



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

Issue 42

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Winter 2006

2006 REUNION REVIEW (Are You Ready For This ?)

Our attendance for the Springfield reunion was down to 135 -**TOTAL**, that's including the wives, and/or offsprings. That is again a drop of over 100 from the Des Moines Reunion, and a 200 drop from the Salt Lake City gathering. Only 59 of our 451st veterans found it convenient to attend. From the pre-reunion mailings I got, the reason for not being able to attend ranged from (a.) Illness (either to himself, or a family member), (b.) Too far to travel, (c.) Inconvenient air connection to Springfield's Capital Airport, and of course, (d.) "My crewmate/tentmate can't make it, so I won't be there either."

In reviewing, and accepting their comments as valid, it seemed that everyone enjoyed themselves to the fullest. And for those that couldn't attend, here's a recapping of how it went.

THURSDAY: Opening event was to pick up the reunion packet containing name tags and meal tickets. This was done in the foyer of the President

Abraham Lincoln Hotel. On display, also in the foyer, were crewman's artifacts brought in by George R. Frisbee (son of the late George Frisbee, 725th) and Randy Jones (dedicated Associate Member).

George brought in numerous artifacts that would be associated with our high altitude flying (e.g. parachute and harness, helmet, oxygen mask, clothing, etc., etc, and maintenance manuals pertaining to our B-24 Liberator).

Randy had an array of finely crafted artwork pertaining to our 451st Bomb Group. He had us busy autographing such items as; an A-2 leather jacket, the surfaces of a B-24 model that had a wingspan of over five feet, the margins of special artwork he brought in from his home in Phoenix, AZ.

Our 'Sales Table' of T-Shirts, Caps, Watches, Automobile Decals, 2007 Day Planner Booklets and Ploesti Pictured Post Cards was competently handled by Edna Haggerty, wife of John Haggerty, 727th.

'Sedge' Hill, 727th, occupied a table in which to sell and autograph the book that he and his son, Mike Hill, had authored together, titled "The Fight'n 451st Bombardment Group (H) WW-II."

At 6:30 PM we adjourned to the Hotel Ballroom and enjoyed an "Illinois Styled Buffet." At 7:30 I had the pleasure to announce the arrival of our evening's special guests; President and Mrs. Abraham Lincoln. Their entry was a total surprise to our dinner guests and to add to the dignity of the occasion, their entry was accompanied by the play-

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"AD-LIB"**451st BOMB GROUP (H), LTD.
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We reserve the right to edit, shorten, clarify any article submitted to the Ad Lib. We may choose not to include an article due to length, content or negative implications - Editor

ing of "Hail To The Chief," as only our trumpeter, John O'Connor, 724th, could do it. After a stunning and historical rendition of some of Abe 'n Mary's time in Springfield and in Washington, DC, the evening faded away with the erupting of flash bulbs as photos were taken with our 'Special Guests.'

FRIDAY: At a little after 11:00 AM we boarded our 3 buses to take us out to visit the 183rd Fighter Wing of the Illinois Air National Guard at the Springfield Capital Airport. Luncheon Buffet awaited us upon arrival, and after eating we were shuttled (in groups of 15 to 20) to one of the Wing's Maintenance Hangers where we got a close-up view, and basic knowledge, of our modern Jet Fighters. Several of the Base Pilots took part of their day off to enlighten us on this new aspect of aerial warfare.

At 6:00 PM we were given a 'Wine and Cheese Appreciation Hour,' hosted by the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel. Throughout the evening we had the honor to listen to the 144th Army Guard Band. First, while we enjoyed the repast, the Dixieland Combo of the Army Guard Band played for our enjoyment. Then, when all had settled down the

Ceremonial Band gave us an hour of great listening. I took it upon myself to ask the band leader if one of our musicians could sit in. They granted my request, upon hearing that our resident trumpeter, John O'Connor, had a well qualified background in all types of music.

I think it surprised the Band Director when they played the Air Force Song and in unison, we all stood and sang along. What a moment!

SATURDAY: A great day for comradeship among your friends and for touring the historical site in Springfield. We had not planned for any specific sightseeing, thus no buses were ordered. Instead the city had buses available on a half hour basis that toured all the major 'Lincoln Sites,' and you could drop off, visit a site, and catch a following bus.

At 6:00 PM we had our Cocktail Hour with a cash bar. Come 7:00 we all took our places for our Formal Banquet. At the Head Table we had Colonel O'Connor (retired) as our Master of Ceremonies, our guest speaker Vice Admiral N. Roland Thunman (retired Commander Submarine Force, U.S. Pacific Fleet) and his wife, Owsley, Colonel O'Connor's wife, Anna and his daughter, Kathy Tessin. OH, I was also included.

Admiral Thunman lauded us for our services during World War Two, and for the honors bestowed on us via our three Distinguished Unit Citations. It seemed a strange match-up to have a Submariner address us 'ol fly-boys. For it was we that carried out our missions from sea level to 25,000 feet altitude, while the Admiral did his duties from sea level to some hundreds of feet below. He made great comparisons and was highly praised by those in attendance.

At the very conclusion of the evening, I introduced George Frisbee who raffled off a B-24 model. George has done this for the past three reunions with the proceeds going into the 451st treasury.

I next introduced Randy Jones who outlined his plans to extol the merits of the 451st with his various projects, such as we saw throughout the reunion that were displayed in the hotel foyer.

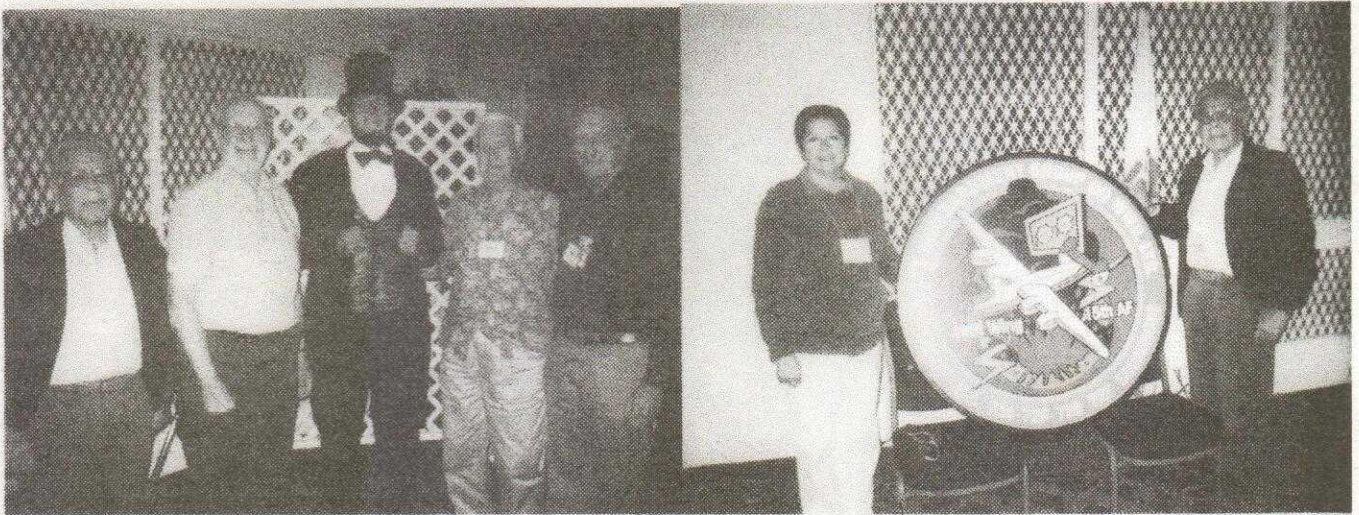
That brought the reunion to a fairly successful conclusion. On Sunday most of us headed back home.



451ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP 2006 REUNION SPRINGFIELD IL. OCT. 4-8

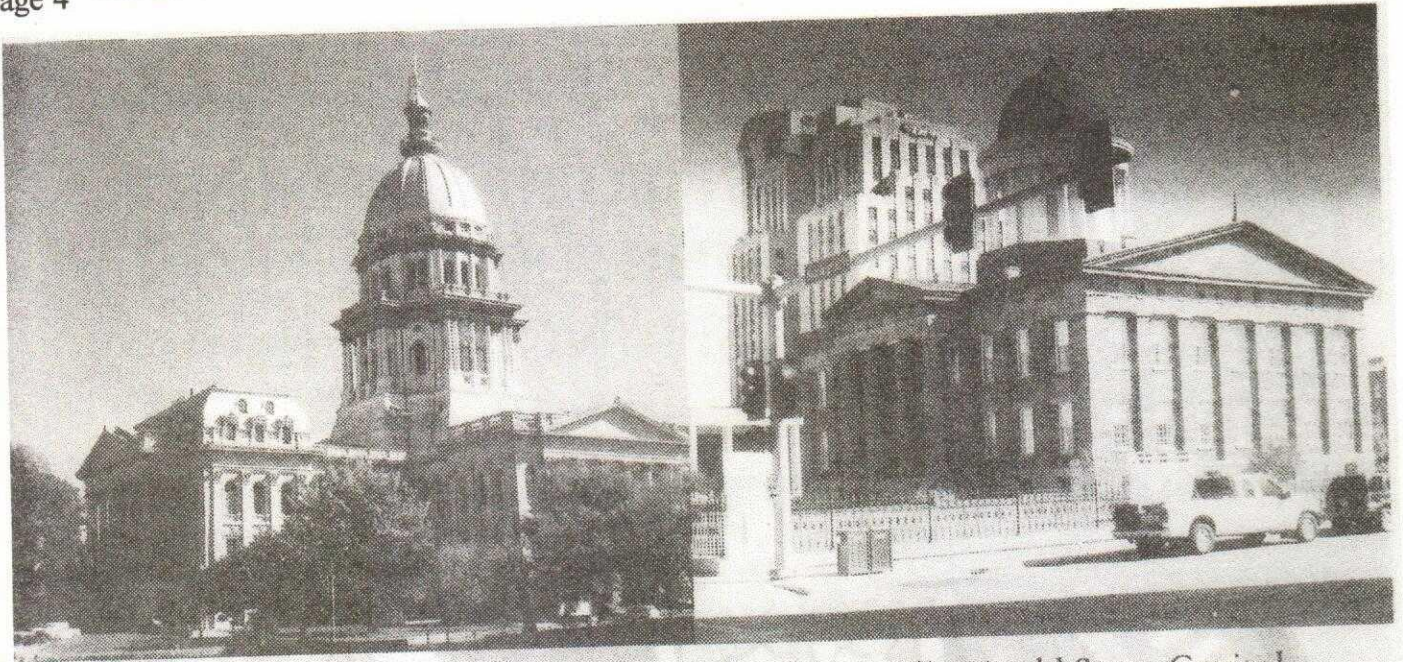


Illinois buffet and a history lesson from Mrs. and President Lincoln



Milo Bob Abe Ed Dave Beccy Milo





Illinois State Capital, Springfield IL.

15thAC's 451st Bombardment group celebrated it's 2006 reunion in this city

Illinois old State Capital

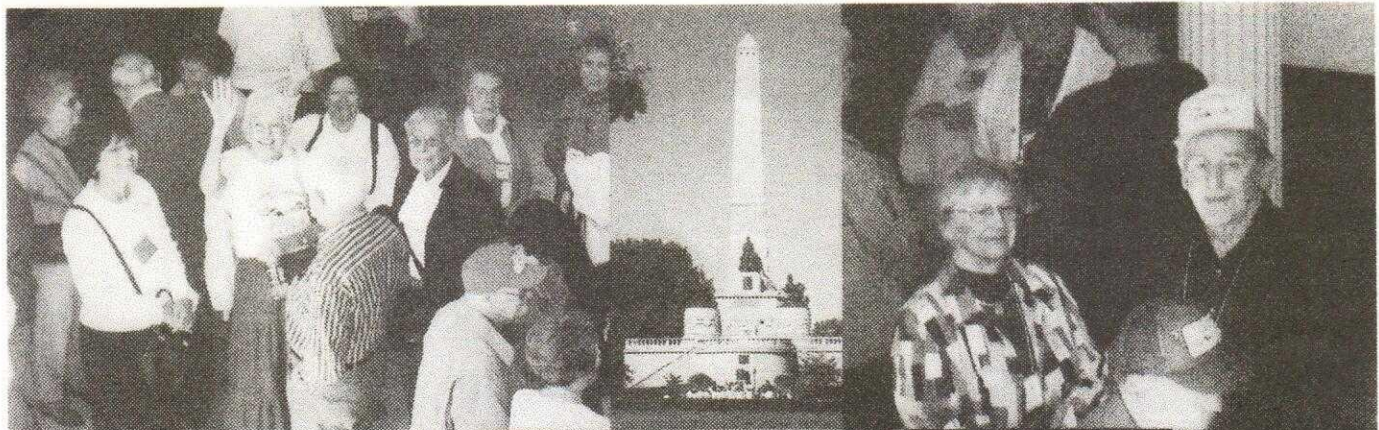


This is a small example of the lovely ladies that accompanied some the veterans to this event.



Bob Anderson and Jim Bitzinger met for the first time although they were both POW's in the same stalag and were shot down on the same mission.



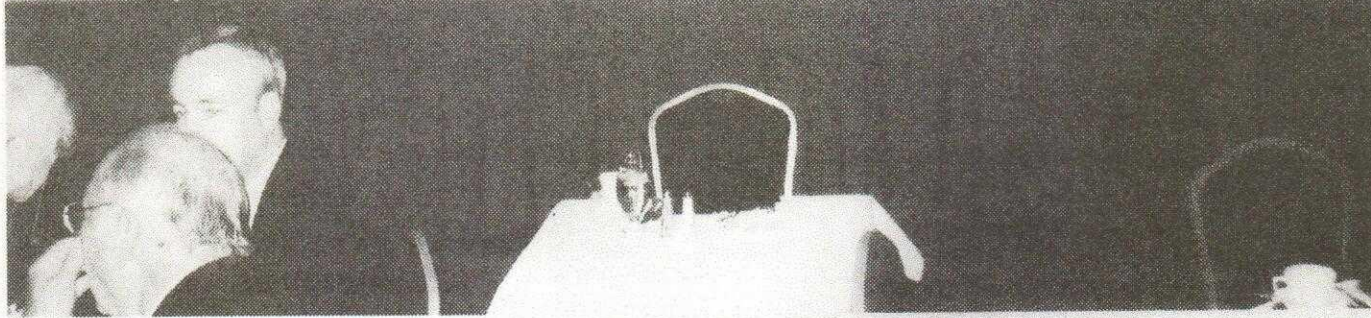
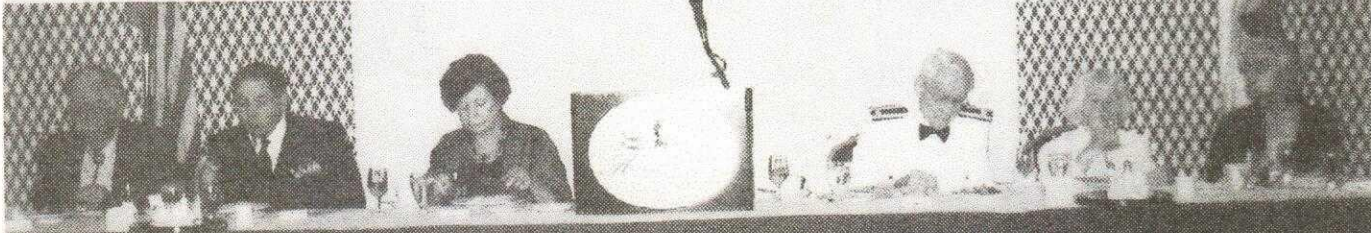


451 BOMB GROUP
2006 REUNION
SPRINGFIELD IL.
OCT. 4-8





Welcome
ST BOMB GROUP VETERANS



451 BOMB GROUP 2006 REUNION
SPRINGFIELD IL. OCT. 4-8

DEMISE OF A/C "COCKY CREW"

As a replacement crew in the 724th Bomb Squadron, 451st Bomb Group, 49th Wing, 15th Air Force, our crew flew a new plane from Topeka, Kansas and had embellished it by naming it, "Boot In The Ass." On its final mission it was brought back to the base to badly damaged to be economically repaired.



lock. Fortunately, no injuries were reported for Captain Rollins or the crew. 'Boot' had at last made its final trek to the salvage area.

Our crew flew other ships including one named "Cocky Crew," Tail Number 73. She was flown, by our crew, to Vienna on February 7, 1945 (mission No. 168). Our

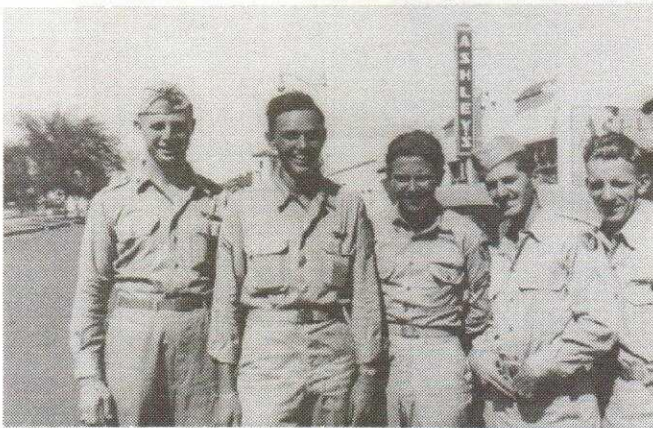
regular Copilot (Tom Flowers) was given a 'day off' to provide an introductory flight for a new pilot (name unknown) while our Bombardier (Walt Downing) had a severe cold and was replaced by Lt. Willard M. McCullum.

The new Copilot made the preflight inspection and was briefed along with the crew members, on the mission, signals, expected escort cover, expected flak, etc. After takeoff, the usual flight deck pattern of alternating fifteen minutes of control duty was followed. The new Pilot did an excellent job of formation flying and engine management.

Heavy flak followed the formation from the IP to "Bombs Away." Our ship sustained hits on the right side which disabled the two right engines and injured the Copilot. He received a deep and painful wound which impinged on his spine and caused loss of control of his legs. Chuck Curby, Radio Operator, and Jimmy Watts, Flight Engineer, carefully extracted the Copilot from his seat and placed him on the flight deck. Morphine was given to ease the pain.

Engine No. 3, of course, drove the hydraulic pumps needed for actuating flaps, brakes, landing gear, etc. The burst also disabled our intercom and other radio communications. After the two dead propellers were feathered and the control trim was adjusted, all that remained was to fly the ship back to base. Watts set about to repair the hydraulics and succeeded in closing the bomb bay doors, which eliminated some of the drag and helped our airspeed. He accomplished the repairs while hanging out over the empty bomb bay. He also

After the story of 'Boot' was published in the 'Ad Lib,' I learned from Robert Karstensen, President of the 451st post war organization, that he had found an additional record concerning 'Boot,' that instead of cannibalizing parts from her, the 60th Service Squadron felt that repairs could indeed be made. Captain Henry Rolliins took a Crew Chief and a couple of repair specialists from the Service Squadron for a test flight. Captain Rollins was a senior member of the 724th Squadron and a very experienced pilot. He related that the test hop demonstrated that the plane flew very well. The landing was 'soft' with no drift. However, the right main gear suddenly retracted and the plane skewed off the runway and was destroyed with the tail section twisted from the fuselage. One can only speculate as to the cause--perhaps hidden damage to the 'gear-down'



DUNSMOOR CREW:

L/R: 'Jack' Dunsmoor, Walt Downing, 'Chuck' Curby, Earl Miller, Sam Strelcki

made repairs to the hydraulics located in the crawlway leading to the nose section. He said that the passage was slick from hydraulic fluid. Guts and determination. Flight Engineers were noted for having on-board a used ammo box filled with pieces of hose, tubing and hose clamps. Jimmy was no exception to that practice. The results were band-aids in a sense, but usually adequate.

Loss of power from the two dead engines and their drag gave the plane a significant yaw to the right, even with maximum amount of rudder trim. Heavy and continuous left rudder pressure was required to maintain a more or less straight course. Anything less immediately resulted in a quickening downward spiral to the right. Here's where the broad rudder pedals proved indispensable. At first, I was able to maintain the effort with my left foot and leg. I alternated then with my right foot, and finally with both feet on the pedal. I thought that the landing would be somewhat tricky.

The cockpit seemed a bit lonesome without another Pilot to share the duty. Of course, we were at the rally altitude to begin with and knew that, without all the engines functioning, the formation would inevitably draw away. So, in fact, we were becoming more lonesome. About this time we became aware of P-51 fighters (Tuskegee Pilots) circling above us. A very comforting feeling. They escorted us nearly to the Adriatic coast line. After this it was simply a case of nursing the engines and slowly, very slowly losing as little altitude as possible and to conserve fuel. Conserving fuel was vital and required transferring fuel from one tank to another.

The B-24 was the only type aircraft I have flown in which fuel gauges and fuel management controls were located out of sight and reach of either the Pilot or Copilot. With the intercom out of commission and all the crew, save for the injured Copilot behind me, it was indeed lonesome. Leaving the controls seemed risky, so I hoped that one of the crew might wander up forward. It didn't happen.

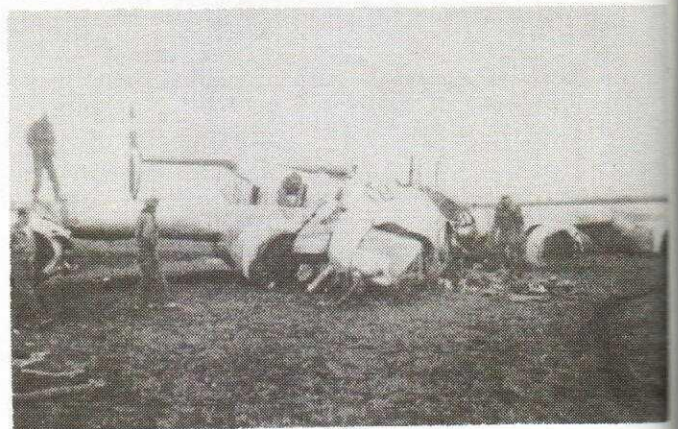
We left the Adriatic Eastern coastline at about fifteen thousand feet altitude, but ahead of us a bank of clouds could be seen over Italy. Not wanting to fly instruments on reduced power, more altitude was bled off so that we could fly under the

clouds. We crossed the coastline into Italy on route to our base at an altitude of fifteen hundred feet. I could not reach Jimmy Watts for a fuel check or change in tanks. We were minutes away from the base when both remaining engines starved and quit running.

As it happened, I rang the alarm bell to alert the crew to jump while we still had enough altitude. After the traditional count of ten, I abandoned the controls and started aft to rig a parachute on the injured Copilot when I found him standing and struggling to put on his harness. Looking back to the bomb bay I saw the bomb bay doors to be closed and the crew scrambling aft. Knowing that the Copilot and I could not bail out my only option left was to climb back into my seat and manage a glide. With no power, the glide was more like that of an anvil lashed to a kitchen table.

In the brief absence from the controls, the ship had sharply drifted down and to the right. Providentially, the aircraft was headed toward a freshly plowed field. The field slanted slightly down and away from us. The farmer had plowed a rough cart path across the field, throwing the earth up-slope across our flight path. We had no option but to slightly alter our course to align the aircraft with the field. The yoke was held back as we rapidly lost flying speed. Without flaps we probably touched down at 150 miles per hour.

As we crossed the cart path, the piled earth in front of it, gave the aircraft a slightly upward thrust and we slipped over it. The next touchdown was violent. Fortunately, the freshly plowed earth most likely eased the deceleration. From the utter silence



"COCKY CREW" AFTER THE HARD LANDING

of the approach, we were suddenly thrust into a shrieking, tearing cacophony of sound as the ship nosed downward and broke up. The entire nose, from the cockpit forward, broke and twisted to the right, opening a huge vertical gap next to my left knee through which mud and earth smashed into the cockpit. The mass of the control column was yanked forward leaving only the rim and spokes in my hands. The bomb bay doors were sheared off during the first impact with the earth.

The entire nose section turned and twisted to the right with the bottom of the nose turret crushed into the No. 3 engine and obliterating the Bombardier and Navigator position. It crushed and filled the entire volume of the Copilot's space. Additionally, the top turret broke its mounts and crushed the Radio Operator's space. No one could have survived the crash while occupying those positions.

The silence following the horrendous and violent deceleration was almost immediately broken by the sudden momentary awakening of the two left engines, by now propeller-less, gulping up the few teaspoons of fuel left in their lines. If there had been any hesitation about exiting the ship it vanished as all able bodied crewmen literally burst

out of any available opening.

During the crash sequence, the remainder of the crew were in the aft of the ship, while the Copilot rode out the crash in the space aft of the Pilot seat. Our Navigator, John Josephic, bailed out and safely parachuted to earth. Jimmy Watts also bailed out but his chute streamed, caught on the empennage and failed to open. Lt. McCullom failed in his attempt to get out of the bomb bay and was smothered by the earth. Both Watts and McCullom were taken to Bari, Italy, for interment in the military cemetery. Sam Strelecki (Tail Turret), Earl Miller (Ball Turret), Charles 'Chuck' Curby (Radio Operator), Frank Shinn (Nose Turret), and Frank Cannon (Waist Gunner) rode out the crash and safely exited the ship. They told me that they were knocked around quite a bit. So ended the career of the aircraft called "Cocky Crew."

Our location had been forwarded to Hiccup Tower and ground support was not long in arriving. Personnel from a nearby fighter base also appeared and secured the area. The crash survivors were taken back to our field for a most welcome late dinner. The following day the crew was taken back to the crash site to retrieve gear and personal effects. We later learned that the injured Copilot had been operated on and would regain full use of his legs.

Members of the crew whose positions were in cramped quarters (Navigator, Bombardier and the Pilots) were issued parachute harnesses to which were attached strong metal rings. The packed parachutes had built-in safety snap hooks which could be quickly fastened to the harness. When I retrieved my chute and harness I was stunned to find that my chute also had no safety snap hooks - just safety rings - no chance to hook up and use it. Needless to say, future issues of chutes and harnesses were carefully inspected.

A DFC citation stated that the Pilot guided the aircraft to a safe landing. Utter nonsense. The ship made it to the ground but two crewmen were killed. Providence was with the rest.

Extending the sadness of the event was the obligation to write McCullom's and Watts' loved ones. Shortly after the end of the war my wife and I had the opportunity to visit Mr. & Mrs. Watts in North Carolina. They were most gracious to us.



'JACK' REVISITS THE SITE TO RETRIEVE PERSONAL ITEMS

HOW THE 725th POWER PLANT CAME TO BE (MORE INFO ON THE 'PROCURER,' SGT RAY KNOWLES, AS DETAILED BY CAPTAIN RALPH McBETH)

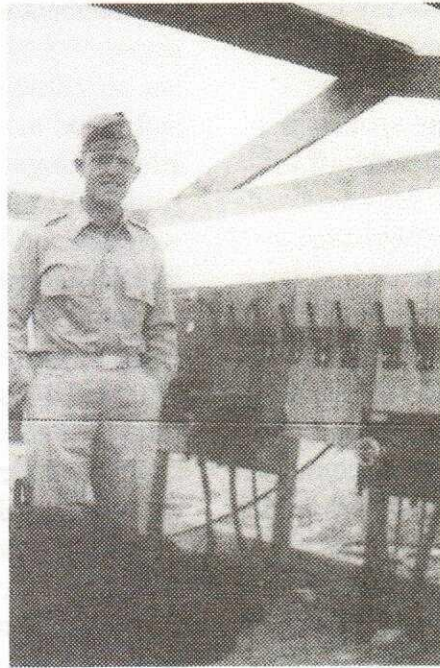
S/Sgt Raymond Knowles was an outstanding Radio Mechanic. Prior to entering the service, he was employed as a Diesel Mechanic. He was older than most of the troops, probably in his early to mid-thirties.

More than one truck was dispatched to the Italian Navy Depot at Bari on that occasion. He returned with two large diesel generators (with at least 15KVA capacity each), concrete, lumber, tarps and heavy duty wire to keep voltage drops to a minimum, as well as light bulbs and fixtures.

It took a lot of preparation to get the generators operational. After pouring concrete and placing the generators on their pads, a cooling system was fabricated by placing a tower of three metal frag bomb liners with holes drilled in the bottom. Water was pumped by the generator to the top liner which was cooled as it ran to the barrel.

It was also necessary to fabricate a way to start the engines. A piece was cut from a web belt, soaked in diesel fuel, set on fire and burned until the blaze subsided and then inserted in the engine as a glow plug.

It was also necessary to find a way to turn the engines over for starting. Sgt Knowles took a jack and Heinz auxiliary aircraft starter, fabricated an adaptor to the engine and used a small PE-175 gasoline generator for 100 volt power. I am sure he ran into many more obstacles that I am not aware of prior to the generator becoming operational.



**CAPTAIN RALPH McBETH
725TH COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER**

One engine ran continuously, while both engines were in use during evening hours until midnight. Every tent and office was provided with electricity for lights and radio.

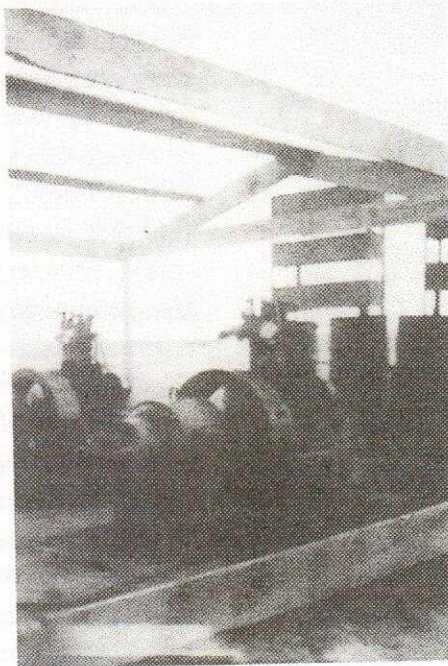
After approximately six months, one of the generators failed. Sgt Knowles tore the engine down and found the main bearing had failed. The 60th poured a new bearing, fabricated gaskets and 3 days later the generator was back in operation.

When we departed the 725th, some of the pilots and crews remained with our aircraft - so, we serviced the generators with fuel and hoped they remained operational until the last aircraft had departed.

This action was just another indication of the "Can Do" attitude of people - to make it better for everyone concerned. We would not have been able to provide electricity for our Squadron if Sgt

Knowles had not found these generators and had not had the technical skill to place them in operation using the limited materials available. There were many other Communications Section people involved in this operation, including the Telephone Linemen who laid the electrical cables for our Squadron.

Sgt Knowles visited me at Dow Field just prior to his discharge in late September 1945. He had just had an operation on one of his eyes to correct a birth defect. I have found no one who has had contact with him since he was discharged.



FINAL PRODUCT

ERNIE CUMMINS' 60th AIR SERVICE SQUADRON JOURNAL

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

1 May 1945

Dear Mabel: Evening Peanut, how y'all? Your Number One boy is sitting around in his undershirt dreaming of home, and no matter where Mabel is, that's home to me.

Got a letter yesterday from C.J. Sloetzer (Duke) - and he told of his travels since Rome, New York. Seems he is now a foreman, lives in a Government dormitory, leaves women strictly alone, and is saving money at a furious rate. That woman business has me wondering, but further along in his letter he states the big reason he volunteered for Island service was a girl in the East was getting to "insistent," so I figure he's been up to his old tricks.

Well lover, the tent has another man for me to get acquainted with now. Jack, (I don't know his last name yet) - a big husky farmer from Iowa. Seems like a nice kid, married and has a cute fuzzy headed baby back home. He's an ex-doughfoot, and the comfort of our camp is a welcome change to him. Early this morning some rambunctious pilot "buzzed" the camp, and you should have seen Jack duck when the prop wash made the tent flap around! It is nothing to laugh at, but his nerves will settle down in time.

This Number 7 that our tent bears is a lucky seven, indeed. The boys are thinking of renaming it "Transient Hotel," due to the terrific turnover of guests. Last summer, when we set up, we had five cots. For quite a time now we have kept it down to four, giving us more room. Was figuring out who has bunked with us since the move to this camp and it comes to an even dozen! Some had the dubious honor of a visit to the Guard House (two) - several more transferred (five) - and some lucky ones got back to the States (four). If you total those numbers, that leaves - guess who? Yep, me, the veteran of Rice Field!



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

It's a joke around here, among the gang - if you want action, move into Tent # 7

Raining again and there is a movie in the mess hall, one I have already seen. That reminds me, honey, one guy I know gets regularly, through the mail, the weekly program of his neighborhood movie theater. What does he get out of that, except to ask his girl if she saw the films, huh?

The news is on the radio now, gosh the places taken recently in Northern Italy are practically undamaged! Smart people up there to grab 'em from

the Germans before they have a chance to blow 'em apart. Well darling - Good night now, sweet dreams, here is a big smackeroo to the girl I love.

Ernie (alias De Lawd)

9 May 1945 (uncensored)

It's Over, Over Here!

The headlines of the Stars and Stripes were in heavy black type yesterday, and we heard the President and other leaders speaking on the radio. So Mabel darling, one half of the war is over, the important half, for those of us in Europe. I imagine the celebration around home was bigger than anything seen there for a long time. We had a very calm party, considering. Some free beer, a day off work, and some colored flares for fireworks. Last night I was on guard duty from 7 'til 10, and from the hill that our camp is on, I could look over the flat valley to the city of Foggia, where clusters of rockets and signal flares were being shot into the air by some happy G.I.'s.

Honey, all we can do now is wait and hope. Pray, too!

Last Sunday I took a run to a Rest Camp. I drove the fellows down and brought back a load of men that had been there the previous week. This big resort hotel is really a fancy place. Four stories

with a basement restaurant and bar, and balconies right over the blue waters of the Adriatic Sea. Real soft mattresses and springs on the beds, along with sheets and pillows. Even modern plumbing with bath tubs, too!

The restaurant has little square tables with Italian boys serving the meals in courses. The bar is slicked up with bamboo trimming, South Sea style. During the afternoon they serve a cold luncheon on a marble floored terrace just outside. Darned good food, too.

It turned out to be a fine trip. Good weather and not much traffic. My only beef was at some Limey driver who nicked my rig when we passed each other going the opposite directions at thirty miles per hour. Kind of gave us a scare!

Some of the Italian workers that labored in the 60th camp for more than a year have left, heading for their homes in the north of Italy that have just been set free. How I wish I could hitch hike back to California!

Met another guard last night (a Texas lad), who use to work as a burner at Marinship. He knew all the bars, dance halls, and places around Marin and San Francisco, so we talked for hours. This is the first guy I've met that has seen Marin since 1943. He was surprised when I told him how the Yard was closing down; he said when the first tankers were on the ways, machinists were getting in eighteen hours per day! What paychecks, imagine!

***** COMMENT *****

V. E. Day itself was not the occasion of great celebration, as the Pacific was still active and many of the troops expected to be transferred there. The closest thing to an emotional display took place about two weeks later. Aircraft had once again been fitted with Tokyo gas tanks for over water hops. I was just driving out of the warehouse area of the Bari depot, heading back to the highway north, when a roar that shook the ground overwhelming the city. I stopped and got out to look, and there, at about 500 feet, came massed flights of B-24s, B-17s, P-38s, P-47s and P-51s. The faster planes weaving back and forth to match speed with the "furniture vans." I think there were many of the ground crews flying that day, just to experience what the guys with wings had been doing. The huge formation passed over many cities

in a Victory Parade, and at the conclusion most of them refueled and headed for African bases on their way to new duty stations. The Italian civilians got a great thrill as most of them had never seen such a collection of horsepower assembled in one place. Neither had I, being use to heavy stuff, but not having much contact with the fighters. As the saying goes - "Sure glad they were on our side!"

After the last combat mission was run there was a period of three weeks that saw the 60th men working harder than at any comparable time span of the war. How this came about was simple: an order was posted saying, "The first outfit that turns in all its equipment will be the first on the ship heading home."

There we were driving like mad all day, hauling freight into various depots and getting rid of all the junk that accumulates when an outfit stays too long in a fixed location. We used the wrecker crane to hoist down all the shower tanks that had served us in camp, took all the loose gear out of the machine shop and instrument trailers, packed the spare parts in Tech Supply. Then at night we pulled them over the mountains to Naples, where all trucks had to be turned in. As we had more trailers than tractors, we came back to camp "bob-tail." and made other trips the next night.

With all the activity in the camp area, and driving at night to turn in equipment, there was little time for sleep. Two hours was about what we got in twenty four, so to keep from crashing down a mountain side, we took Benzedrine tablets that the Medics gave us. One of the conditions that the United States granted Italy for the right to build bases, was guarantee the places uses would be returned to normal after the became unnecessary. That meant buildings had to be razed, fields cleared of metal planking, pipelines taken up, telephone lines removed, drainage restored to former channels etc. Of course the 60th didn't do all this, but we saw the start before we convoyed across Italy for the last time to the Port of Embarkation at Naples.



"LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON (Continued 17th Installment by Dr. Royal C. Gilkey)

On October 13, 1944, Squadron P-38s were sent on an escort mission for the 55th and 304th Wing bombers out to attack the south oil refinery at Blechhammer, Germany. At 0806 hours (8:06 a.m.), 15 "Lightnings" took off, but one crashed on take-off, leaving 14 to fly the mission. Their position in the Group was second. The heavy bombers were escorted from 0910-1105 hours (9:10-11:05 a.m.). Rendezvous with them



occurred 18,000 feet over Yugoslavia's coast at Drevnik, the time being 0910 hours (9:10 a.m.). The P-38 then escorted the heavies as far as midway between the I.P. and the target at 1513N 1755E. Time and altitudes were 1105 hours (11:05 a.m.) and 28,000 feet. Leaving the bombers at that point, our P-38s flew cover for the strafing by other squadrons in the Group from 1125-1150 hours (11:25-11:50 a.m.) at altitudes varying from 10,000-15,000 feet. The area covered lay between the vicinity of Lundenberg & the Neusiedler Lake (Neusiedler See) region. Unaccompanied by the other fighters, ours returned to the briefed course from a point (4801N 1654E) just north of the lake and flew the route homeward, landing at 1347 hours (1:47 p.m.). All 14 pilots got back, receiving sortie credit for having completed the mission. They reported that both bomber and fighter formations were good. Smoke from bomb bursts on the target arose over it. Flak was seen in the target area & also at Veszprem (4706N 1753E) in Hungary. There were other observations. From an altitude of 25,000 feet, the pilots saw a mushroom-shaped black cloud trailing down over the Austrian capital Vienna (Wien) at 1135 hours (11:35 a.m.). They also spotted 150 single-engine fighters arranged in three bunches of 50 each, forming rectangles with orchard trees as boundaries, at 4830N 1656E, the altitude of observation being

12,000 feet. As for weather, it was clear at the target. Over the mountains, there were scattered cirrus clouds, with tops at 25,000 feet but rising to 27,000 feet in the vicinity of Lake Balaton, Hungary. Unnecessary radio chatter was reported. The pilots heard calls that the aircraft observed on the ground were really mock-ups or duds. There was no radio contact with the bombers being escorted. The enemy offered no aerial

resistance.

October 13, 1944 proved to be a bad day for the pilot who crashed while taking off; but he was fortunate to come out of it with his life. Quick rescue-action by the Squadron personnel saved the situation for him. His rescue, from the burning and fully-armed plane, with ground personnel acting at great risk to themselves, showed commendable courage.

The diary entry for the day made this clear by reporting the accident as follows: 2nd Lt. Ragusa (Paul J.) [from East Elmhurst, N.Y.] crashed on take-off, just south of [the] field. The plane started burning. M/Sgt Lewis Crooks, T/Sgt Ross Swinford, Brownie Wyborski, and Leonard Davidson pulled Lt. Ragusa from the plane. S/Sgt Michael Onderchanin also assisted in saving Lt. Ragusa's life. He was trapped and could not free himself. What happened to him was enough to make pilot Ragusa "gun shy," and he was in no hurry to fly again. After examining him, the Squadron flight surgeon agreed it might be best for the victim to stay out of airplanes for a while. So he was not immediately assigned to fly combat missions in the wake of being badly shaken up by the crash. The question of whether to remove him permanently from flying status remained to be determined.

The Squadron's S-2 had a good reason to remember the day. It had brought him a promotion. An entry in the unit diary succinctly noted: "2nd Lt. Royal C. Gilkey was appointed 1st Lt." A higher rank was not to come his way until after the war was over.

On October 14, 1944, a repeat-mission was undertaken. October 13th's mission was to "provide escort on penetration to prudent limit" for heavy bomber attacking the South Oil Refinery at Blechhamer, Germany. October 14th's was to "provide penetration and route cover" for the heavies hitting the same place. On the 14th, however, there were some different bombers among the attackers. These attackers included four Groups from the 304 Wing and three Groups from the 49th Wing. Again, flying second in the Group, 16 "Hangman Squadron's" P-38 took off at 0915 hours (9:15 a.m.) and headed for rendezvous, which was effected 22,000 feet over Kostajnica at 1050 hours (10:50 a.m.). From Yugoslavia's Kostajnica (4513N 1633E) near the Una River, the "Lightnings" escorted the heavies as far as Tardoskedd (4805N 1805E) where they departed at 1145 hours (11:45 a.m.), their altitude being about 19,000 feet. Our P-38s then turned to scour the general area to Hungary's Szekesfehervar airdrome, which was to be strafed. With P-38s flying cover while other "Lightnings" strafed, identifiable objectives were hit. At 4640N 1716E near a place called Vors, a blue-black vehicle was caught driving westward through a clump of trees and damaged, white smoke from its exhaust giving its position away. A P-38 fired a burst into it as the vehicle emerged from the trees. The driver got his comeuppance at that moment. There was evidence of other damage. From 22,000 feet at 1010 hours (10:10 a.m.), fire and high-rising column of black smoke were seen over Croatia's capital, Zagreb. A motionless eastward-facing passenger train emitting smoke was

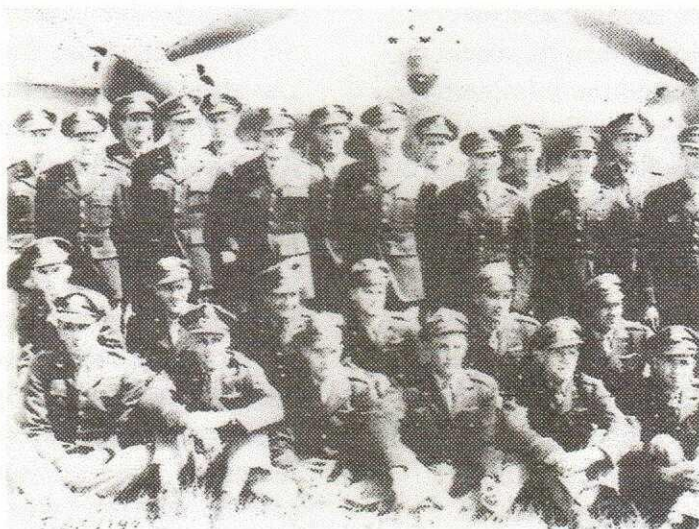
spotted from 12,000 feet about noontime at 4643N 1713E. North of Lake Balaton at Tapolcza airdrome (4654N 1727E), pilots reported seeing five aircraft, two of them single-engine planes and the other three, twin-engine. No enemy air resistance was encountered, but flak "greeted" our planes over Veszprem and the target airfield in Hungary. With these things in mind, our pilots headed back to base, crossing the coast of Yugoslavia at 4333N 1625E, the time and altitude being 1330 hours (1:30 p.m.) and 11,000 feet. The "Lightnings" landed at different times. Eight got back to base at 1420 hours (2:20 p.m.); four at 1620 hours (4:20 p.m.); and three at 1725 hours (5:25 p.m.). One P-38 crashed on a Yugoslav offshore island while landing at Vis airdrome. From there, he was airlifted across the Adriatic Sea to Bari aboard a DC-3. Fortunately, he was uninjured. The 16 "Hangmen" who completed the mission received sortie credit.

One tragedy marred the mission. At 1245 hours (12:45 p.m.) a single P-38 was seen to plunge straight down from 4,500 feet at 4718N 1805E. Evidently, its pilot lost his life on Hungarian soil in the flaming wreck because no parachute was observed by our P-38 pilots flying at 6,000 feet.

The weather varied on this 944 mile round trip. Over Yugoslavia's coast, it was clear; but the mountains were 8/10 covered by cumulus clouds. East and north of Lake Balaton in Hungary, the cloud ceiling was at 19,000 feet, where the coverage was 8/10.

Although the fighter and bomber formations were good, radio security left something to be desired. Pilots called it "fair." No fighter called the bombers; but bombers contacted the fighters to inform them they would be 20 minutes early to rendezvous.

(Editor .. 13 October proved to be a disastrous day for the 451st. Our mission was to bomb the Osterreichische Motor



PILOTS OF THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON

Works and Marshalling Yards in Austria. Our Group history does not identify our fighter escort, only that the 15th Air Force Headquarters would list one later. We lost 8 aircraft due to flak. No enemy fighters were encountered. Of our aircraft lost: (1 from the 724th, Pilot Ken Elliott -10 POW); (2 from the 725th, Pilot Ashley Smith -1 KIA, 7 POW, 1 EVADED; Pilot Robert Baker -5 KIA, 5 POW); (2 from the 726th, Pilot Ibar Spellacy -10 RETURNED; Pilot James Rowsey -10 EVADED); (3 from the 727th, Pilot William Goin

-10 KIA; Pilot Homer Brewer -11 POW, Pilot James Moye -1 KIA, 9 POW.

14 October was a whole different story, though not without losses. Mission #135 was to bomb the Odertal Oil Refineries (Blechhammer area), Germany. We were escorted by the "Hangmen" of the 49th Fighter Squadron. Our losses were 2 aircraft; 1 from the 724th, Pilot Eugene Steinberg -1 KIA, 9 RETURNED); 1 from the 726th, Pilot Eugene Porter -11 EVADED.)



CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

There comes a time, at least within the course of our past reunions, that I am asked, "Where's the next reunion gonna be?" But now, after noting my pained expression and my response of, "I don't know," the next question is, "Are we even going to have another one?" Again, I am at a loss to give a positive answer. My only response is to say, "We'll just have to wait and see."

At this Springfield Reunion I found a lot of our regular attendees that bypassed this event due to illness, some of it just due to 'age,' and the number of members that have been found to be deceased since our last 1st class mailing.

I'm not about to concede that there won't be future 451st reunions, but I'm working on a way that would put them more locally to a member that would want to host one. I haven't worked out the details, as I hope to find that our numbers are sufficient enough that we can still do them as we have.

To early to ask you how you feel about this. Just wanted to 'bounce' this off you, anyway.

Has anyone out there seen the January/ February issue of the DAV (Disabled American Veterans) magazine? The cover shows a single P-51 Mustang flying cover/escort to a Squadron of 451st Liberators that are en route to Germany. Inside the cover is a written description of what is shown. It reads thusly:

First Lt. Charles P. Bailey keeps watch over a squadron of B-24s from the 451st Bomb Group as they cross the Alps en route to Germany during the summer of 1944. Lt. Bailey and his P-51C



Mustang, "My Buddy," were part of the 99th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group based at Ramitelli, Italy. One of the famed Tuskegee Airmen, Charles Bailey flew 133 missions with the 99th, then returned to Tuskegee as an instructor after completing his tour of duty. He was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross on May 12, 1945. He passed away in April 2001.

Mike Hill, our resident historian/author, has done it again! In conjunction with John Beitling, another noted military historian, they have authored a book that encompasses quite a bit of the aircraft inventory of the whole 49th Wing (451st, 461st and 484th Bomb Groups). The book, itself, has some 65 pages dedicated to the aircraft of the 451st, 33 pages to the 461st and another 33 to the 484th. The overabundance of aircraft of the 451st is due, in part, to all the research that Mike had done previously in this field.

Mike, and his father, Sedge Hill, (727th) had authored our first publication, "The Fight'n 451st," (Turner Publishing) then Mike followed it up with, "The 451st Bomb Group In World War II, A Pictorial History" (Schiffer Publishing). Now this newest, titled, "B-24 Liberators of the 15th Air Force/49th Bomb Wing in World War II." A worthy accomplishment that should be found at your local bookstore. Or, you can place your order directly with Schiffer Publishing; Ph. 610.593-1777

I don't mean to take away the importance of the book, but I should point out that early on in the conception of said publication, I was offered the honor of writing the Forward. Aside from some punctuation errors by the publishers, it's almost readable.

THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE

By: Herbert Guinness

I had just graduated from the final phase of the Army Air Corps cadet training program in August 1943. I was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and presented with the coveted pilot's wings to pin proudly on my uniform.

Out of our starting class of 430 cadets, some 7 months ago at Randolph Field in San Antonio, Texas, only 240 of us graduated that day. The rest were "washed out" along the way and were transferred to Navigator or Bombardier training schools.

After the graduation ceremonies, which took place at our advanced twin engine training school in the little town of Ada, Oklahoma, we all rushed over to the bulletin board outside the Headquarters building to locate our names and our next duty assignments. About 20% of the class were to be posted to Training Command as Instructor Pilots for upcoming cadet classes. Most of us felt that this was the worst duty -- we all wanted to go overseas and get into combat right away! The propaganda in WW-II was so intense that we were instilled with the urge to fight the enemy and avenge Pearl Harbor.

I whooped with joy when I saw my name assigning me to the flight transition training class for B-24 Liberator planes at Tarrant Field in Fort Worth, Texas. After 5 weeks of intensive flight and ground school training was completed successfully and the entry of "Qualified in B-24 Aircraft" was entered into my flight log book record, I was transferred to the Air Corps Base in Casper, Wyoming for crew assignment and crew training. I met the other 9 men of the crew assigned to me. There was a Copilot, Navigator, Bombardier (all 2nd Lieutenants), plus a Radio Operator Gunner, Engineer Gunner, 2 Waist Gunners, Belly Turret Gunner and a Tail Turret Gunner. We proceeded to train on practice missions in Norden Bombsight target bombing runs, gunnery practice against tow targets, formation flying, and navigation runs.

Even though there was a crying need for trained flight crews for combat assignments in Europe and the Pacific because of heavy losses from anti-aircraft fire and enemy fighter planes, we were never rushed through the training and were required to satisfactorily complete all phases of the program.

My crew was then ordered to proceed to Liberal, Kansas to pick up a new B-24 bomber and fly it overseas to the European Theater of operations. When we arrived at the Air Base in Liberal, I was called into the Flight Assignments building. I was directed to an office labeled "Aircraft Allocations." I was handed an Army supply form (in 6 copies), and asked to sign it after I had read it. It turned over to me, as the Pilot, 1 each B-24 Model E airplane built by the Convair Corp in San Diego, California, complete with 4 Pratt and Whitney R1800 turbopfan engines. The U.S. Army cost was listed at the base price of \$283,000, plus an additional sum for listed 50 caliber machine guns and other equipment for a total of \$319,000. This seemed to me to be an enormous amount of money, since I grew up in the years of the Great Depression. I willingly signed the forms (6 copies) and was given the log book and engineering documents for the plane. I was then sent to the Supply Room, where I overheard the Supply Sergeant say to a new Private Enlisted Man standing next to him, "If you want to get along in the Army, don't volunteer for anything, keep your mouth shut, your bowels open, and make 6 copies of everything." I thought that was pretty funny. He issued me a Colt 45 Pistol with a brown leather shoulder holster, plus some ammunition clips for it. I signed the 6 copies!

As I walked down the Flight Line searching for my new plane, I felt like I was 10 feet tall, especially with that pistol strapped to my shoulder. I was so proud and excited, and I thought, "Gosh the Army is even paying me the princely sum of \$250 per month, plus 10% more for flight pay. I think I would have flown that bird for free, I was that enamored with flying! Finally I spotted that brand new shiny aluminum plane ahead of me. I knew then that this was the best day of my life.

The next day we received our orders to proceed to the 15th Air Force crew replacement depot in Tunis, Tunisia in North Africa, via the Southern Atlantic route. We all climbed into our shiny new plane and headed for our first stop at West Palm Beach, Florida. This was the Staging Base for all flights on the South Atlantic route. After landing and refueling, we were issued maps, radio call signs and lo and behold, to my great amusement

the Signal Corps Officer issued 1 each carrier homing pigeons, with G.I. cage. Naturally I had to sign the 6 copies confirming receipt. I told the boys in my crew to handle the pigeons with great care as I was responsible for them. The Officer told us to release the pigeons if we were forced down in the South American jungle, or in the Atlantic Ocean on the trip to North Africa.

The next stop heading south was for refueling in Trinidad, then on to the jumping off port of Fortaleza, Brazil. Looking at the route map, I saw that this was the closest point of land facing the Atlantic Ocean towards the North African coast. Fortaleza bordered the Amazon jungle, and when we landed there we were told that all ocean flights were scheduled at night so the Navigators could shoot star sights for position fixing.

The next day, one of the Ground Crew soldiers at the Base asked me if I wanted him to paint a name on the plane, as it was common practice for planes going into combat to have creative art work on the nose of the planes. He said he was an accomplished artist and had decorated most of the B-24's passing through. I had a brilliant idea and said, "How about a picture of Uncle Sam, with a bare behind, and Hitler kissing his ass?" He thought this was a great idea and he did a masterful painting on the nose of my plane. After I saw this completed masterpiece, I thought, "My God, what if a Nazi fighter pilot flew close enough to see it -- he would make every effort to shoot us down.

That afternoon, a Brazilian civilian worker on the Base approached my crew holding a small Rhesus monkey in his arms. He offered to sell it to them for \$5.00 U.S. They all chipped in and paid him. Although it was forbidden to carry monkeys on the plane of long flights over the Atlantic, because they had been known to chew through the electric cables with their sharp teeth, I overlooked it and told them to hide him in the rear of the plane. They picked up a good supply of green bananas to feed him on the flight to North Africa, for it was going to be a long trip that night.

We took off after dark. It was a smooth flight of about 11 hours duration, with my Copilot and I taking turns flying. The boys in the back began singing over the intercom:

"Oh, the coffee that they feed us, they say is

mighty fine, It's good for cuts and bruises and tastes like iodine. Oh, I don't want no more of Army life, Oh, Mom I wanna go Gee, Mom I wanna go home."

And then the next verse:

"Oh, the doughnuts that they feed us they say are mighty fine One fell off the table and killed a pal of mine! Oh, I don't want no more of Army life. Oh, Mom I wanna go Gee, Mom I wanna go home."

They kept singing it over and over until I finally told them to shut up and go to sleep. But for the rest of the trip I couldn't get that stupid song out of my head. It damn near drove me batty. To this day I still remember that crazy song!!

We reached Dakar, Senegal in North Africa the next morning as the sun was rising in a brilliant yellow sky to the east. After catching up on our sleep and refueling, we took off the next morning for our final destination to Tunis, Tunisia, flying over the Sahara desert all the way. As the sun heated up the sand during the day, the air became extremely bumpy, and our erstwhile Navigator, Henry, got airsick and lost his bearings. There were no radio beacons, roads, towns, railroad lines or any other navigational aids -- only sand and more sand. We continued to fly on his dead reckoning course. He apologized for getting us lost, blaming it on the extreme turbulence. In the meantime, our little pet monkey was crushed by a dislodged parachute and suffocated. The boys tossed him out over the desert. So much for their \$5.00!

After a day of sightseeing in Tunis, we were

given our orders to fly to southern Italy to join the 451st Bomb Group, 726th Squadron as a replacement crew. We landed near the small town of San Pancrazio in the southern part of the Italian boot. It was raining heavily and the paths to the Headquarters and Mess hall were ankle deep in mud -- no sidewalks here! I reported to the Squadron Commander tent as instructed. Major Haltom welcomed us to the Group, and sadly for me, told us he was taking over my brand new airplane for other purposes.

He told me that we would be assigned to an older B-24, curiously named "Lonesome Polecat," probably because no other crew wanted it. So began our first experience with the 451st Bombardment Group.

(Editorial Comment: To further amplify on the previous narrative; the aircraft verbally assigned to Lt. Herbert Guinness, Lonesome Polecat (42-52114) was flown overseas, as an original Group aircraft, by Lt. Wilfred Bias. While under Lt. Bias' command, on 30 March 1944, S/Sgt Andrew Wirtzberger (Nose Gunner) lost his life over Sofia, Bulgaria.

On 10 June 1944, under command of Lt. Guinness, Lonesome Polecat was forced to ditch in the Adriatic Sea with the loss of two lives; Gunners Robert Anderson and Gardner Flint. The target that day was the oil refinery at Porto Marghero, Italy.

To date I have not been able to find any MACR, or Accident Reports on this incident.)



"LONESOME POLECAT"
Crew/Personnel Unknown

Jest Jokin'

It was told that a gangster rushed into a bar-room in the West, shooting right and left yelling, "All you dirty skunks, get outa here, get out!"

The customers fled in a hail of bullets except of an Englishman who leaned casually against the bar sipping his drink.

The gangster glared at him and said, "Well?"....."Well, ole man, there certainly were a lot of skunks in here, wasn't there?"

Diner: "I see by the sign tipping is forbidden."

Waiter: "Lord bless you, sir, so was apples in the Garden of Eden."

In spite of the expense and loss of time, the bridegroom should accompany the bride on the honeymoon. It may be the last vacation he will ever have.

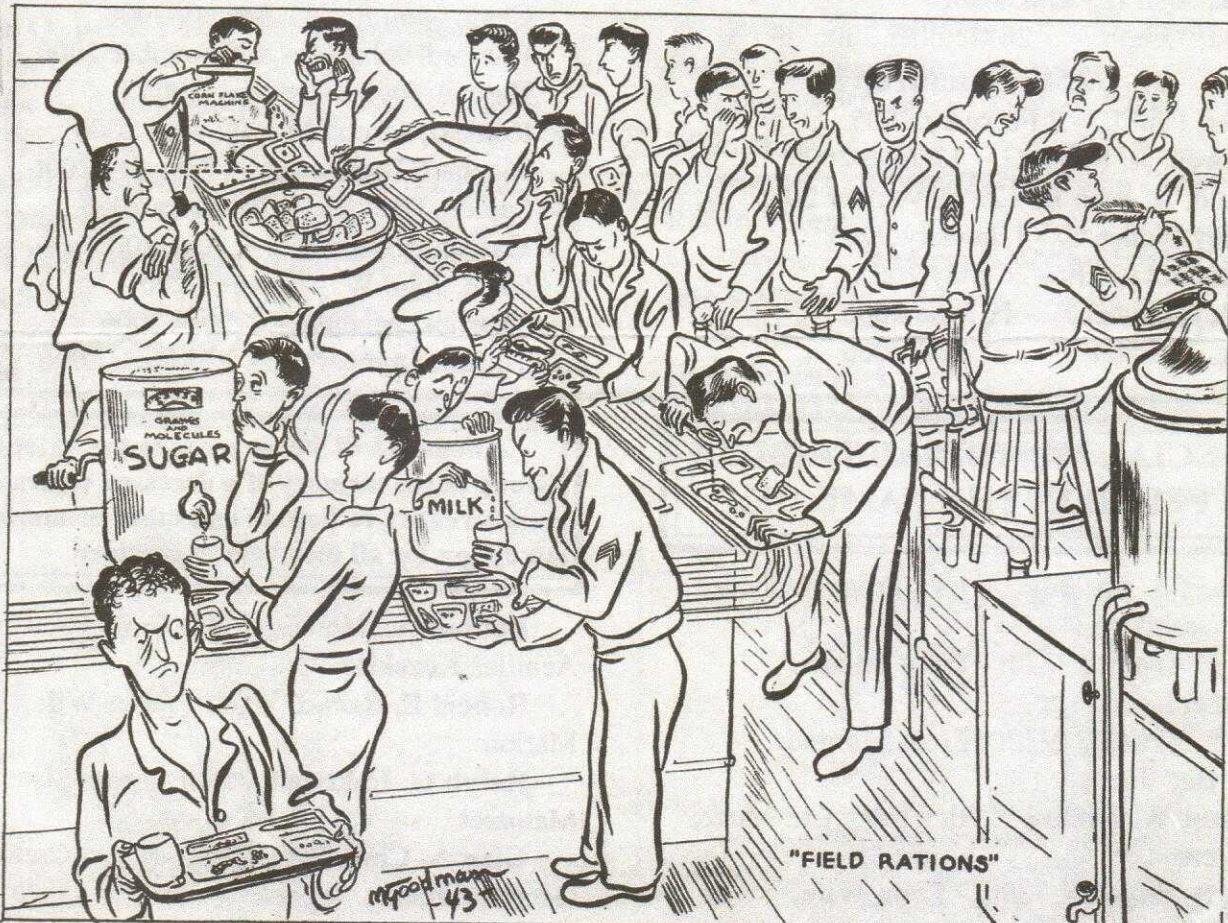
A classified boy married a widow with four children and then asked for a re-classification. "Nothing doing, the local draft board told him. "Anybody brave enough to marry like that is just the kind of man the Army is looking for!"

Typist: "Your wife wants to kiss you over the 'phone."

Boss: "Ssh! Take the message and give it to me later."

Bob Hope says a Yardbird is a guy who would like to drown his troubles. But he can't get the Sgt. to go in swimming.

Italy is getting out a new issue of stamps. Seems they had a stamp with the picture of Hitler and Mussolini, and people were spitting on the wrong side of the stamp.



OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

REPORTED SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Headquarters

Quillen, Monroe C. - 28 November 1990

724th Squadron

Beckwith, W. Philip - 14 June 2006
Custer, Robert E. - September 2003
Damaree, Dawson - 15 September 2000
Eggleston, Simon C. - 28 December 2005
Jones, Captain E. - 14 February 2006
Marksberry, Delton E. - 16 May 2005
McMillen, Paul E. - 20 November 2005
McNichols, James J. - 24 July 2006
Murphy, Francis P. - February 2001
Palumbo, Joseph N. - 4 August 2006
Samuel, Roland D. - July 2005
Sanford, Lyle E. - 2 November 2005
Stack, John L. - Unknown
Wood, Joseph A. - 26 October 2006

725th Squadron

Butler, Paul E. - 2 February 2005
Caldwell, Jr. Ralph G. - 17 June 2006
Caputo, Jr. John B. - 23 November 2005
Dooley, James C. - 1 January 2003
Dube, Jackson E. - 26 May 2002
Frisbey, Homer E. - 15 June 2006
Hoag, William E. - 13 April 2006

Isom, Allie O. - 9 February 2006
Johnson, David G. - 25 January 2006
Nelton, Grady M. - 18 April 2006
Ryan, Lloyd M. - 5 May 2004
Watson, John P. - January 1998

726th Squadron

Allen, John D. - 11 February 2006
Castoro, Paul L. - 16 April 2005
Clancy, Robert D. - 26 August 2006
Ginsberg, Harold A. - 11 May 2006
Hoffman, Charles E. - 16 January 1999
Kleine, Lyle F. - 14 September 2006
Realley, George W. - 5 August 2005
Singletary, Donald L. - 5 October 2006
Ten Hagen, Donald C. - 2 March 2006
Thackara, William C. - 30 March 2005
Tuchscherer, Walter A. - 11 June 1994
Upham, Gilbert L. - 31 March 2006
Walker, Donald E. - May 2005

727th Squadron

Chepulis, Henry F. - 7 December 2006
Clark, John F. - 11 January 2006
Hanford, John M. - 9 November 2006
Harvell, Philip - 18 May 2005
Konicki, Joseph M. - 29 May 2006
Rinehart, Forrest A. - 5 February 2006
Sapien, Hector - 23 February 2005
Slavich, Vernon G. - 9 June 2005
Stout, John W. - 9 March 2001
Thorrick, Michael - 6 April 2006
Tucker, Quincey W. - 12 March 2006

SPECIAL MEMORIAL TRIBUTE OFFERED IN THE NAME OF:

Edward J. Antonik, 724th - From Nephew,
Richard Washik
Ora P. Arnold, 727th - From Friend,
Sally Lather
Ora P. Arnold, 727th - From Comrade,
Winson 'Big' Jones
Earnest W. Atkins, 727th - From Crewmate,
Paul Anderson
John S. Bagwell, 726th - From Wife,
Delcia

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

Lauren A. Balzer, 726th - From Crewmate,
Achilles Kozakis
Robert E. Barnd, 726th - From Wife,
Marion
Ralph G. Caldwell, 725th - From Sister,
Margaret
Glen A. Chambers, 726th - From Crewmate,
George Rafter

Gates P. Christensen, 724th - From Comrade,
Achilles Kozakis

Keith O. Daudermann, 727th - From
Comrade, Charles Thomas

Keith O. Daudermann, 727th - From
Comrade, E.D. Witherspoon

Errol E. DeWitt, 726th - From Crewmate,
John Jodell

Rudolph S. Gasparovic, 726th - From
Tentmate, Charles Fishbaugh

Patrick H. Hawkins, 724th - From Crewmate,
Sam Rosenblatt

Patrick H. Hawkins, 724th - From Crewmate,
Ralph Doty

Raymond K. Henley, 727th - From Crewmate,
Jack 'Little' Jones

William E. Hoag, 725th - From Wife,
Virginia

Gerald W. Hopkins, 727th - From Crewmate,
Paul Anderson

Henry C. Houkal, 727th - From Crewmate,
Winson 'Big' Jones

Henry C. Houkal, 727th - From Crewmate,
Jack 'Little' Jones

Allie O. Isom, 725th - From Crewmate,
Fred Kuhn

Roger A. Johnston, 724th - From Crewmate,
Robert Stone

Russell L. Jopson, 725th - From Tentmate,
Jarvis Anderson

Lyle F. Kleine, 726th - From Crewmate,
Richard Minor

Stanton Leiter, 725th - From Wife,
Florence

Peter A. Massare, 727th - From Crewmate,
Winson 'Big' Jones

David C. Messer, 724th/726th - From Friend,
Marie Elder

Francis P. Murphy, 724th - From Daughter,
Nancy & Family Members

Archie Piirainen, 727th - From Comrade,
Achilles Kozakis

Alvin G. Reise, 725th - From Sons,
David & Jeff

George W. Realley, 726th - From Crewmate,
Achilles Kozakis

Forrest A. Rinehart, 727th - From Comrade,
Charles Thomas

Forrest A. Rinehart, 727th - Form Daughter,
Janet

Mark P. Robinson, 725th - From Crewmate,
Harry Fornalczyk

Eugene N. Schwerdtfeger, 725th - From
Nephew, Terry Dumerauf

William M. Silliman, 725th - From Sister,
Bette Froehlich

Leon Stone, 726th - From Wife,
Janice

Leonard L. Strickler, 727th - From Comrade,
Terry Tomberlin

Donald C. Ten Hagen, 726th - From
Crewmate, John Bethea

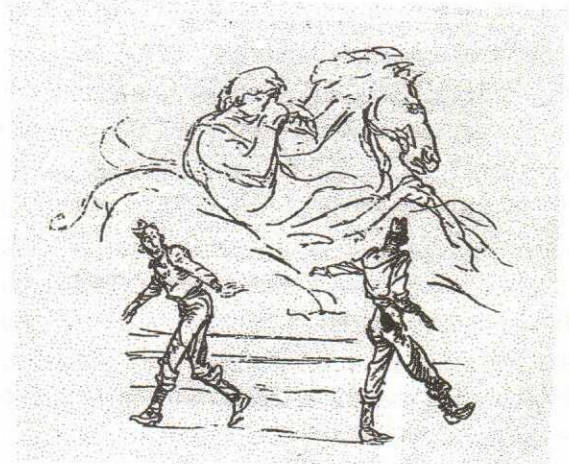
Quincey "Tommy" Tucker, 727th - From
Wife, Jane

Samuel C. Uhler, 727th - From Crewmate,
Robert Thornton

Wayne A. Wessman, 727th - From Comrade,
James Martin

Robinson Crew, 725th - From
Harry Fornalczyk

Crew Of "MY GAL," 725th - From A/C
Commander, William Paddock



MY OVERSEAS TOUR

BY: Clyde W. Phifer

(Editor ... I owe it to the crew and family of Clyde Phifer to offer an explanation as to why I'm publishing this Journal at this late a date. For whatever reason, this document has been languishing amid other documents awaiting publication. It wasn't until I reviewed its contents and did a running check on its author, that I saw that Clyde had passed away on 22 March 2003. It is with regret that Clyde is not with us to savor, along with his crew, the efforts he put forth in granting us the privilege to publish his overseas combat Journal.)



Original 726th Crew

Pilot, Edward J. Shimanski

Copilot, Arthur Eckstein

Navigator, William F. Kann

Bombardier, Thaddeus F. Kumor

AEG & Upper Turret Gunner, Elwood Lucas

ROG & Right Waist Gunner, Ralph S.

Peterson

Nose Gunner, Clyde W. Phifer

Ball Turret Gunner, Jerry Goldman

Left Waist Gunner, Harold L. Todd

Tail Turret Gunner, Joseph Vargo

November 2, 1944

I left my wife, Bobbie, in Savannah about 8 am. The troop train left Chatham Field about 6 PM. We were assigned to Pullman sleeping cars. We arrived in Mitchell Field, New York about 10:30 pm, November 3 1944. Just before we got to the airfield the train went through a long tunnel, under a river. We were assigned to barracks, drew our bedding and went to bed.

We were issued new flying equipment; a 45 caliber automatic pistol, a knife, etc also a new B-24L #44-49294. Sent a telegram to Bobbie. We all checked out our new plane. We went on a wild check-flight. The officers buzzed all their homes around New York & New Jersey. We flew around the Empire State building, the Statue of Liberty, the Brooklyn Bridge, etc. I would sure like to do that once again.

November 7, 1944

Left Mitchell Field and landed at Dow Field, Bangor, Maine in our new plane. We are sure proud of it. We are all talking about what we will name it. I wrote a letter to Bobbie. We were issued heated suits, leather jackets, an escape kit that contained a folding machete, fishing equipment, maps, etc.. I was issued a leather jacket, but while the guy was in back, in the stock area getting something else, a young Lieutenant put my jacket on and walked away with it. That was the last one they had. I never got another.

November 10, 1944

We left Dow Field heading for the unknown. We landed at Gander Field, Gander, Newfoundland. For the next 22 days we were grounded by the weather. We were on constant alert to take-off at any moment. We just laid around, playing Ping-pong, pool, cards, went to the shows, and griped because we couldn't get any mail from home. There was snow and ice on the ground all the time. The temperature was always around zero or below. The ice just got thicker. We took turns guarding the plane. One Enlisted Man had to be there around the clock.

December 1, 1944

Harold Todd and I went to the Canadian side of the Base. It was off limits to us, but we sneaked by the guards down through the woods. We bought a pillow top of the Royal Canadian Air Force at their P.X., and looked at things made of fur in a private home. Then sneaked back to our Base.

December 2, 1944

We took off from Gander Field, Newfoundland about 1:30 am and landed on Terceria Island in the

Azores around noon. We landed on a steel mat runway. The main landing gear wheels locked up, blew out a tire and did something to the landing gear, so that it would not lock in the 'up' position. We were there three days while they repaired the plane.

Our billet was a tent, kinda out by itself, with a lister bag for water, an outdoor toilet, and a long walk to the Mess Hall. We were pretty sad, and were just sitting on our canvas/wooden cots when our Officers came walking up. They picked up our belongings and insisted that we go with them to their quarters. So for three days we slept and ate in the Officers' quarters. I don't think anyone ever found out. I bought Bobbie a bracelet in the P.X. that was hand made in Portugal.

One day I went for a walk with Art Eckstein. He had an old man pose while Art made a sketch of him. The people are Portuguese.

We all walked down to the sea shore one day. There was a high cliff all along the water front about 50 feet high, and at the bottom there were large rocks. We climbed down to the rocks from the cliff top. The rocks had mud and clay on them and they were slick as hell. The big rocks at the bottom went on out to the sea until they became submerged. Joe had some thread and a needle. He used a match to heat and bend the needle, then killed a crab for bait. He hooked three fish but they all got away. While this was going on, a big wave came in and got us all wet, especially Joe and Ed. So we all took off our clothes and laid them on a large rock to dry, then went swimming in a small natural pool formed by some large rocks that were covered with thick moss and other growths. Some of the rocks on the bottom were sharp. The water was just the right temperature. Imagine swimming in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean on December 5, 1944. Joe Vargo did a hand stand on the edge of the cliff. I think someone took a picture of it.

December 6, 1944

We took off from the Azores and landed in Marrakech, French Morocco, West Africa. We stayed over night and left the next day.

December 7, 1944

Three years to the day since Pearl Harbor. We took off from Marrakech and landed in Tunis, Tunisia, North Africa. A pretty nice place. We

slept in a new two story barracks which was more like a hotel. They had a lot of Italian prisoners working on the Base.

December 8, 1944

The second day we were there, Jerry, Todd and I walked out to the ship to get a suit of ODs for me. Jerry went in the ship where Joe and Pete were playing cards. He sat down and started talking with them and playing around with his pistol. Todd and I were standing outside the ship, looking through the right waist window waiting for him and yelling at him to come on. He stood up, put the clip back in his pistol and put it in the holster that was hanging in the ship. He then got it out again and cocked it and fired, similar to the way he had been doing it before he put the clip back in. This time a bullet went through his left palm, at the thumb knuckle and his little finger. The bullet came through the side of the ship and hit the ground behind Todd and me. It had gone between us at about there inches above our belt line. It missed each of us by only a few inches. Todd said he heard it ricochet across the field. Jerry was bleeding a lot. Pete tried to get the radio to work, but not enough power. I ran across to the fire station that lay off in the distance. They brought me back in the ambulance and took Jerry to the hospital. Jerry was left handed. That was the first hole in our new ship.

The next day we went into town and looked around a little. It was Saturday afternoon and everything was closed.

Sunday, December 10, 1944

Joe, Todd and I went into town. The truck stopped at the Red Cross. We left there walking, just to see the town. After walking for quite a while we realized we were on the other side of the "Casbah," which was strictly off limits to all US Army personnel. We saw no signs of any kind warning us to "stay out," or "off limits," or anything until we were on the other side. Well, the only way to get back to town was through the Casbar. If the MPs had caught us it would ave been hell to pay, Plus, the way those mean looking Arabs were looking at us had me plenty scared.

So off we went, right back through the center of the Casbar. We walked along streets just wide enough for three of four people to pass, side by

side. There was mud, water and filth all over the streets. And too, most of the alleys, like the streets were covered over so they were dark and smelly. The shops along the streets were small and dirty. Some had old shoes piled in them and an old man, or woman, working on some of them. We were walking along one of these filthy streets with all those mean looking Arabs staring at us (we were the only American soldiers in there).

A fellow, who was walking a little ways behind us said, "Hello Joe." Well Joe says "Hello Joe" right back at him (Those people called all soldiers 'Joe,' for 'GI Joe,' I guess). He spoke broken English. After telling us that we were 'off limits,' and in some danger, he invited us up to see his home in the Casbah. So having nothing else to do we went in. It was surprisingly clean. We had a glass of wine. He played some American phonograph records for us. He was going to be married in a day or so, He introduced us to his 'bride to be.' She couldn't speak English so he wasn't too careful as to what he said about her to us. She showed us a lot of beautiful clothes, shoes, dresses, gowns, silk underclothing, etc. They all came from France. He invited us to the wedding celebration that was to start the next day. It was to be a big feast and last for several days. He said he had a home outside of the Casbah. He then escorted us out of the Casbah to help us avoid the MPs. We gave him two packages of cigarettes and went back to the Base. I will never forget my trip through the Casbah.

December 11, 1944

We took off from Tunis. Jerry had his hand in a cast. We were supposed to land at Gioia, Italy, but a B-24 had crashed on the runway. It was standing on its nose, with the tail high in the air. We circled the field for a while, then went to Bari, Italy to land. We spent the night in the "Sad Sack" hotel. Joe slept on the floor with two blankets. I slept on a



MUD ... ITALIAN STYLE

cot, but the springs went down so far in the middle that I slept in a sitting position.

We talked to some guys there that had been shot down. Some had been injured. One told us about landing in the Adriatic Sea and being rescued finally after a long time in the water. They told us some horrible stories. I was ready to go back to the States.

December 12, 1944

I saw my first burst of flak (practice firing) on the way from Bari to the Air Base. They shot right over the bus and it burst out over the water.

We took off and landed at Gioia. There they took our plane and put it in a pool to be flown by everyone.

December 13, 1944

Landed in "Royal Prod" in this hole. It is the 726th Squadron, 451st Bomb Group, 49th Wing of the 15th Army Air Force. The nearest town is Foggia, Italy, some fifteen miles away. The day is very dark and is drizzling rain. It is cold and miserable; very depressing. We are taken to our tent in the back of a truck. On the tent, someone had put a piece of plywood for a door. In the door it had a piece of Plexiglas, about a foot square, taken from a wrecked airplane. It was the only light that came into the tent. There were six cots and a tall man was sitting on one of them with his head in his hands. He was the lone survivor of his crew. He had just arrived from the hospital. All the other cots had personal belongings piled on them. We had to take them to the Quarter Master, in the rain, and draw out two blankets, each, for our cots. I

damned near froze to death that night. In some way we were able to get another blanket the next day.

The ground is so slick that your feet slip every time you take a step. Even inside, all floors are covered with mud, even the Mess Hall. We eat out of Mess Kits and wash them in large barrels filled with hot water and some kind of

chemicals, then we rinse them in another barrel of hot water. Everyone uses the same barrels. The barrels usually have food particles floating on top of the fluids.

The Mess Hall has dogs running in and out all the time. Most all the work is done by Italian civilians, overseen by our cooks and bakers. The Italian people that live around here will do laundry for a package of cigarettes, or a bar of soap.

There are several urinals placed around the area where the tents are. They are out in the open with no walls of any kind. They are clay sewer pipes protruding from the ground at about a 45 degree angle, 4 or 5 in a cluster pointing out from the center. This is a combat zone and there are no women expected. But sometimes a Red Cross lady drives by, and sometimes they bring in some Nurses in for a dance at the Officer's Club.

December 15, 1944

I went to two hours of school yesterday, two more today, then two more tomorrow. Then I will be an Armorer Gunner, MOS #612, instead of a Career Gunner, MOS #611. I expect to fly my first mission in a few days. No mail yet!!!

FLIGHT TIME BETWEEN BASES

New York to Bangor, Maine	3 Hours.
Bangor to Gander, Newfoundland	3 Hours and fifty minutes.
Gander to Azores	9 Hours
Azores to Marrackech	6 Hours and fifty five minutes.
Marrackech to Tunis, North Africa	Hours and fifty minutes.
Tunis to Bari, Italy	4 Hours and fifteen minutes.
Bari to Gioia, Italy	35 Minutes

December 17, 1944

It is 7:25 pm here. It is 12:25 noon in New Mexico where my two girls are right now. I pulled Guard duty last night. 10 pm until 2 am.

December 18, 1944

I got some mail at last. The first since I left Chatham Field on November 2nd. I am really a happy boy. I just laid around and read my mail over and over.

December 19, 1944

Just rested today and took a shower. The shower is not available all the time. It is a

interesting setup. It consists of a 500 to 700 gallon tank on a hill with a pipe that goes down hill through a heating contraption and then into the shower room. You pull the chain to allow the water to run through an overhead shower head. There is no way to control the temperature or the water pressure. You just pull the chain again to stop the water. Sometimes the water suddenly becomes cold, or suddenly stops altogether.

I have a pair of wooden "Clacks." They are pieces of wood carved to fit the bottom of the foot with a piece of canvas across the top of the foot. They make a clacking noise when you walk. I wear only my clacks and a towel to and from the shower, which is about one fifth of a mile away on a muddy trail.

Ed and Bill went to Bari, Joe and Luke went to Foggia.

December 20, 1944

Got up early today, ate breakfast, brought in some water and filled the gas tank for the stove. We keep our water in five gallon GI cans. We have a five gallon fuel can outside, behind our tent. A small diameter metal tube, fastened to the bottom of the can, runs into our homemade stove. The gas pours in on some rocks in an old 88mm shell that has holes drilled in it. It is welded to the bottom of a thirty gallon barrel. The stove pipe is made from the tin from the inside of an ammunition container. We get all the 100 octane gasoline we want. (No coupons needed)

December 21, 1944

Our tent leaks. Joe and I went to Supply and got a half of an old tent and put it over the back half of our tent. It's raining now and the tent doesn't leak yet. No more mail yet.

December 22, 1944

I was awakened this morning at 5 am for my first mission. We had briefing at 5:30 am to go to Brucks, Austria. They told us how many flak guns and fighters we could expect at our primary and alternate targets, plus weather conditions, etc. Then I went to try to eat breakfast. I rinsed my mess kit in the barrels and start down a muddy incline from the Mess Hall. I slipped and fell flat on my face in the mud.

The mission was cancelled. We had another briefing at 8:15. We were supposed to go to

Verona, in northern Italy. But it was also cancelled about 9 am. My first two missions were stand downs. I still have 35 missions to go.

December 23, 1944

No more mail yet. I'm getting anxious again.

December 24, 1944

Christmas Eve. Just took it easy all day. We went to the Officer's tent and drank champagne, ate "K" rations (cheese and crackers), and smoked cigars. Went with Ed, Ted, Bill, Joe and Jerry to the Catholic Midnight Mass.

December 25, 1944

Just fooled around all day. Just read the mission sheet. Lucas and I fly in ship #46. Ed and Joe go in #54. Bill will fly in "Patches." It will be our first mission.

December 26, 1945

Mission #1

Date: December 26, 1944

Pilot: Lt. William Jackson

Plane number: 46

Target: Oswiecim, Poland. Oil Refinery

Take off time: 8:05 am

Time of landing: 3:05 pm (Bailed out in Yugoslavia)

Bomb Load: Six 500 lb. Demolition bombs

Visibility over target: Clear as hell.

Altitude: 26,500 feet.

Temperature: -37 degrees Celsius

Enemy Fighters: 60 to 80 FW 190s - 40 to 50 ME 109s.

Enemy Flak:: 97

This as a day that I shall always remember (I'm writing this on January 4, 1944). We took off at 8: am for a place called Oswiecim, Poland. We were instructed to destroy a synthetic oil and rubber plant. We got to the target about 12:30 pm at 26,500 feet. I was surprised at my own calmness. I believe we made a direct hit with our bombs. The flak was accurate as all hell. We got hit in #3 engine and in the aft part of the waist area. Lots of holes in the ship, but no one got hurt. Then we were out of it and I thought it was all over.

Our Squadron left the Group formation. Just six or seven planes flying home all alone. When all at once, while we were over a place called, Gyor, Hungary, and were down to 17,000 feet, we got hit by more flak. They must have tracked us for miles,

because they sure had our range. We got hit pretty hard. They shot out our rudder controls. We made a left turn without banking any. The ship was out of control. The C-1, or the Auto Pilot was all set up, but it took time to get the ship under control again. By this time we were going through the flak again. I saw two B-24s going down in the distance. Our Pilot, Lt. Jackson did a great job. By this time the formation was way ahead of us. We had just 2 engines and we were losing gas fast. We finally caught the formation and with Luke checking the gas supply, said that we could not make it home. So we left the formation again and headed for "Vis," an island off the coast of Yugoslavia. Luke kept checking the gas, then he saw that we couldn't even make it to "Vis." So the Navigator started looking for a place for us to bail out. I got out of the Nose Turret and grabbed my parachute and went back to the waist section. I did not think that we would bail out, as I was pretty sure that we would land some place in a friendly airport. I left my escape kit in the nose area. On the way to the back I noticed that the ship had holes all over it. It was just a miracle that no one got hurt. I will never be able to understand it.

I started back up to the nose section to get my escape kit and GI shoes, but Mal, the other Engineer, motioned me back and said we were going to jump any minute. So, I left them in the plane.

Larry Prochnow, the Ball Turret gunner, had the back camera hatch open and was sitting there with his head-set on waiting for the word to bail out. When the word came he just rolled out, then Doyle, the Tail Gunner, then Wally, the Bombardier, then it was my time to go. I sat down at the edge of the hatch, facing aft with my feet hanging out. I then made the mistake of looking down. It was 12,000 feet to the ground, and I'd have nothing but silk to hang on to. Clyde Fuqua, the Radio Operator from Amarillo, Texas, had jumped twice before. He laid his hand on my shoulder. It kinda seemed to help me get my verve, so out I went. The wind hit my feet and started me tumbling over and over. I stretched out my arms and legs and stopped tumbling. I was facing the sky and it seemed like I was lying on something softer than you could ever imagine. I felt so free.

Everything was so quiet.

The Navigator had briefed us over the intercom. He told us a lot of things, like we were over enemy territory and would be captured and how we should conduct ourselves, etc. He was very good. I waited, for what seemed like a week, before I pulled my rip cord. I didn't want to be floating too long up there and be a good target for the enemy. When I pulled the rip cord, nothing happened. I looked at my chute and started to pull the chute out. Just then it came out and hit me in the face real hard. When it opened, my head was jerked back. Boy, what a jolt!! Then I started to swing real high, back and forth. I thought I was going to go over the top and collapse the chute. I had pulled my rip cord too soon, I was still way up in the sky. I started to sweat out my landing. I thought about church steeples, telephone poles, barbed wire fences, and all sorts of things, even a nice soft haystack. I heard gun shots while I was probably some two hundred or so feet from the ground.

I landed in a level, muddy pasture. The wind was in my face, and although I had my knees bent and was ready to roll forward on my shoulders, instead I was slammed onto my back very hard. I was knocked unconscious. I don't know how long I was out, but when I awoke I heard voices all around me. I opened my eyes and saw that the people had Red Stars on their caps. That meant that they were "Partisans," and our friends. I tried to raise my head, but found that I couldn't. My neck had been injured when the chute opened, and again when I hit the ground. When I moved they all became very quiet. I said "Americano!" They all smiled, and so did I.

I rolled over on my stomach and got to my feet. One woman handed me a liter of what I thought was water. I was real thirsty, but when I started to drink I discover it was clear white wine. I tried to hand it back, but she made me keep it. Some of the women had gathered up my parachute and were looking at the silk and wrapping it around themselves and laughing. I motioned that they could have it. They divided it up right there. Then a group of men dressed in uniforms came up and took me by the arm. I started to go with them. The two groups started to argue and fight. The women

were making it very clear that I should not go with the men in uniforms. So I went with the group that had originally found me. They took me to a small town about two miles away called Drnis, Yugoslavia. Upstairs, in an office building, I found the rest of the guys. At that point I gave my 45 caliber pistol and shoulder holster to the leader of the group. I drank the wine on the walk to town and was feeling pretty good by the time I got there. Since I had left my GI shoes in the plane, I had to wear my big heavy flying boots and the mud clung to them making my feet very large and extra heavy.

Since I had previously injured my right knee while carrying two five gallons of water for our tent, this time my foot slipped in the mud and I injured it again. It swelled up pretty big. My neck hurt pretty bad too. My walk to town was somewhat painful. The wine helped.

There were two other groups in Yugoslavia at that time that would have either killed us, or turned us over to the Germans. I'm not sure of the spelling, but they were the Chetnicks and the Estashas. We were fortunate to have been rescued by the Partisans. Malcolm was taken to the hospital, as he had landed in a ditch and broken his leg. Lt. Jackson, our Pilot, had landed between two rocks and sat down pretty hard on one of them. They are both still in Yugoslavia.

Dan Popovic, described as similar to the "Vice President of the District," seemed to be in charge. He had spent about 20 years in the United States and could speak good English. The President was out of town, so he was the 'big shot.' All the men saluted him and stood at attention when they talked to him. We were also saluted when we walked down the streets. We just smile and wave.

They took us to a house and we had supper. For drinks we had wine. Our dessert was hot cakes, rolled up, and slightly sweetened. Then we were taken to a Government office, where all our beds were made. One blanket for each was already spread out on the floor. It was a very hard marble floor! They gave us each a new US Army overcoat to cover up with. So we slept fairly good. Comfortable too. HA!

We were constantly under guard by at least one guard, sometimes three or four. They were young men, or women, as young as 12 year of age. They

were very serious and firm with us. They had ammunitions belts from their shoulders, slanting across their chests and back. There were hand grenades hanging from them, also. In addition to a side arm, they had a wire handled automatic rifle. Dan Popovic told us that they were protecting us, but we could only go where they escorted us and we had to stay together. Dan said there were snipers around that would like to shoot us if they got the chance. I guess you could say that we were in 'protective custody.' Custody for sure.

December 27, 1944

We were taken to the back yard of a house where we washed our hands and face in cold water from a faucet in the yard, all without any soap. A Yugoslavian soldier gave me his towel to use after he had finished with it. It was a piece of bed sheet and it was soaking wet.

We then when we went into the house and ate breakfast. We had bread made from barley. One small piece was as heavy as one of our American loaves. The coffee was made of scorching barley, then boiling it. It was very bitter. We had some dried figs, also red and white wine. We sat around the table talking and smoking cigarettes. I had about one and a half packs of Camel cigarettes. Luke ran out of cigarettes first, then helped me to run out. The Yugoslavian cigarettes are very strong and bitter. Clyde Fuqua got some music on the radio in the house. We were taken for a walk around town. All of us had our flying suits on, along with our heated suits under them with the electric cord hanging out. Some of the people would come up and all the time talking to each other and looking at the electric cord. I wonder what they were thinking. We were the first Americans most of them had ever seen. One man talked to us in English. He had spent some time in the US and spoke broken English. He said his excuse for his poor English, was that he had no one to speak English with.

For dinner (lunch) we had pork chops and eggs, wine and that darned bread. Dan told us that the people around there went to a lot of trouble to get the pork chops and eggs for us, and they did not eat that well themselves. After dinner Dan took us to a barber shop where we had a shave and hair cut. A 13 year old kid shaved us. He was a good

barber.

We had noodle soup of supper. It was darned good. That night we slept on a marble floor again, this time in another office building. But this time without a blanket or overcoat. This office had a rug on the floor and they kept the stove going all night. I had a chair cushion for a pillow. A large young lady was our guard for the night. She was not fat, just big, over six feet tall. A lighted wick floated in a saucer of oil on a table in the middle of the room. One of the guys blew it out so we could sleep better. Our guard re-lit it and made it very clear that it would stay lit. Another guy moved over to a wall and sat on the floor, leaning against the wall. She was very stern and made him lay back down on the floor.

One night Dan had some guards take us to a building where they were having a dance. They let us look in a door for just a very brief time. They were dancing a polka. Then it was back to the house where we had previously eaten.

December 28, 1944

We had barley cereal for breakfast. It was pretty good. But the same old bread and coffee. We left Drnis, Yugoslavia about 2:00 pm. We traveled by truck to Sibenick, Yugoslavia. We got there about dark. There were several people in the back of the truck with us. The truck had no cover over the back, and no place to sit down. It was a very rough, dirty, uncomfortable ride. We were taken to a cafe for supper. We were starved, so the goulash tasted good. We had cheese for dessert.

We were then taken to a large government office building. A man was seated at a desk and apparently a Judge. Guards would bring men in and they would stand in front of the desk. The man seated at the desk would ask them questions and their punishment would depend on their answers. Some of the men were captured German and Italian soldiers, while some were civilians. One German soldier was very rigid, snappy, smart-ass type with his answers. All at once he slumped and started crying. I asked someone what happened and was told the he was sentenced and was going to be taken out and shot right then, and I think they did. The man behind the desk had made that decision.

They separated us and took Clyde Fuqua and me to a private home. It was a nice home, with a

young couple with a baby. The home was very clean and had nice furniture. We slept on a couch that made into a double bed. Clean sheets and real pillows. I held the baby while the lady made our bed. The baby was probably 2 or 3 months old. They had a nice bathroom, but the water and sewer lines were damaged.

December 29, 1944

We left Sebenick, Yugoslavia after dinner (lunch). We rode in another open truck. There were even more people than before. We were really packed in tight with families and their belongings, more airmen, and even a German soldier. One of our guards was probably 12 years old. He was heavily armed and very serious. I looked at him and thought how horrible war is. He should be playing with toy guns, but his were not toys and he was not a little boy anymore.

The German soldier found a seat on something and one of the US Airmen, who could speak German, sat on his lap. Sometime after dark the truck stopped in a little village and one of the young guys ran to a building and came back with an unwrapped loaf of bread. It was inside his shirt, next to his body. When we got underway again, he took the loaf out and began tearing pieces and handing them to us. The big loaf lasted only a few seconds.

It was a cold ride and we almost froze. It was very rough riding back there, I would squat, kneel and stand some more. We were packed pretty close, that helped with the cold, but the wind had ice in it.

We arrived about 10 pm. We went to the American Mission there, and when we walked in, an American Sergeant said "God Damn' More Airmen. How are you boys?" It really seemed good to see someone that could speak English for a change.

While in Split, Yugoslavia, I bought Bobbi a handkerchief and some pictures. We stayed two nights. We took baths, but we had no change of clothing.

The Sergeant took some of us into town in his Jeep. It was a wild ride. He drove plenty fast down those narrow streets. The streets were full of pedestrians, and he never slowed at all, just honked the horn constantly. The people got out of the way

just in time. We had a shave in a barber shop. A young boy applied the lather and his father shaved us.

There was a young family in the shop with a little girl. I gave her a package of chewing gum. She had never seen gum before. It was fun to see her learn about it. Her mother showed her how to chew it.

The Sergeant arranged for passage on a boat to Bari, Italy. It was named the "Lubjbyanna," maybe 100 feet in length. We had rooms below decks.

December 31, 1944 New Years Eve on the Adriatic Sea

We left Split, Yugoslavia (on the coast) in the early afternoon. We docked at "Vis," an island in the Adriatic Sea. It was the island where we had wanted to land, but did not have enough fuel. We went ashore with some English soldiers who had been to Yugoslavia to play professional football (soccer). We went to a movie and saw Mickey Rooney in "Blonde Trouble." Then went to an English Mission Headquarters and ate and drank tea, wine, scotch and all kinds of booze. We ate all kinds of cold cuts, etc. I really got plastered. I hardly remember getting back on the boat. I think I had a good time, but I'm not sure.

I do remember that when they sat the first big platter of food down on the table, it was right in front of me, but I was too slow. I reached out and the platter was empty. Hands came from everywhere. When the next platter arrived, I grabbed with both hands, just like the British soldiers did. The guys were really nice, but not very mannerly.

January 1, 1945 New Years Day

I woke up about 3:30 or 4:00 am and we were at sea again. I was very sick. Sea sick, plus a very bad hangover. I thought I would surely die. Then I was afraid I wouldn't. I stuck my head out the port hole and fed the fish several times.

We were invited to the main dining room for breakfast with the British football team. My head hurt so bad and I was sick. We all tried to look as good as we could. I was worried that I might not know how to conduct myself at such an important occasion. As I remember, it was about 7:30 am when we walked into the main dining room. A British soldier said a very cheerful "Good Morning,

and threw the remaining tea from his tin cup onto the floor and handed it to me, for my use. He told me where to find the tea and "C" rations that we were having for breakfast. We all stood around and ate as best we could.

We docked at Bari, Italy about 2:30 pm. A Sergeant on the dock threw us a pack of "Lucky Strike" cigarettes, and talked to us as the boat was being tied up to the dock. He took us to the "delousing" area. We were taken to a room and told to put all of our personal items in a small cloth sack and remove all our clothes. Then we went into the shower room. After our shower we were dusted all over with delousing dust, and told to put on some new clothes that they had given us. We had to leave the dust all over us, in our ears, inside of clothing, etc. YUK! They took everything except our personal items. We were allowed to keep anything made of silk. I had a piece of parachute. It was a piece of Malcombs' chute; the guy that broke his leg when he hit the ground. I had traded my silk gloves for a "Partisan" cap, which they took from me. I was very angry. I still wonder who took it home to the States. Wally, our Bombardier, had a full fox fur that he bought in Yugoslavia, and they took that also. He was angry.

January 2, 1945

We were interrogated at the 15th AAF Headquarters. That night we stayed in one of the buildings of the AAF Headquarters. The toilet in there was interesting. It consisted of a ditch of running water with foot prints on each side for the feet to be placed in while squatting. We saw a U.S.O. stage show, "The Ten Little Indians."

3 January 1945

Elwood Lucas, Clyde Fuqua, and I hitched hiked back to our 726th Squadron in Army trucks.

January 4, 1945

Read mail and wrote letters. I wonder if Bobbie and Mother got MIA notice on me, I hope not. One of the letters was from Basil Butler. He said that Lloyd Estes was killed. The B-24 that he was in went down somewhere between Newfoundland and Greenland. Crashed at sea. He had 4 children, and was 38 years old. He was a great guy from Hope, Arkansas. I went through Shepherd Field, Tyndall, Westover, Chatham, and Dow Fields with him.

January 5, 1945

Got some more mail. The first letter Bobbie wrote from Portales, New Mexico, on November 6th. Our wedding anniversary. I went on guard duty for Sgt Rodney J. Vance for \$10. 10 pm until 2 am.

While in Yugoslavia I learned: Falla = Thank you, Sdravo = Hello & Good bye, Dobri = Good and Zima = Cold.

January 6, 1945

Went to Ordinance and got a new 45 pistol to replace the one that I gave to the Yugoslavia soldier. Had my shot record cleared at the Dispensary.

January 9, 1945

On our way to Rome for a one week Rest Camp. Lucas and I went to Naples, Italy by truck. Rented a room in a private home.

January 10, 1945

Lucas and I walked around Naples. I wrote a letter to Bobbie at the Red Cross - no censor - so was unable to mail it. I bought a pair of leather gloves for Clyrene. We hitch-hiked to Rome with a British soldier. They drive on the right side of the road, back in England, so the truck had the steering wheel on the right side. I was sitting on the left side without a steering wheel. A very strange feeling.

We had an interesting conversation on the way. Our driver was from Ireland and did not like England all that well. An Italian boy walked up from a nearby village. He was about 12 years old. He was studying English in school and wanted to practice on us. He asked how many pounds there were in a ton. I said two thousand pounds. The British soldier said two thousand five hundred pounds. The boy really laughed. He knew we would disagree.

We arrived in Rome about 8 pm. A lady came up to the truck when we pulled into the British compound. She asked us if we needed a place to spend the night. The truck driver told us that she was a respectable person that was just trying to help the war effort. So Lucas and I went with her. After a long walk we came to a place with a high stone fence around it, with a big gate. The fence had broken glass, and other sharp objects on top, all around. She opened the gate and we went inside. We were in a courtyard of a large apartment complex. She took us up to her apartment where

we met her husband and children. Her husband was a Barrister (Lawyer). The apartment was very nice. Lucas and I had a room with twin beds. The rent was reasonable. Although they spoke no English, and we no Italian, we were able to communicate by sign language and lots of laughter.

January 11, 1945

Went to two shows, ate dinner and supper. Then just rested. The shows were in Italian, with English sub titles.

January 12, 1945

Got up late, ate dinner, went to a show, shopped a little and went to bed. Bad weather, snow and rain.

January 13, 1945

The weather had been bad, but it was better today. We went on a Red Cross tour in the afternoon. Saw St. Paul's Cathedral and the old jail where Peter and Paul were kept captive. It was a small dungeon about 15 feet across with a rounded domed ceiling. It was built by laying the rocks on a mound of dirt. Each rock was cut to fit perfectly, no mortar, then the mound of dirt was removed from beneath it. It was said that if one rock was removed the whole thing would collapse and kill everyone inside. 48 men were supposed to have been kept in there at one time for nine months. I think they were a bit crowded. There was a spring of water that Peter, or Paul, were said to have used to baptize the jailer and some of the other prisoners.

We saw a Protestant Cemetery in which several US citizens were buried. They were people that lived in Rome before the war. I saw the wall of Rome and a pyramid that was part of it. We walked all over Rome and saw the balcony where Mussolini made his speeches. The guide told us that the young people and kids were placed up front and were paid to start the cheering for him, than all the rest would cheer. While I was there I saw several good stage shows. One was "Aladdin And His Lamp."

January 15, 1945

We flew back to Foggia, Italy in a C-47. The first one I have ever rode in. Met Jerry in Foggia and rode back to the Squadron with him in a Medical truck. The rest of the boys are now Buck Sergeants, while Luke and I are still Corporals. I

got 4 letters from Bobbie and 4 from my Mother, plus one from Mom Nix, and one from Jewel and Jim Burns. A package from Bobbie and a fountain pen from Bobbie's Grandmother.

January 16, 1945

I received Valentines from Bobbie and Clyrene and one letter from Bobbie and 3 letters from Mother.

January 17, 1945

Rained all night and all day.

January 18, 1945

Pretty nice day, still muddy. Three Red Cross girls serving coffee and donuts in the Mess Hall today. The first American women I've seen in a long time. Funny to watch the guys stare at them. Some of the guys have been over here for two and a half years, or longer.

January 19, 1945

I had three fresh eggs for breakfast. Eggs cost thirty five cents each, over here. Talk about inflation, cigarettes can be sold for a nickel each. \$10 per carton. We pay a nickel a pack at the PX. In Yugoslavia the people are just barely getting enough to eat and clothes to wear. They wear all kinds of mixed uniforms; German, British, American, etc. The same in Italy. The wind blew hard today.

January 20, 1945

We had PT (Physical Training) today. The wind blew very hard last night. Blew some tents down.

January 21, 1945

Got a package from Mother. One letter from Bobbie.

February 1, 1945

Mission # TWO

Date: February 1, 1945

Pilot: Shimanski

Plane Number: 54

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery.

Take off time: 8:07 am

Time of landing: 4:05 pm

Bomb Load: Eight 500 lb. bombs

Visibility over target: 3/10 -6/10 Cover

Altitude: 25,000 feet

Temperature: -38 Degrees C.

Enemy Fighters: Few expected.

Enemy Flak:: 90 (397 over Vienna)

Flak was moderate and inaccurate. No holes in

ship. When I plugged in my heated suit, there was an electrical short where the cord connected to the suit. It burned the cord off at the suit and scorched my leg. I got another suit from the emergency kit. When it came time for oxygen, I had no hooks or snaps on my helmet to fasten my mask in place. I used the belt from Bill's Bombardier briefcase. I put it around my head and around my mask. It worked fairly good. Just sitting in the nose turret for eight hours, no food or water, was not much fun. Only 33 more missions to go. With this mission over, Lucas and I shook hands and slapped each other on the back. We got back to the Base this time.

February 3, 1945

Went to a USO show. Saw the picture, "Make Your Own Bed."

February 6, 1945

Scheduled for ship #48. All except Ted.

STAND DOWN.

February 7, 1945

Mission # THREE

Date: February 7, 1945.

Pilot: Shimanski

Plane Number: 53 "PATCHES"

Target: Korneuberg Oil Refinery, Vienna, Austria.

Take off time: 8:15 am

Time of landing: 5:00 pm

Bomb Load: Eight 500 lb. bombs.

Visibility over target: Clear over target

Altitude: 24,000 feet

Temperature: -40 degrees C.

Enemy Fighters: Few Expected.

Enemy Flak:: 397 plus rail.

58th mission for "PATCHES." There is a legend around here about "PATCHES." It always comes back. It has been on some rough missions and has patches all over it. On this mission the flak was intense and accurate. I got 2 holes in the Nose Turret. One piece hit the Pilot's left rudder pedal. Number 3 engine had an oil line out and had to be feathered.

I saw the lead ship get a direct hit in the belly. There was a big flash and something fell past our view. Some say it was a body. Joe said he saw a guy with his chute flying after him like a white rag. The ship started losing altitude immediately. It

seemed to be under control. Major Reichenbach was flying as our copilot. He was a swell guy.

February 9, 10, 11 & 12, 1945

All STAND DOWNS!! Not much fun. Early morning briefing, breakfast, check out parachute, etc. Ride out to the ship and check guns, turret, etc. I get all emotionally set to go, then don't go. It makes me very tired. I will not get home until I get my 35 missions in. Each stand down could have been a mission.

February 14, 1945

Mission # FOUR

Date: February 14, 1945

Pilot: Shimanski

Plane number: 55

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Vienna

Area

Take off time: 9:40 am

Time of landing: 4:30 pm

Bomb Load: Eight 500 lb bombs

Visibility over target: Overcast

Altitude: 24,000 feet

Temperature: -36 degrees C.

Enemy Fighters: 60 expected

Enemy Flak:: 90 guns (325 at Vienna)

"VALENTINES" for the Nazi's. Flak intense and accurate at our altitude, but off to side and in front. A few holes in ship. I think we hit the target pretty good. All of our crew flew except Ted.

February 16, 1945

Mission # FIVE

Date: February 16, 1945

Pilot: Shimanski

Plane number: 45

Target: Neuburg Airdrome, Germany

Take off time: 8:00 am

Time of landing: 4:01 pm

Bomb Load: Six 500 lb bombs

Visibility over target: Clear from North.

Overcast from South

Altitude: 24,000 feet

Temperature: -37 degrees C.

Enemy Fighters: Jets Expected

Enemy Flak:: None

Flak over Feume, Italy, about 14 bursts. One hole in left bomb bay. Direct hit on target. We really hit the target today. We bombed a Jet aircraft factory and air field. Joe and Jerry saw the bombs

hit the target. They said that the barracks were blown all over the place.

February 18, 1945

Jerry's brother came down from the 5th Army front. He has been overseas for 32 months. The first time they have seen each other for over three years.

February 22, 1945

Mission # SIX

Date: February 22, 1945

Pilot: Shimanski

Plane number: 55

Target: Rosenheim M/Y & Target of Opportunity, Germany

Take off time: 8:00 am

Time of landing: 4:05 pm

Bomb Load: Eight 500 lb Bombs

Visibility over target: 10-10 coverage

Altitude: 24,000 feet

Temperature: -42 degrees C.

Enemy Fighters: Few expected

Enemy Flak:: None

No flak all day. Saw some in the distance.

Target was an alternate. Ships were scattered all over Germany, from one to seven in a formation. Saw several columns of white smoke coming up through the clouds, expanding into large puffs at the top. Something new I guess.

February 23, 1945

Jerry's brother went back to the front lines.

February 24, 1945

The 451st Bomb Group's 200th mission. We started walking to the Skeet Range, but a ship in a revetment caught fire, right along the road we were on. We turned around and got to a safe distance and watched it burn. The guys were running from the ship. There was a terrific explosion. I think it was 500 lb bombs. There were several explosions; tires, oxygen bottles, etc. The flames went over 100 feet in the air from the gasoline. There were tracer bullets flying out from the fire. All those 50 caliber's were cooking off. I don't think anyone got hurt. After the explosion we went up closer. The plane was flat on the ground. There was a 500 lb bomb under the right wing tip. We came back to the tent. It stopped burning in a couple of hours. Ed and some of the guys went out and took some pictures of the remains. The bomb that was under

the right wing tip never went off.

When the planes came back from their 200th mission they buzzed the tower and runway in formation. Guys stood in the shape of the number 200, with white sheets of paper over their heads. Some of the planes were so low their props nearly hit the runway.

February 26, 1945

Took off at 9:00 am in ship #47. Went to Caprag Oil Refineries in Yugoslavia. Made two runs over the target at 18,000 and 13,000 feet. Did not drop bombs. 10-10 cloud coverage and target too small. Landed at 2:00 pm. No mission credit.

February 28, 1945

Mission # SEVEN Date: February 28, 1945

Pilot: Shimanski Plane Number: 41 Target:

Balzano Marshalling Yards, Italy Take off time:

7:30 am Time of landing: 2:40 pm Bomb load: Ten

500 lb bombs Visibility over target: Clear over

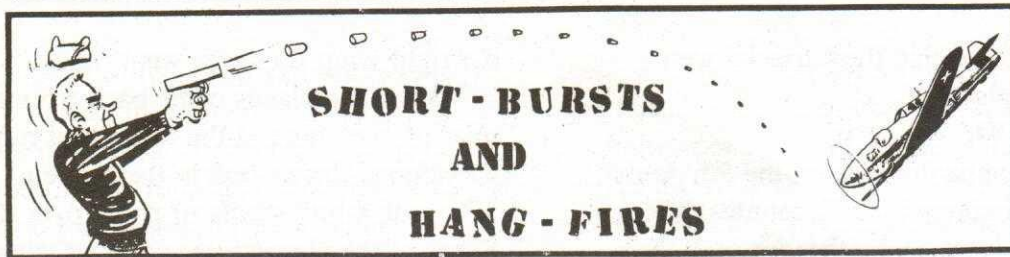
target Altitude: 26,500 feet Temperature: -35

degrees C. Enemy Fighters: None Enemy Flak: 109

Guns

Took off on time and got to the target about 12 noon. Brenner Pass near Balzano, Italy. Lots of flak just before bombs-away and accurate as hell. One piece struck Plexiglas in line with my head. I have that piece of flak for a souvenir. The Nose Turret was badly damaged and I was blown through both sets of doors into the Navigator/Bombardier area of the ship. Bill's maps and papers went flying all over. The oxygen lines were cut in the nose area. Bill and I discarded our flak vests, while we were still in heavy flak, and went to the Flight Deck right after bombs away. My walk-around oxygen bottle was empty. I got to an oxygen hose connection on the Flight Deck just as I was blacking out. One bomb was hung up. Bill and I dropped it using a screwdriver while standing on the catwalk with the bomb bay doors open. We were at 26,000 feet with no parachutes on. When the bomb was released it caught Bill's oxygen line and almost took him with it. The ship was really shot up. It won't fly again for quite a while. Flak hit an iron brace by Lucas' head. Joe's goggles were broken by flak and had a large hole in his turret. Ship #45 missing. The crew bailed out near the Isle of Krk.

(Continued Next Issue)



**Ernest Sabec, 724th [NAVIGATOR:
CLAUDE WOODS' CREW]**

It becomes quite evident that one of the infirmities of the 'creeping years' is procrastination, coupled with forgetfulness. As I recall your letter of last September, the heritage of the Group relies on we members to support your effort in keeping the spirit alive. I commend your efforts over the past 25 years!

The newsletters have been a stimulation for recalling memories of what our humble efforts helped to achieve without the expectancy of any rewards, all because it was the right thing to do! We were all so young that we overlooked fear. At the same time those memorable times remind us of things paralleling stories that you have printed.

For me it was my first ocean cruise --- 17 days aboard the Louisa May Alcott. As we approached the Canary Islands, rumor had it that we were going to Italy where we would be living in Villas! From Oran we had a two day cruise on one of Britain's finest: the Arundo Castle --- Stateroom D-4; a tarp stretched over the deck with 40 canvas bunks.

When we reached our final destination, our Villa was tossed out of the back of a truck and life with the 451st, and the 724th Squadron began.

I remember the mission to Oswiecim every time the 26th of December rolls around. There are only two of us left from Crew #4. The Tail Gunner, Willard Rogers, and myself. The last time we got in touch, we joked that he hoped that I knew where we were going, because he knew where we had been.

(Editor ... I know where your coming from when you mention Oswiecim and the 26th of December. Without meaning to brag, but my Pilot, Captain Henry Rollins was flying Deputy Lead when Captain Stanley Jackson (With Major Douglas Sanford, 724th CO) took a hard hit, and aborted to make it into Russia. I was in the Nose Turret and visually followed the Lead plane as it

headed East. Until Major Sanford returned, Captain Rollins became Squadron Commander.)

**Joseph Wood, 724th [MECHANIC/CREW
CHIEF]**

My two favorite pieces of mail are my Social Security check and the Ad Lib. Even my wife, Sue, enjoys both. Volume #41 arrived today and like every other volume I've read word for word, from cover to cover and enjoyed.

The recalls of S/Sgt John C. Bounds tugged at the "old heart strings," when I read the account of our 17th mission to Orbetello, Italy on April 28, 1944. It so happens that "Diddling Dolly" and the crew of Lt. Walter Graber was shot down on this mission.

M/Sgt Robert King (Crew Chief) and myself (AC Mechanic) were the Ground Crew that kept 'Dolly' air worthy. Bob and I were assigned to this air craft and crew in the spring of 1943 at Wendover Field. During our training at Wendover and Fairmont, we became to each other as a team. The first four months of 1944 deepened the ties among all of us in Italy. When 'Dolly' failed to return from Orbetello that day, it was a sad occasion for Bob and myself.

On March 12, 1945, I had another aircraft that failed to return to Castelluccio. So happens, a Nose Gunner named Bob Karstensen was riding up front when "friendly fire" hit #2 engine, setting it on fire, while in flight over the Adriatic Sea. An emergency landing allowed all the crew to safely evacuate. I have often thought to myself that God must have said, "Bob, today is not your day of earthly departure, I have another mission for you." No one but God will ever know the influence and impact that you have had on thousands of comrades-in-arms, family and friends. These and many more have found comfort in the hard work that you so willingly volunteer as founder and President of the Former Members of the 451st BG.

(Editor ... Thanks Joe for the accolades on

what I am so proud and happy to be doing for my wartime comrades. But on a lighter note to your comments about 'losing aircrafts' [note I used the term 'aircraft(s) - plural] I remember at one of our reunions when a large scale B-24 was being raffled off by George Frisbee and you and Sue came up with the winning ticket. Your comments to me, upon accepting the model, were; "Well, your finally returning the airplane that you left on ZARA! ... RIGHT? ---- Editor's addendum This remembrance was written into Short Bursts before notification of Joe Wood's passing. I thought it was significant to our 451st history that I decided to leave it as offered)

Marie Elder [ASSOCIATE MEMBER]

I read Issue #41 of the Ad lib and enjoyed it - especially the article, "A PILOT'S STORY." This pilot seemed to care for his crew, even the enlisted men. I have read many stories, but to me his story is somewhat rare.

The copies you sent me some time ago about a "Messer" flying as a photographer was very helpful. That WAS David C. Messer flying with the 726th Squadron. He never had enough missions to be sent home. I keep hoping someone will write in something to keep me looking for news of David.

(Editor ... Glad you enjoyed 'Jack' Dunsmoor's story about his relationship with his crew. As to finding out more about the late David Messer's military tenure with our Group -nothing more has come to light. Perhaps the fact that David flew missions as a photographer will jar some memories.)

Drue Folk, 726th [NAVIGATOR: IBAR SPELLACY'S CREW]

I joined the 726th Squadron as Navigator on Mike Spellacy's crew. We were shot down on 13 October 1944 at Vienna. We all got back to Italy with the help of Marshall Tito's Partisans. By the end of the war, I became Squadron Navigator of the 726th. Colonel Stefanowicz ordered that all 4 Squadron Commanders, Squadron Bombardiers and Squadron Navigators go home with him by ship. It was his plan to go to Washington, see General Twining and get all new crews, then go out to the

Pacific Theater with the same Squadron Staffs. He thought the war in the Pacific would go on for a long time. The "A Bomb" ended his plans.

(Editor ... Your comments about how the war closed out, from the aspects of one of the last Staff Officers within the Group, was a bit of a revelation to me. I appreciate you passing that on to the rest of us who got out before the end of hostilities in Europe.)

Robert Thornton, 727th [GUNNER: PHILIP HARVELL'S CREW]

One of my missions was to Linz, Austria. We did not have our regular pilot, as some pilots were switched with other crews. As I remember, there was plenty of flak. The nose landing gear hydraulic line was shot out by flak. It was urgent to do something pronto. Sam Uhler suggested robbing a piece of the hydraulic line from the ball turret to replace the one in the nose of the aircraft, near the nose wheel. Sam and I got the piece off the ball turret and took it to the front of the plane. It was much too long but with a sort of horseshoe bend, it was made serviceable. The Flight Engineer couldn't get the connection started on the threads, and in desperation, handed the wrench to me. I did get the connection started and it held fluid. We landed safely at Castelluccio Air Base

The pilot turned the Flight Engineer in for the Distinguished Flying Cross. He probably never knew who actually repaired the hydraulic line that made the landing gear serviceable for landing.

(Editor ... That episode, over and returning from Linz, Austria, sounded a bit 'hairly.' Luckily Sam Uhler had the presence of mind to think about the linkage of the hydraulic line at the ball turret, and to improvise that connection to the nose wheel and bring the plane back home for a safe landing. I have noted your Memorial Tribute to Sam in the Diminishing Ranks page. Thanks.)

John H. Brown, 725th [COMMUNICATIONS SECTION]

Like everyone else, I join in thanking you for your continued work on behalf of the 451st, both for the Ad Lib, the continuing research that makes the news very interesting ... and for the reunions. Ad Lib #40 was an eye-opener for the Ground

Crew members, like myself. Ad Lib #41 and the pictures Andy Pendleton submitted brought back memories. Ray Knowles was a tent-mate of mine. I will try to find out from you at the reunion whether you have any information since Italy.

I'm enclosing three pictures. One is of the two Italian generators that Knowles helped acquire and set up. One is of our tent mates and the other of the entire 725th Communications Section, including Ralph McBeth when he was a First Lieutenant - A great boss.

(Editor ... Thanks, John, for the accolades and kudo's, but when I have people like you supporting this effort, then it becomes a 'labor of love.' I'll try and squeeze the photos into this issue so others can see the follow-up that comes from some recent articles.)

Irvine Levine, 724th [PILOT: AIRCRAFT COMMANDER]

Thanks again for the Winter/Spring issue of the 451st Ad-Lib.

I find I relate to so many of the letters included that it is almost a biography.

I regret reading that my Bombardier, Allen Lien and my Copilot, Leo Upchurch have made their final Fly-by. I spoke to Upchurch a few years ago, apparently shortly before his demise, but have not been successful in contacting the other members of my crew.

I read of other Pilots landing on Vis and recall having a flak hit next to my rudder which left the trim tab flapping, causing my plane to shudder almost uncontrollably.

I flew over Vis to give any of my crew the opportunity to bail out, if they elected to do so. They decided to stay and I decided to cross that Adriatic rather than risking a landing on Vis. I was told to land at Bari, where the plane was cannibalized. Peck, my Tail Gunner told me, "Skipper, I found a quick way to get out of the turret, but I can't remember how."

I am enclosing a check towards the continuance of this/our organization.

(Editor ... Thanks, Irv, for the healthy donation and for the vignette on your trip 'over' Vis. Luckily we had three possible landing fields on the other side of the Adriatic that we could call upon when

under duress: Krk, Vis and Zara. When flying with the 'Lt. Maurice Brown Crew,' as spare gunner, I had the opportunity to visit Zara - Nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there.)

Richard C. Cook, 725th [GUNNER: G. DeTAR'S CREW]

Reporting for duty - Yes, I'm still alive. I have certainly have enjoyed the recent Ad Lib publications. They are first rate.

(Editor ... Thanks for your kudo's and support. I hope this publication still falls within your approval rating.)

William C. Paddock, 725th [PILOT: AIRCRAFT COMMANDER]



WILLIAM "CHUCK" PADDOCK'S CREW

Actually I feel foolish to write to you about the following situation, as it occurred so long ago and my crew are all gone so they will not be able to verify it.

I do not remember the date, but it was a typical hot-summer day in southern Italy. Perhaps the heat

of the day woke most Squadron members early because almost all the sides of the pyramid tents were rolled up and tied before breakfast. The interior of each tent were observed from the Squadron area and you could see most crews did a wonderful job of organizing their personal affects.

Sometime after breakfast, while the crew and I were lounging around enjoying the warm weather, a Squadron member tracked me down and ordered me to report to the 725th Squadron Headquarters. There I was informed that I was to fly to Naples in one hour with a group of Squadron members who had completed their missions and were heading back to the States. I thought to myself, 'What an important mission and I'd better get to Naples without mishap!' Stan Leiter, my Copilot, Red Witherow, the Crew's Flight Engineer, and Tex Waggoner the Crew's Navigator were alerted and ordered to fly with me.

The crew and I met at the assigned plane, checked it out and waited for the lucky returnees to appear. They did, and what a lot of joy and excitement they expressed. They wanted to make sure I understood they wanted me to 'buzz' the 725th Squadron area before heading for Naples. I was apprehensive about doing something like the, but I indicated that I would. The returnees were securely placed, with a few on the Flight Deck and with most in the rear of the plane. All had parachutes.

The engines were started, checked, and we taxied to the take-off position - and off we went. I circled left around to the southeast of the field and headed northwest for the Squadron area, losing some altitude and gaining some speed. As we passed over the Squadron area the yelling was louder than the four roaring engines. So off we went towards Naples. The flying time to Naples was short, about 45 minutes. We landed, unloaded, wished the returnees good luck, checked with Operations and headed back to the 451st. We landed at our Base at Castelluccio, shut down the engines and climbed aboard the waiting truck. But first I was given instructions to appear at Squadron Headquarters. I followed orders, only to learn that I had created havoc in the Squadron area because of the 'buzz' job. All the tents with their sides rolled up to allow for the summer breeze to float through,

also allowed the prop wash of the four engines to balloon the tents so that the four corner posts fell to the ground, thus allowing the four sides of the tents to collapse. All the creative planning of the Squadron members to improve their living facilities, all went down, also coat racks, desks, cots with mosquito webbing, just to mention a few.

Walking to my tent, one by one I faced the Squadron members to hear of their displeasure. I indicated my sorrow, but the final result was they all got a kick out of the experience. All items were soon righted and things returned to normal -thank goodness. I did feel bad for the mess - including my own.

(Editor ... Thanks 'Chuck' for the tale of the 'ballooning tents.' Maybe someone out there will remember the incident and do a follow-up. I guess there were some dandy 'buzz jobs' done over the plains of our Castelluccio Air Base.)

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

From the Ad Lib Issue #41. Congratulations on reaching your 80th. That was quite a "BASH" they put on for you. You deserve it for all the good work you do the for the 451st.

Sorry to see in that issue that my 726th Squadron Commander, Charles Haltom, passed away in June of 2005.

(Editor ... It is indeed sad to see the ranks of our first Squadron Commanding Officers disappearing from our roster. First we lost James B. Beane (724th) in October of 1972. Then followed Clayton E. Evans (727th), in December of 1998. Now, as you noted, Charles C. Haltom in June of 2005. Only one original Squadron Commanders is still with us. That is John P. Davis of the 725th. All of our overseas Group Commanders are gone as well; Eaton, Knapp and Stefonowicz. Hardly a month goes by without getting word that another comrade or two has taken the 'High Flight.' So, hang in there .. Us younger fellers' need you.)

James W. Bitzinger, 724th [NAVIGATOR: CORNELIUS E. DONOGHUE'S CREW]

Karen and I enjoyed the 2006th reunion of the 451st Bomb Group in Springfield, IL.

We are very appreciative of your dedication to the planning and success of the gathering.

I have enclosed a contribution to honor those of us that could not attend, and thankful for those of us that could. As we all know the ranks are getting thinner. Nevertheless, we will keep going as long as God wills it.

(Editor ... Thanks for the kudo's on the success of the Springfield Reunion. Seems that this one was a bit harder to put together than some of the past ones. With our thinning ranks, it seems that I don't have the leverage to negotiate like I use to with the various components that it takes to put it all together. Then again, maybe I'm just getting older and it just seems that way. Nevertheless -;-;-THANKS.)

Robert J. Anderson, 727th [PILOT: AIRCRAFT COMMANDER]

Wonderful reunion, THANKS. All events, out standing. How do you do it? I guess when you do it as long as you have, it must become somewhat tiresome and can turn into a chore.

But I misjudge, since the effort shown has to be done with interest and zeal to be so well put together and interesting.

I have put together some of the photos I have taken. Hope you can use some of them. As you can see, I enjoy this kind of activity, also the subject matter is of great interest to me. The group picture, on the balcony above the banner, is an example of all the friends we have made since we have been coming to the 451st reunion. This is worth more to me than gold.

(Editor ... Bob, your photo collage are always the GREATEST. I look forward to your effort and to use them in the Ad Lib.

But, as noted in the photo of you and Jim Bitzinger, this must have been like "old home week," since you meet for the first time and never realized that you were both in the same Stalag as POW's back in 1944 after the August 23rd Markersdorf mission. Ah -- another memory to savor.)

Stanford Weinberg, 726th [ORDNANCE SECTION]

I am sorry that I did not attend the reunion of

the 451st in Springfield. I was at the Des Moines reunion two years ago. It was a nice gathering, but I was unhappy that no one from the 726th Ordnance Section was able to attend. I really missed getting the chance to be with any of the fellows I really knew.

I do want to thank you, and commend you for the wonderful work you are doing for the 451st Group, and I hope you will keep doing it for many years to come.

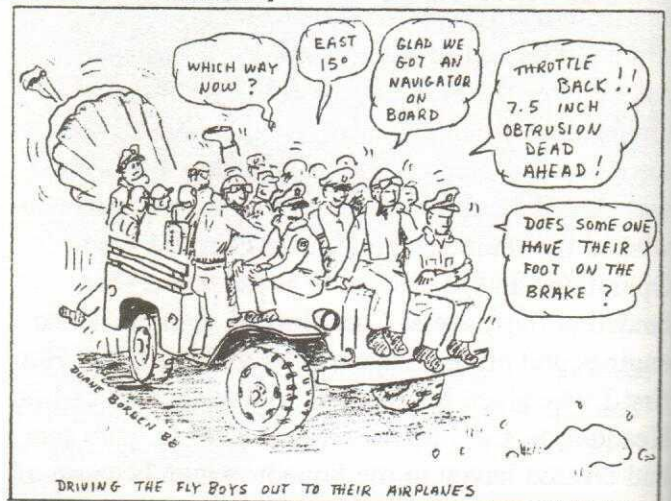
(Editor ... Thanks for the kind words about this effort. As to lack of special friends being in attendance, I guess that comes with our 'Diminishing Ranks.' We can't forestall the inevitable. Just take a look at those that have taken their 'Final Flight' that are listed in this Ad Lib.)

Alfred Epestine, 724th [ROG: JOSEPH C. CHENEY'S CREW]

Had a wonderful time at my first reunion with all of the 451st'ers. Do you know yet where the 15th will be in 2008? I've enclosed a few pictures. Do with them what you wish. Thanks again for a great reunion.

(Editor ... I know its on the mind of most of the members, as to where, and if, we'll have another get together. Only time will tell. Once we establish the potential attendance number for a 2008 reunion, and it will be worth the effort, we'll go from there.)

Duane Borden, 725th [GUNNER: PAUL HARDEN'S CREW]

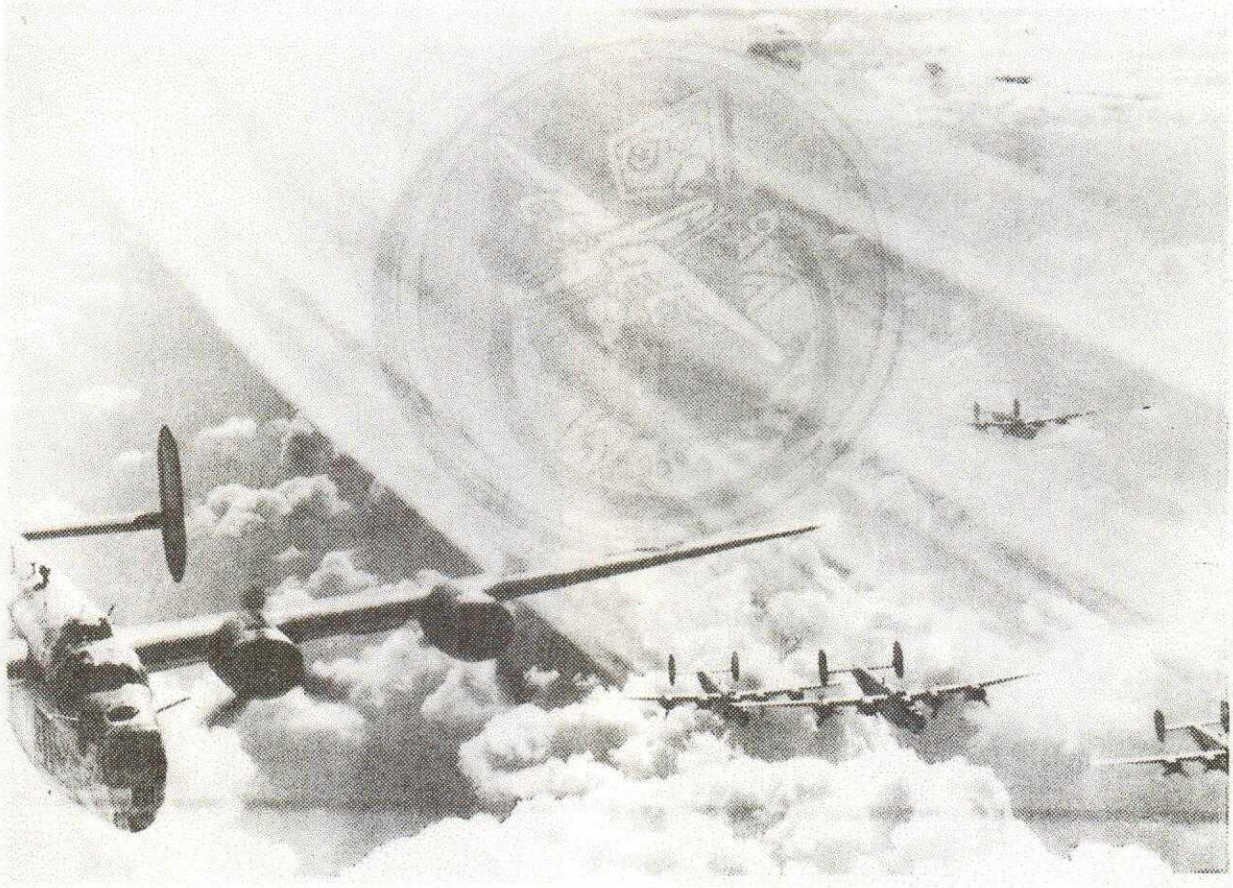


ARTISTIC EFFORT BY SERGEANT BORDEN

MISCELLANEOUS U.S.O. PHOTOGRAPHS



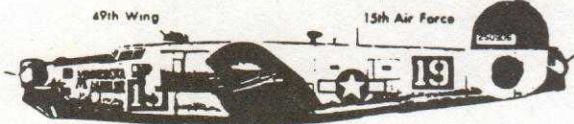
MICROFILMED U.S. AIR FORCE PHOTOGRAPH



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



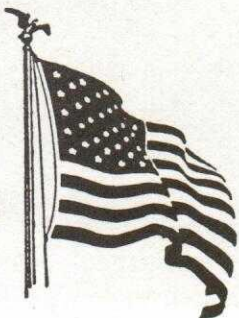
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