lucky Strike," that lay along the west coast of France. Here our time was spent eating high protein foods; steak, ice cream, candy, milk shakes and plenty of sleep. The Army was trying to get some weight on our "skinny" bones. I had lost 40 pounds, and, except for bleeding gums, was in pretty good physical shape. Mentally, I don't know to this day whether it has affected my life. I would like to think that it has not.

The latter part of May we were placed aboard a freighter that had been modified with hammocks and lots of food to return to America. Our previous crossing with our airplane took only ten hours. To again cross the Atlantic it took 14 days, but we didn't care .. we were going HOME!

The Army Base at Newport News, Virginia was overwhelmed with returning soldiers. To lighten the "crunch" we received a 90 day furlough and were sent on our way. The trip home to the Ozarks was so calm, quiet and peaceful, without worry or concern as to where our next meal was coming from, or when.

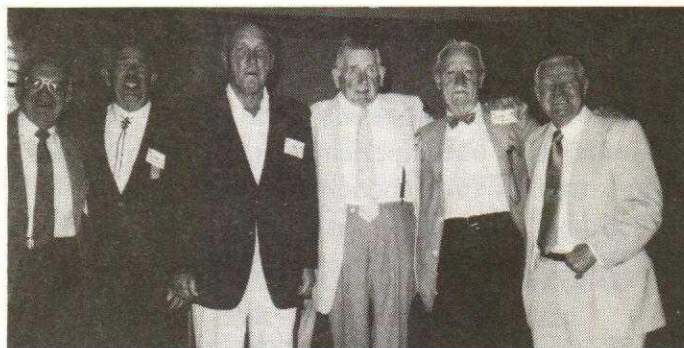
Upon arrival at Lebanon, Missouri, I met my High School Math teacher. We had a joyous reunion right there in the Greyhound Bus Station, where he held a summer job. Because I did not know when I would be arriving home I was unable to notify my family, and since they didn't have a phone I asked my 'ol Math Teacher, Mr. Peterson, if he knew someone who could drive me the 11 miles to home. No he said, "I'll do it myself." So he called his substitute to fill in for him at the station, and away we went.

He started honking the horn some distance from the house and I think the folks guessed what was happening because they were there in the yard when we drove up.

HOME SWEET HOME .. But not quite complete. My wartime sweetheart lived in Kansas City, some 200 miles away. Arrangements had to be made through the Ration Board to get enough gas stamps to allow me to drive up to see her. Remember, we were still at war with Japan and critical items were still being rationed (i.e. gas, tires, sugar, coffee and other things). Plus we had a 35 MPH speed limit. I called her when we were in town to let her know that I was on my way. The phone lines

were wet with tears of joy from the both of us. The trip took one of the slowest 8 hours I had ever spent, but at last we were together. We were married July 9th 1945 and spent the next 50 years loving each other until she slipped away from me in 1995.

2 YEARS - 9 MONTHS- 1 DAY OF SERVICE  
TO MY COUNTRY  
TIME LOST --- BUT NOT WASTED



Kansas City Reunion - 1994  
Attending McCutchen Crew (including DiSanto, Heimaster,  
McCutchen, Beckwith (Crew Chief) Schmidt, Henry  
(Not necessarily in proper order)

## ACHI'S VIGNETTES

### FLYING THE NOSE TURRET

Having the "Best Seat in the House" has its consequences and they also say that "Seeing is Believing." I instantly became a believer - in a big way - during my second mission over Vienna, Austria (6 November 1944).

We were flying at 26,000 feet; the weather was CAVU, and I had a great view of what was coming ahead. At 10 o'clock level, and at approximately 15 to 20 miles distance, I could see heavy flak and smoking aircraft. My selfish thoughts told me we were heading for another target. WRONG! We suddenly made a sharp left turn; on the IP. Oh my God! we were heading into the same hell I had witnessed just moments earlier.

I had one thought greater than all others: Will I live? Instantly I began praying, again and again .... "Our Father Who Art In Heaven ...," until I gathered my wits and strength to overcome my fears. I could not let the crew down, so I continued with my duties of scanning the skies.

Bombers flying in a tight formation, began to break up as those distant aircraft, riddled with flak, fell out of formation with smoking engines, some with chunks blown apart. First one, then another, then another ... Oh God, is there no let up? Aircraft rolling on their backs and falling straight down. I followed them until they were out of my view. I could see no parachutes, only trailing smoke.

There was nothing I could do for these fellow crews, who were being mauled and chopped up by flak bursting all around. It was so thick - not only could you walk on it, as airmen sometimes say - you could smell it too!

A far cry from my first mission a day before: A milk run over Sarajevo's Marshalling Yards - troop

concentration. I had no idea how difficult these missions would get.

On our third mission, following the Vienna mission, we bombed an Oil Refinery in Blechhammer, Germany. By this time I had been baptized under fire and my fears, although never completely absent (you never get over it) were somewhat weaker, diminished and a bit more controllable.

Ten days of stand-downs, between Vienna and Blechhammer missions, due to bad weather, gave me and my crew members a well deserved rest. But the war goes on, and the following five consecutive days earned me another five more missions, my first Air Medal and Purple Heart.

I was told at the end of this memorable month that I was now a "veteran" had earned the right to tell war stories and to bitch about it. They say "War is Hell."

### ACHI'S POSTWAR VIGNETTE SCHOOL OF HARD KNOCKS

I've heard people say, the "School of Hard Knocks" is the best teacher. Maybe so! The following example always reminds me of my younger days. Whenever I'm extremely tired and stressed out after a grueling week of work, I mentally refer back to my days spent in combat.

Flying five consecutive missions, all averaging 7 hours long, will really tax your mental state and physical well being. Yes, your extremely tired and stressed, knowing too well that adrenaline rush builds within you as the flak, tracking your aircraft, reaches out ever so close with each successive burst that could be the very last you'll encounter! But you have a job to do and you continue with your work so that you don't let your fellow crew members down.

What is my point? One does not "really" know his threshold of continuous abuse of body and mental state, until one experiences it. Thus, whenever I'm extremely tired and stressed out, I think about those days in combat; then I know I can continue a bit longer under these current conditions.



Bob K. / Achilles Kozakis & Son Peter Kozakis

## OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

### REPORTED SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Allyn, Bruce C., 725th - 29 May 2001  
 Anderson, William C., 725th - 16 May 2003  
 Asbury, Grover L., 725th - 20 May 2004  
 Bradley, Thomas D., 727th - 27 September 2003  
 Busby, William A., 725th - 3 January 2003  
 Chrans, Dallas R., 727th - 15 August 2004  
 Clegg, Bryant L., 724th - 22 August 2003  
 Clopton, James H., 725th - 26 August 2004  
 Cohen, Jacob J., 727th - 20 June 2003  
 Connor, Roy L., 725th - 10 July 2004  
 Curtis, George R., 727th - 18 October 2002  
 Dash, Samuel, 724th - 29 May 2004  
 Delafield, David D., 727th - 26 December 2003  
 Devlin, Arthur D., 727th - 22 April 2004  
 Diveley, Allen L., 726th - 25 June 2003  
 Duncan, Robert A., 724th - 18 June 2004  
 Edinger, Harold E., 726th - 21 August 2004  
 Eno, Ellis E., HDQ - 5 February 2003  
 Flowers, Thomas E., 724th - February 2004  
 Foy, Francis D., 726th - 31 March 2003  
 Frisbee, George, 725th - 23 March 2004  
 Gallagher, William J., 726th - 1 February 2004  
 Hoermann, Francis J., HDQ - 25 August 2004  
 Holda, Stanley C., 726th - 15 July 2003  
 Keister, Donald C., 727th - 4 May 2004  
 Koenigseker, Aaron L., 727th - 27 September 2003  
 Lather, Frank J., 727th - 26 May 2004  
 LaVigne, Robert J., 724th - 19 November 2002  
 Leistner, Emil C., 724th - 19 May 2004  
 Maher, Matthias D., 727th - 11 August 2004  
 Malterner, John, 724th - 17 February 2004  
 Nagurny, Michael, 726th - 21 April 2004  
 Pfohl, Porter P., 727th - 18 March 2004  
 Rasmussen, Edward B., HDQ - 29 October 2004  
 Robinson, Kenneth D., 726th - January 1996  
 Rotello, Thomas S., 724th - 4 August 2001  
 Saye, William J., 724th - 2 May 2004

### SPECIAL MEMORIAL TRIBUTE OFFERED IN THE NAME OF:

Crew of "Screamin' Meemie," 726th - From Edward Longenecker  
 Harvey A. Carpenter, Fred J. Clamser, Andrew G. Clark, Richard R. Hancock, William Hutton, Lem L. Phillips, William J. Runkle: 724th O'Connor Crew - From John A. O'Connor  
 Edward H. Stresky, Paul Hendrix, George D. Meyran, Arthur L. Miskend, David W. Peterson, Quentin H. Thorvig, 727th: All KIA 25 April 1945. - From Ora Arnold  
 Joseph R. Anderson, 725th - From Jarvis Anderson  
 Grover L. Asbury, 725th - From wife, Margaret  
 Ernest W. Atkins, 727th - From Winson 'Big' Jones  
 Charles W. Atterholt, 726th - From James W. Atterholt  
 Robert E. Barnd, 726th - From wife, Marion & Family  
 James E. Burns, 727th - From Winson 'Big' Jones  
 Frank A. Clark, 725th - From George E. Tudor  
 Archie Eakins, 725th [KIA 6 May 1944] - From Ken Barmore  
 Harold E. Edinger, 726th - From wife, Helen & Daughter Donna Marie Burks  
 George Frisbee, 725th - From son, George R. Frisbee  
 Joseph F. Grossman, 724th - From Patrick Hawkins  
 Gerald W. Hopkins, 727th - From Jack 'Little' Jones  
 Cecil Reid Johnson, 725th - From Daughter, Joan Marie  
 Cecil Reid Johnson, 725th - From Wife, Mable & Daughter, Cindy Barr  
 Verne G. Johnson, 724th - From Daughter Kay & Family  
 Donald C. Keister, 727th - From Max Noggle  
 Frank J. Lather, 727th - From Eli Zinn  
 Frank J. Lather, 727th - From Robert Mitchell  
 Frank J. Lather, 727th - From Donald Schaffner  
 Emil C. Leistner, 724th - From Wife, Barbara  
 Stanton Leiter, 725th - From Wife, Florence  
 Peter A. Massare, 727th - From Jack 'Little' Jones  
 Llewellyn D. Morse, 726th - From Richard Minor

**DECEASED** - From Previous Page

Schafer, William J., 725th - 14 July 2003  
 Schrader, Herbert E., 727th - 15 May 2004  
 Sewald, Roman, 726th - 22 November 2003  
 Strickler, Leonard L., 727th - 1 October 2004  
 Tension, Marion A., 726th - 18 April 2003  
 Tolosi, Francis A., 726th - 23 June 2004

**MEMORIAL TRIBUTE** - From Previous Page

Alex Nerroth, HDQ - From wife, Pearl  
 Orville L. Peterson, 725th - From Harry Fornalczyk  
 Porter P. Pfohl, 727th - From Charles Sciuolo  
 Thomas M. Plude, 726th - From Wife, Norma  
 Terrell G. Prewitt, 727th - From Philip Andrew Family  
 Edward B. Rasmussen, HDQ - From Bob Karstensen  
 William J. Saye, 724th - From Dale Mayswinkle  
 Herbert E. Schrader, 727th - From Leonard Strickler  
 Marshall D. Word, 725th - From Brother & Sisters of  
 Collins P. Byrn

**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.*



**CHATTER  
 FROM THE  
 FLIGHT DECK**

Bob Karstensen

**OKAY - What am I gonna 'harp' about now?** OH! -- I've got it -- Lack of new members! A subject that has long been a'brewing in my mind -- That is trying to build our roster due to our diminishing ranks.

Starting last March (2004) I started searching the Internet for addresses of some names that I had from old shipping orders that I hadn't yet explored for membership. In the three months (March, April and May) I mailed out over 475 cards to, what I hoped was, potential members. The card read thusly:

*Dear Sir,*

*Our World War II Bomber Group is attempting to locate ALL its veteran members. We have, through the phone directories, or by way of other former members, found your name and current address. It is the exact same name as the person we are seeking.*

*If indeed you are the same person that served with us in the 451st Bomb Group (H) [HDQ, 724th, 725th, 726th or 727th Sqdn's], 15th Army Air Force, Italy, we would be pleased to have you contact us so we may offer you a renewed membership*

*in the old outfit. To date we have enrolled over 1,900 former 451st members.*

*If you are not the person we seek, but you have information on this person, we would appreciate whatever you can offer as to his current address; or sadly, his demise.*

*This effort is being conducted nationwide, and if we have inadvertently mailed to you before, we apologize. Your benevolence in this matter is truly and deeply appreciated. You may write to the address shown on the front of this card, or use the following communication contacts for more information. (Then I list my phone/fax/e.mail address)*

Many of my 475 mailings were to multiple names; sometimes as many as 10 that bore the same identical names. My responses fell in this order: Post Office returns [47] Undeliverable; Those that did respond, but with a "NO" [45]; And those that never answered back, one way or the other [375].

From all this effort we recruited 8 new members.

I'm sure that more than those 8, who received my card, had once been part of our Bomb Group, but for whatever reason were not now interested. Some of those that did respond, either by mail or phone, had a very negative attitude. A few were sceptical as to our purpose, and a few just figured it was too damned late in life to get involved.

I guess this is why we're seeing other WW-II organizations folding up their tents and disappearing into the past, all because of their rapidly

diminishing memberships. We're going to be the 'stand-out' organization when we're declared the only one left .... RIGHT?! Hang in there with me!

As an aside; our smaller membership also means that some of our lax members aren't there when it comes to helping finance our/this effort. Whatever you can afford would be appreciated....;-)

**Something else is in the works** (apart from our organization), and that is a proposed trip to Italy to visit the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and the Florence American Cemetery. The proposed tour is being organized by Post 50 of the Pelham, NY American Legion and will be conducted, in conjunction with the final liberation of Italy, exactly 60 years ago. The following communication is my first knowledge of their plans:

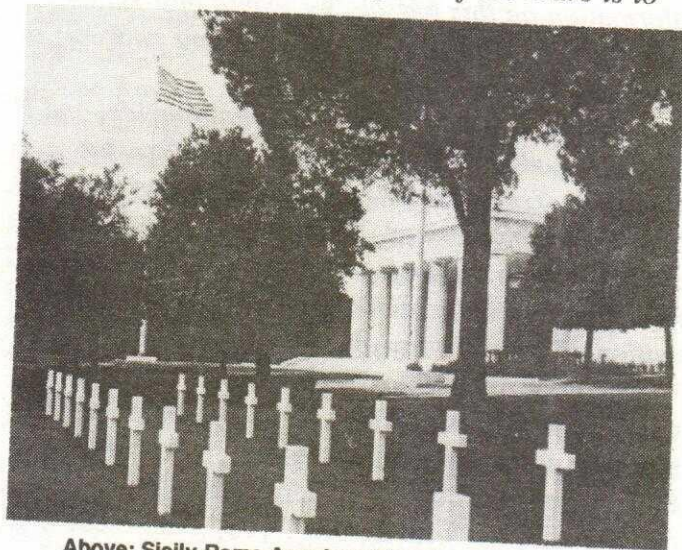
*Pelham, New York, Post 50 of the American Legion is organizing ceremonies and tours of the Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial in Nettuno, Italy and the Florence American Cemetery and Memorial near Florence, Italy during the first week of May 2005. The purpose of the tours is to*

*honor the veterans of the United States and its Allies who liberated Italy in the campaigns of 1943 through 1945 and to commemorate the Sixtieth (60) Anniversary of the final liberation of Italy in May, 1945. The tours will be open to anyone interested in attending. The tours are tentatively scheduled to depart the US on Friday, April 29, 2005 and return to the US on Saturday, May 7, 2005.*

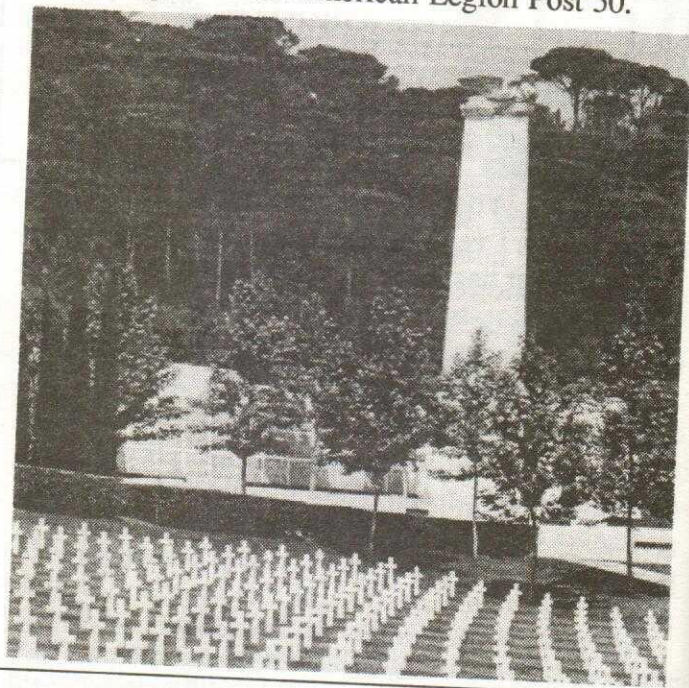
Many of the details have not yet been worked out; i.e. Tour Costs?, Air Fare? (if not imbedded in 'Tour Cost'), Departure point?, What's all, and what's not, included?

What we have here is something that some of you may be truly interested in. Many of you, such as I, have a crewmate or two buried in one of those cemeteries, and in the autumn of our lives would like to pay our final respects to him.

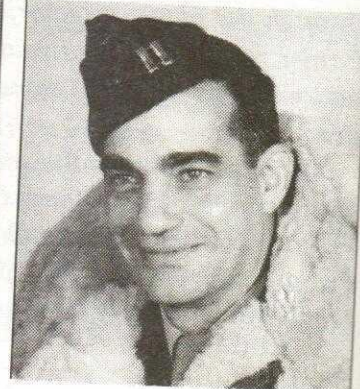
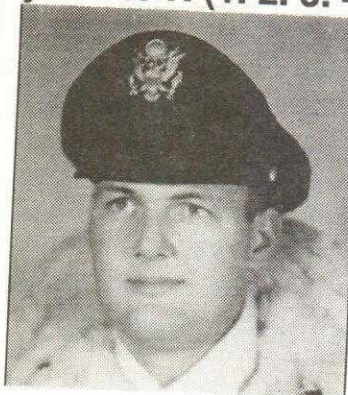
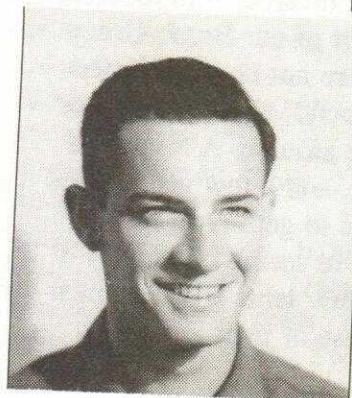
If this sounds like something you want to pursue, drop me a line telling me that you ARE interested and I'll keep you abreast of what information I'm getting from the American Legion Post 50.



Above: Sicily-Rome American Cemetery and Memorial  
Right: Florence American Cemetery and Memorial



**Help Identify These Guys: L to R (1. 2. 3. 4.)**





## AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR IN GERMANY

Prepared by **MILITARY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE, WAR DEPARTMENT**

15 July 1944

**STALAG LUFT III**  
**STRENGTH 3,363 AAF Officers.**

**LOCATION** Pin point: 51°35'; North latitude. 15°19'30" East longitude. Camp is situated in pine-woods area at Sagan, 168 kilometers Southeast of Berlin.

### **DESCRIPTION**

Three of the camp's 6 compounds are occupied by Americans, 3 by RAF officers. Each compound is divided into 15 buildings or blocks housing 80 to 110 men. The 12 rooms in a block each house 2 to 10 men. Barracks are one-story, wooden hutments resembling old CCC barracks in this country. Beds are all double-deckers.

### **TREATMENT**

An American P/W in this camp was fatally shot and another wounded under circumstances appearing to be in violation of the Geneva Convention. Fifty British Ps/W were murdered in March. Prior to these recent incidents, treatment had been excellent.

### **FOOD**

Food is adequate only because of regular arrival of Red Cross food parcels, although for a time during March, 1944 Ps/W received only German rations insufficient for subsistence. Vegetables from individual garden plots lend variety to diet. Food parcels are pooled and men in each room take turns at cooking. One stove is available for each 100 officers. A food exchange is maintained by Ps/W. Cigarettes serve as the medium of exchange.

### **CLOTHING**

Clothing is furnished by the Red Cross. Germans issue only booty and very little of that. Men need summer issue underwear.

### **HEALTH**

Health of Ps/W is good. Calisthenics are compulsory by order of the Senior American Officer. Adequate medical care is provided by British & French doctors. Dental care is not satisfactory, and difficulty is experienced in obtaining glasses. Washing & toilet facilities are adequate although hot water is scarce.

### **RELIGION**

Complete religious freedom is observed. Services are held in specially constructed chapels by 9 chaplains, 7 of them Protestant, 2 Catholic, One chaplain is Lt. Eugene L. Daniel, an American; the others are British.

### **PERSONNEL**

South Compound -- American Sr. Officer: Col. Charles G. Goodrich.

Center Compound -- American Sr. Officer: Col. Delmar Spivey.

West Compound -- American Sr. Officer: Col. Darr H. Alkire.

German Commandant: Oberst von Lindeiner.

### **MAIL**

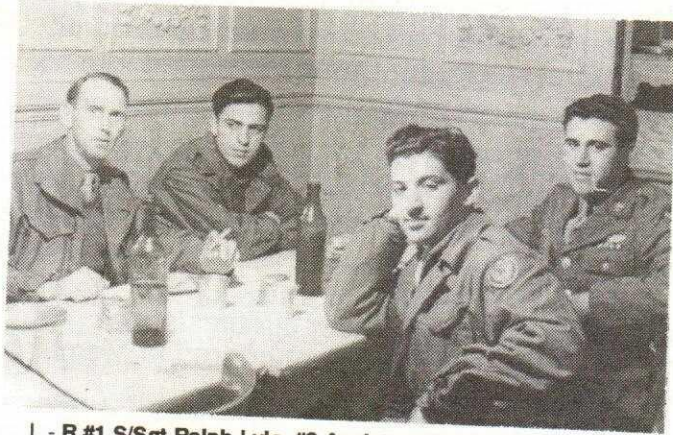
Airmail from camp averages 1 1/2 months in transit, surface mail 3 months. Next-of-kin & tobacco parcels average 2 1/2 months of travel time. Sometimes they are pilfered.

### **RECREATION**

This camp has the best organized recreational program of the American camps in Germany. Each compound has an athletic field and volleyball courts. The men participate in basketball, softball, boxing, touch football, volleyball, table tennis, fencing. Leagues have been formed in most of these sports. A fire pool 20'x22'x5' is occasionally used for swimming. Parole walks are sometimes permitted. In each of the compound theaters built by the Ps/W, plays & musical comedies are frequently presented. Top-flight swing bands & orchestras perform regularly, and several choral groups take part in religious services & camp entertainments. Other recreational activities include bridge tournaments, building of model planes, visits to occasional movies, listening to phonograph recordings. Competent instructors teach a wide range of cultural & technical subjects, & lectures & discussions are numerous. A newspaper posted 4 times weekly is edited by the Ps/W. Each of the compounds has a well-stocked library.



**Silviu Dan, 725th [GUNNER: ALBERT F. BOYHAN'S CREW]**



L - R #1 S/Sgt Ralph Lyle, #2 Assistant Public Relations Man, #3 Chief Public Relations Man, #4 S/Sgt Silviu Dan

In the 451st Ad Lib, issue #37, pages 24 & 25, and in issue #38, page 29, there are some questions as to the whereabouts of Sgt. Ralph Lyle. On 11/9/1944 we (Ralph and I) did a radio broadcast from Rome, Italy. A record of the broadcast was made and sent to my family. The label on the 78 speed record reads ... MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED AIR FORCES. During the broadcast Sgt. Ralph Lyle stated he was from Salina, Kansas. I still have the record and a photograph of me, Ralph and 2 Public Relations guys in a restaurant.

In "The Fightin' 451st Bomb Group" book, there is no mention of a "Lone Wolf Mission" that was flown by our crew. Our Pilot, Albert Boyhan, volunteered our crew for this mission. We were just one aircraft from our 725th Squadron. How many from the Group I don't know - perhaps one per Squadron - flying at different altitudes. I talked about this mission in the broadcast. It was probably flown sometime in October 1944. Did you know of this mission?

*(Editor... Sorry Silviu, that 'Lone Wolf Mission,' or any other single ship mission like that, I'm not familiar with. I do recall [from my own experience] a 3 aircraft mission that occurred on 9 February 1945. It was when, after briefing and the weather report was analyzed, it was considered non-productive, and probably dangerous, to send the whole Group up because of bad weather [10-10 overcast,*

*and clouds up to 15,000 to 20,000 feet over target], plus over most of southern Europe. Instead, three aircraft were selected from the 724th to fly a 'harassing type' mission over southern Europe, just to set off 'air raid alarms.' The originally scheduled mission was to hit Moosbierbaum in Austria, but as we flew north, Captain Charles Smith, Pilot, shook up a lot of cities along the way. Over Moosbierbaum our bomb bay doors failed to open and we ended up dropping our bombs at Graz Marshalling Yards, Yugoslavia.*

*I'm sure we'll get some input from some of our members that recall those "Lone Wolf Missions."*  
-- RIGHT GUYS !?!

**Victor Melnick, 726th [AEG LEW MORSE'S CREW]**

I received a phone call from Gene Minor, saying that you had located our former Copilot, Stanley S. Cohen. Congratulations, Lew Morse, our late pilot, always reminded me to keep looking for STAN.

*(Editor ... Finding our former members and getting them to join the organization, gets to be a real challenge. Had I found them 20 years ago, when we first started up, I'm sure they wouldn't have hesitated. Now, with the passing years and fading memory, they become reluctant to join, wondering 'what's the purpose.' Regardless, I'll keep the pressure up. As to Copilot Cohen, I alerted Gene so he could apply pressure, via e.mail, on our candidate. You're welcome to join in on the recruiting.)*

**George E. Tudor, 725th [PILOT: AIR-CRAFT COMMANDER]**

I've thought quite a number of times about the Crew Chief who took care of 'EXTRA JOKER' for us; M/Sgt Frank A. Clark. Our plane was always ready to go and always performed perfectly. To my knowledge, Frank has never shown up on our roster.

On the August 23, 1944 Vienna mission, when we took the plane in the next revetment and Ken Whiting took 'EXTRA JOKER,' I remember quite vividly, after the mission, seeing Frank standing in the empty 'EXTRA JOKER' revetment, with his arms outstretched and palms up. It was as if he was saying, "Where's my airplane?"

I went over to him and told him the story of the mission. How we were attacked by 75 FW 190s, coming at us from the rear. How they seemed to center their fire on 'EXTRA JOKER' and how it

went into a spin, exploding on its way down. There were no chutes. Of all things I wanted him to know, there was no mechanical problem that caused its loss.

I never saw Frank again, nor do I have any way of knowing if Frank is still living. But because he was a very essential part of our missions I want to offer this check in his memory. Maybe someone who knew Frank over there will see this remembrance in the next Ad Lib and will know what happened to him. I know three of us will be in Des Moines - possibly four. There are only five of us left now.

*(Editor ... Your right - Frank hasn't surfaced yet. But in doing a little researching I found that 'EXTRA JOKER' wasn't the first aircraft that Frank had lost. On 17 February 1944 his original aircraft, 'HONEY CHILD' #42-29220 [piloted by James G. Price] went down on a mission to bomb the Belgrade-Zemun Airdrome in Yugoslavia. 7 were KIA and 3 became POWs.*

*In trying to locate Frank A. Clark through various means, I run into a stone wall. Just how many Frank A. Clark's would you think, inhabit the U.S.? Way more than I can contact. The only lead is that he originated from California. But from there, where could he be now? Nevertheless, we'll post him as you requested - in the 'Diminishing Ranks' file.)*

**Ora 'Pete' Arnold, 727th [AEG: EDWARD H. STRESKY'S CREW]**

I was glad to receive the Ad Lib, which I always read from front to back. I am enclosing pictures of the crew. The clearer one has all of us except George Meyran, Nose Gunner. For the past 55 years I have had flowers on the Church Alter Table every 25th of April, in their memory.



Front Row L-R: Lt's. George S. Crommelin, Arthur L. Miskend, Edward H. Stresky, Samuel Swardlick Back Row: Sgt's Ora Arnold, Arthur Barker, Paul Hendrix, David Peterson, Quentin Thorvig

*(Editor ... Whenever I get letters such as yours, renewing events of the past, I get into my computer database and do some researching. In this case I accessed my "Killed In Action" [KIA] file for that date; 25 February 1945. Over the past years I have made a concentrated effort to locate the burial places of those [KIA], or "Killed In Line Of Duty" [KLD]. In your case, of the 7 that died that day, there are only two I cannot account for. They are: Sgt David W. Peterson and T/Sgt Quentin H. Thorvig. I found 1LT Edward H. Stresky, Pilot and S/Sgt Arthur J. Barker, Gunner, as being buried in the Zachary Taylor Nation Cemetery at Louisville, Kentucky. 1LT Arthur L. Miskend, Copilot, Sgt George D. Meyran, Jr., Gunner and S/Sgt Paul Hendrix, Gunner are laid to rest in the Ardennes American Cemetery at Neupre, Belgium. This is probably more than you wanted to know .. But with your dedication to these men, I included it.)*

**John V. Cummings, HDQS [RADIO OPERATOR]**

I often look through our 451st book, "The Fight'n 451st Bomb Group" and reminisce about the old days in Italy. From Dyersburg, to Wendover, to Fairmont and various bases in Italy. I can still remember the field, but not all their names. When overseas I was quartered at the 726th Squadron and worked in the radio room at Group Headquarters.

After radio school at the Stevens Hotel in Chicago, I was assigned to the aerial gunnery school in Panama City, Florida. After a short stint in B-17's (Radio Operator Gunner) - for some reason I left flying and ended up in the 451st original cadre - You know the rest.

*(Editor ... Thanks for the Change of Address, and the kudo's, which I omitted. Tis' much appreciated.)*

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

A week before Memorial Day our church was having Sunday Service and a picnic on the grounds when I noticed a visitor with a B-24 emblem on his cap. After introductions I asked what unit he was assigned to? He said to the 451st Bomb Group. With surprise I questioned, "What Squadron?" He said the 725th. I found out he was visiting his daughter and her husband who had been church members with us for over 28 years. Grady M. Nelson and I agreed to meet later to get better

acquainted. My story was that I was with the 451st when the Group formed in Fairmont and we flew our plane over, arriving in Italy in December '43. With the Group I flew my missions and lived to come home and eventually we were living in Arlington, Texas. Grady had come to the Group in June '44 as a replacement crew, and on his 4th mission was shot down and soon was imprisoned in Germany for seven months. He now lives on his ranch near Alpine, Texas.

*(Editor ... Jay, scan down to the next inclusion. It arrived just five days after your letter. I guess it shows that the 'ol bond still survives, no matter how old we become. There's always a story behind those B-24 logo's on someone's 451st cap, bumper sticker, or T-shirt.)*

Grady M. Nelon, 725th [COPILOT: JAMES F. EVARTS' CREW]

On a recent trip, I was in Mansfield, Texas, where my daughter lives. On this particular Sunday they were going to hold their church services outside, therefore I was dressed in casual clothing. I wore a cap with a picture of a B-24 on it. As we were sitting down for the services, I heard a fellow say, "I like your cap." After the service was over we got together and learned that we were in the

same Bomb Group and in the same Squadron in Italy. He got there four or five months before me, therefore I had never met him there. His name is A. Jay Woods. He was a Navigator and a member of our organization.

*(Editor ... Great to get mail like this. It shows there is still pride in what we did, and who we did it with.)*

**Marion 'Mickey' Barnd, Widow 726th - [Complimentary Member 74]**

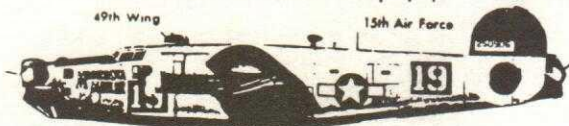
I would like to send a Memorial Tribute in Bob's name. He really enjoyed the reunions that we were able to attend. He also enjoyed all the research he did and read the Ad-Lib's over and over.

Our Group appreciates all the hard work and time you have put in as our leader. You have managed to keep it together all these years. Congratulations - Keep up the good work.

*(Editor ... Thanks Marion for your kind words. But thanks is really not needed in my efforts. While in active service overseas, I didn't do much but ride around Southern Europe in a high altitude military conveyance, so I feel I somewhat obligated to do something more for my wartime comrades. Perhaps this makes up for me not 'downing' those ME-109/ FW-190 that came into range.)*



FORMER MEMBERS OF THE  
451ST Bombardment Group (H) WW II. LTD.

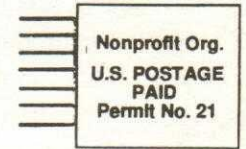


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