



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

Issue 44

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WHAT'S HAPPENING ?!?

Well, the inevitable has happened. This 451st office made a judgement call to cancel the 15th biennial 451st reunion that was scheduled for the Chicago Land area this upcoming October 2008. Much of the decision was predicated on the low volume of favorable responses and number of death notices since our last Ad Lib, which discussed our chosen dates and location.

Taking all factors into consideration, I began to explore my database of located, and mailed to, members. It showed that this office had located, over the past 30 years, some 1,900 bona fide members. That's out of some 5,000 that may have served during the 451st' tenure, both Stateside and Overseas. Digging further into my database, I found that we've lost some 1,090 members, of the 1,900, due to death. And digging still further I found some 50 that I've had my mailings returned by the Post Office. At the present time I have less than 700 451st

members on my mailing list. That's not counting the 60th Air Service Squadron, Strategic Missile Wing and interested family members of our departed that wish to be included.



Bob K.: Pondering If It's "AYE" Or "NAY"

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OKAY . . . Now comes the 'kicker.' After composing the 'Cancelled Reunion' letter and having phone communication with Winson Jones (727th), he opted to take on the challenge of putting together this final reunion. With the contacts he had from publishing his 'Post 2006 Reunion Booklet,' and cooperation from this office, he felt that enough interest could still be generated to put on one final gathering. He stayed with the same Chicago Land area, but changed the hotel from the Double Tree Arlington Heights to the Hyatt Hotel in Deerfield, Illinois. He also abbreviated the dates from Thurs-

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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

day 16 October (registration) to Sunday 19 October (departure). 'Sit down dinners' are planned for Friday and Saturday. I wish him God speed in his efforts.

NOW . . . still on the subject of 'reunions.' As I had indicated in my 'Cancellation Letter,' I think I have found a way that 'REGIONAL' reunions, rather than 'NATIONWIDE' reunions, could be held. First off, by the term 'REGIONAL,' I'm referring to members that live in a close-by area to a designated site. This has worked for me in the past as I have traveled the country doing 451st work, and by contacting members prior to a stop-over.

First off, there has to be a host/sponsor that would take on the chore of setting this up. Be it a one time, one evening, dinner, or an overnight stay in a conveniently located hotel. It could even be an informal backyard barbeque, should the attendance be to small for a lavish get together.

The member that would take on this challenge would have to contact me with their proposal: dates, location, costs and his determination to pull it off. I would then go into my database and seek members that live in the surrounding Postal Zip Codes and alert them, by mail, as to your plans for this mini get together. If you have 'buddies' that live apart

from your immediate area, you already have their addresses and can notify them of your plans so they may also attend.

This seems, at this point in our lives, the only way to go. I had conferred with other Groups about having a 49th Bomb Wing Reunion, but received little support from those in the know.

A CASE OF DEJA VU

By Charles M. Thomas

With great interest, I watched the TV coverage of the progress of the Jet Blue flight over California, 21 September 2005, with a nose wheel alignment problem. I had a similar experience in about the same area of California on 23 January 1946. As Yogi Bera would say, "I was just having deja vu all over again."

Perhaps a few words about my pilot experience would be appropriate. I was a B-24 Liberator Bomber pilot during WWII. I flew 35 bombing sorties, which with double credit for the best defended targets, netted me 50 mission credits over Germany and surrounding countries, from my base at Castelnuovo, Italy.

Upon return to the U.S. I requested, and received, C-54 training. Then I was assigned to the 4th Ferry Group in Memphis, Tennessee. My job was to ferry B-24s and C-54s from place to place within the U.S. About 21 January 1946 I received orders to take a commercial flight to Washington, D.C., pick up a C-54 from American Airlines, fly it to Dallas, Texas, spend the night, pick up 32 nurses and take them, and the C-54, to Long Beach California. The flight from D.C. to Dallas was uneventful.

The next day, 23 January 1946, about an hour after take-off from Dallas, we lost all hydraulic fluid, this meant the complete loss of the use of several systems.

1.) Auto Pilot, but this was the least of our worries because could hand-fly the airplane.

2.) Hydraulic gear extension, which should not be a problem because the main and nose gear retracted forward and when extended would free fall and the air slip stream would help lower the gear to the down and locked position.

3.) Wing flaps, which meant we would have to

land faster than clean stalling speed, which I don't recall, but was probably about 140 MPH.

4.) Nose steering, without hydraulic pressure we would have no control over the nose wheel, and we doubted that the centering cam could align the nose wheel without hydraulic pressure. We had no way to determine the position of the nose wheel.

5.) Hydraulic brakes, we had no back-up air brakes which were the old non-metering type, which meant after landing, just cracking the air brake valve open would lock the main wheel brakes and probably put excessive side loads on the landing gear, and IF the nose wheel was not aligned straight, could cause a ground loop that could collapse one, two, or all three gear struts.

The C-54 had a feature that was very important to us on this occasion. The passenger and cargo loading door was near the tail of the airplane, therefore when heavy cargo was to be loaded, a tail stand, a long strong pipe, would be attached to the tail skid under the tail to protect against tail damage. Without a tail stand in place, the loading of heavy cargo would lower the tail to the ground.

I believed that the tail skid would be sturdy enough to withstand the weight of the nurses lowering the tail to the runway. Dragging the tail skid would eliminate the very serious steering and braking problems.

With our needs in mind I went to the cabin and asked the 32 nurses and one male fighter pilot to tighten their seat belts and expect a firm landing because I would have to land at high speed and may need their help to stop the airplane --this got their attention. I told them if all went as planned, after landing, I would ring the alarm bell as a signal for all of them to go the rear of the plane to lower the tail to the runway, and allow the dragging of the tail skid to stop the airplane. I asked them to remain there until the plane stopped and then I would send the Engineer back to lead them forward slowly so the nose wheel could be lowered to the ground gently.

This procedure worked as planned. When the nose was lowered, the plane turned left onto hard dry ground. I cleared the runway and shut down the engines. The nose wheel was turned left about 30 degrees! We landed the airplane without injury to personnel, or damage to the airplane.

The nurses hugged and thanked us for saving their lives, when actually I felt that they saved our lives, too.

Now, an embarrassing confession. Not one of us three bachelor crew members had the imagination, or foresight to say, "The Army may conduct an investigation and we may need witnesses. Please give us your names, addresses and phone numbers."

CORPORAL BOURDETTE REMEMBERS

By Warren C. Bourdette

Going back to WWII. Apparently Paul Harden, my skipper, has never mentioned what happened to his first crew, of which I was a member. Shortly after taking off from Gowen Air Force Base, Boise, Idaho, on the morning of July 12, 1944, on what was to be our last operational training mission, one of the fuel lines in the wing started leaking like a sieve. The guys back in the waist called Paul in panic, as you might imagine, and alerted him to the problem. He and Fred Bohn, his original copilot, brought us back down, safely.

After telling the Ground Crew Chief that the aircraft wasn't safe to fly, he was told, very adamantly and successively by the Crew Chief, then the Officer In Charge of Maintenance and, finally, the Base Commander (you might recognize the name:

Colonel John 'Killer' Kane), that there was nothing wrong with the aircraft. Then 'Killer Kane' ordered us back up in the air.

In kind of a strange coincidence, another B-24 from our Base had blown up in the air, and for the same reason. Only the Flight Engineer survived .. and by only a miracle. Nevertheless, we took off again and got up to about 800 feet when the fuel started pouring again. Apparently a lot of it had accumulated in the wing, because as we banked to return to Base, Paul and Fred had to fight to try to control the attitude of the aircraft.

Paul had sent me back to the bomb bay to check the fuel lines. The stench was so bad, that I called Lyle Smith, the Bombardier, and asked him to open the bomb bay doors about a foot or so. Surprisingly

I woke up that night in the Base Hospital, in traction. This ol' body had been somewhat rearranged. I'll spare you the details. However, we lost our Flight Engineer. He was a great guy and, believe it or not, his name was Rod Sterling, and he hailed from Everett, Washington.

I'm still amazed ... and damned thankful ... that this aircraft didn't blow up, as did the one I had previously mentioned.

Paul and Fred did a fantastic job keeping the rest of us alive. Rod Sterling apparently had been in the tunnel over the nose wheel when we hit. I'm eternally indebted to Paul and Fred ... and I certainly won't forget the many Surgeons and Nurses who have worked on me. It allowed for my continued presence on this beautiful planet

Later, when I got out of the hospital, Paul came to me and told me that he was forming a new crew and would I join him. The rest is history.

(Editor ... This apparently was not the only 'close encounter / disaster' that Warren endured during the course of the war. For it was on 16 March 1945, while on a mission to Moosbierbaum,

Austria, that the Harden Crew endured another devastating situation. Hit by flak and limping as best they could, the order to bail out was issued.

Members of crew were:

1st Lt. Paul E. Harden, Pilot (POW)

2nd Lt. Louis R. Head, Copilot (EVADED)

2nd Lt. Kenneth Branstetter, Navigator (POW)

2nd Lt. Eugene L. Wolff, Bombadier (POW)

CPL Warren C. Bourdette, Nose Turret (POW)

CPL Everett J. Alleman, Upper Turret (POW)

CPL Hubert D. Odom, Ball Turret (POW)

CPL Richard T. Fulmer, Waist Gunner (POW)

CPL Morton Sheffler, Waist Gunner (POW)

CPL Duane S. Borden, Tail Turret (POW)

SGT William Mathieson, Photographer (POW)

Of the afore mentioned crew members, Warren now shares life with (at this point in time) are: Paul Harden, Louis Head, Eugene Wolff, Kenneth Brandstetter and Duane Borden. Of those we've located, these members of the crew are deceased: Richard Fulmer, William Mathieson and Hubert Odom. Not located are: Morton Sheffler and Everett Alleman.)

SON RECALLS DAD'S LEGACY

By: James Prato

Dear Group Members;

As some of you may know, my father was S/Sgt Nick Prato, a photo technician with the 451st. Dad had a son (me) who retired from the Air Force in 1978 as a M/Sgt (almost 24 years). Nick also had a grandson (my son, Mike) who retired from the Air Force as a M/Sgt in 1994, with 20 years duty. Mike was a Munitions Maintenance technician, and I was an Aerospace Control and Warning Superintendent (a fancy name for radar operator).

Having said all that, I sit up and take notice whenever I see a picture of a B-24 Liberator. My ears perk up, too, when I hear something to do with the 451st! I have a picture of Dad on my desk at work. On it there's a decal with a B-24 belonging to the 451st. On the tail are the distinctive group markings, top half red, with a red circle underneath. I was surfing the Internet the other day looking under the Air Force, and especially WW-II (I wonder why?) - and what to my wondering eyes should appear but a 451st B-24, tail number 44-50443, and a large 16 under the cockpit, and another 16 just aft

of the waist window. So I thought I'd include it in this letter and maybe find out more information about the particular "bird."

(Editor ... The aircraft in question .. 44-50443, named "LO-AN-ROY" came into our Group in February of 1945 as a replacement. It survived the war and was returned to the U.S. at the close of hostilities.)

My story doesn't end there. About a week after I discovered the picture I took my car to the garage and while waiting for them to change my oil, a car pulled in with a 451st sticker on the bumper. Of course I immediately headed for the car. A young man got out; my first words to him were, "I think you're too young to have been in the 451st!" As it turned out his wife's uncle was in the 451st as a Bombardier. He was shot down on a raid over Germany and was KIA. The young man's name was Richard Washik, and he lives in the same development that I live in! Small, small world!

(Editor ... The Bombardier in question was Lt.

Edward J. Antonik, 724th Squadron. On mission to Toulon Harbor, France, 11 March 1944 on aircraft 7725 - "Piecemaker," Pilot Lt. Claude U. Vail, all aboard were KIA.)

Two more incidents, it's really ironical how they "pop-up." I was at an air show (I go to them like other people go to football games). At this particular show they had, what is reported to be the only flyable military configuration B-24 left. I wandered into a tent that contained WW-II memorabilia. As I looked over the display or AAF patches, wings, etc. I spotted the elderly gentleman wearing a 451st T-Shirt! "Hey, that was my Dad's outfit," I yelled! He asked me my Dad's name and all I said was "Prato!" He came right back with "Nick!" I was shocked to say the least! I'm sorry I never got

his name.

One last incident, about two years ago I met one of the "Tuskegee Airmen." He was a clerk with one of the P-51 Squadrons. I knew from reading that the bomber crews always breathed a "sigh of relief" when they saw their fighter escort were Mustangs with red tails - "The Tuskegee Airmen."

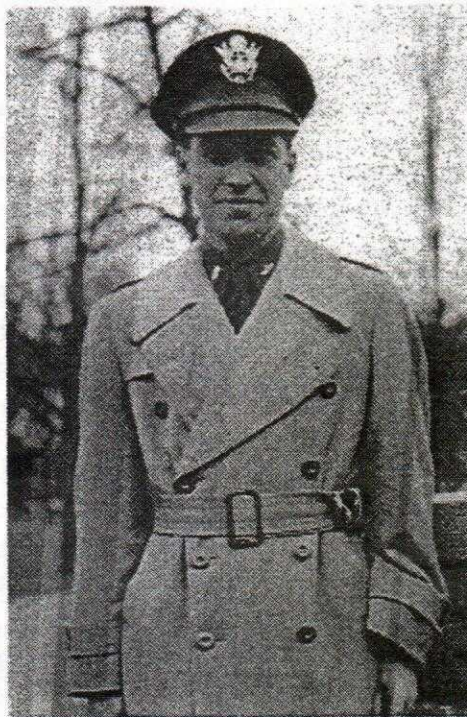
Rich tells me that you are having your last reunion this year. That brings a lump to my throat and a tear to my eye, but I understand! What a grand and glorious legacy you left for those who followed you. When it's all said and done, may each of you be able to say, {"I reached up and touched the face of God, all the while humming "Off we go into the wild blue"} (signed) James R. (Jim) Prato, M/Sgt, USAF (Ret.)

CAPTURED

By: George Held

(Editor ... Again we have a memorable wartime experience we're offering to our readers posthumously to the author's death. This tome was kindly sent to me by the wife of George Held, Lucille. I thank her for the privilege of offering it to our members.)

I looked down into the open bomb bay doors. We were at about 5,000 feet, losing altitude at the rate of approximately 1,500 feet per minute; there was no option, it was either jump or go down with the plane. A few of the crew members had already jumped. I just closed my eyes and let go. I could feel the wind blasting around me, and when I finally opened my eyes, I looked up to see my plane passing overhead. No practice ... never did it before ... but the instructions were implanted in my mind the lyrics of an Andrews Sisters' hit song. (Instructions were; "After you jump, wait until you are clear of the aircraft to open your chute!") It was at that moment, when I put my hand on the ripcord



Lt. George Held
Born: 1921 - Deceased 2006

and pulled, that I suddenly felt a strong upward jerk and the whooshing around me suddenly stopped ... everything became quiet ... so quiet it was unnatural. I was just floating in space.

The reality of what had just happened had not set in and would not for a while. I was aware of such calm; it was hard for me to accept that I had just bailed out of my four engine B-24 United States Army Bomber over northern Yugoslavia.

It was summer. It was hot. It was the 22nd of August 1944, the fifth year of the war in Europe, and here I was dangling from a nylon chute. Moments before I'd been homeward bound after a successful bombing mission over Vi-

enna.

I reached into my flight suit, unzipped a pocket, took out a Camel and lit it with my Zippo. Floating down, smoking a cigarette, must have presented a silly looking picture as I think back. However, there were things to do, plans to make ... German forces might pick me up. This frightened me

because I was Jewish and that information was imprinted on my dog tags. Along with other vital statistics -- name, serial number and blood type -- was embossed the letter "H", denoting Hebrew. Well aware of the Nazi hatred for Jews, I removed the dog tags from around my neck and flung them away.

On the other hand, Allied Forces might pick me up, since there were two factions fighting a civil war in Yugoslavia. One group headed by Marshall Tito, known as the Partisans, worked with the Allied Command. We had instructions, if shot down in this theater of operations, to make for his headquarters on the Island of Vis, from where our American forces would provide ferry service across the Adriatic and back to our base at Castelluccio, Italy. The other possibility was capture by the "Chetnicks," a pro-Nazi organization with allegiance to Colonel Mihajlovic, and a reputation of "selling" Americans to the Germans.

I searched the horizon for my plane. Just ahead, I could make out two open chutes, obviously other members of my crew. The ground was getting closer and objects were becoming recognizable. I had probably dropped to 1,000 feet by now; it was taking longer than I expected. Suddenly I was aware of red flashes below, followed by puffs of smoke ... I wondered what it was. Shocked ... it dawned on me ... GUNFIRE!; someone was shooting at me. Tapping into some of the lessons learned in the classroom, I attempted to maneuver the shroud lines of my chute to help me control my direction. First, I twisted my right hand downward and my left up, which propelled me in one direction and then the opposite until I began to get a feeling of how I could control myself. I tried manipulating the lines to keep me from heading towards a heavily wooded area that was rapidly approaching me. It would be safer to head for a clearing just ahead, but I quickly realized that I would not reach my goal in time.

Unfortunately, the winds made control too difficult; I buffeted in too the thick black forest area where I watched the ground rushing up to meet me, like the bottom dip of the Cyclone ride at Coney Island. Falling into these giant trees, I defensively raised my hands over my face. It seems I had slowed my fall but at the last moment my chute, which had just reached the tree tops, spilled its air. I plunged towards the ground some 40 feet below;

breaking branches, bouncing off limbs, brushing through leaves and twigs, I finally came to a thumping halt.

As I lay motionless for a few moments trying to regain my composure, my left leg began to throb, and I could feel a sharp pain from my ankle. After some preliminary self-examination it became evident that I was in rather good condition and that my leg was not broken, probably just sprained. "Pretty good shape," I thought. I tried to stand and found it painful to put pressure on my injured leg; I knew walking out of here was not going to be easy. I had to make plans, and I thought back to the survival techniques briefed during training. Some emergency rations, plus a few "D" bars (high concentrate food in a chocolate bar), some maps, a watch, a knife, a compass and a sidearm; all regular "GI" issue. In addition, as a Navigator, who better to find a way out of this mess?

My first job was to bury my parachute; nylon was in short supply and considered vital to the enemy. Besides, burying the chute would help conceal my location. After some difficulty, I found a good spot and stuffed the chute, with its lines and canvas pack, into a crevice and covered it with dirt, twigs, branches and leaves.

Now, I could plan on my next move. Where was I? My last visual landmark before bailing out was the southwest corner of Lake Balaton in Hungary. Obviously, I was far from the other crew members, since the intervals between our jumps separated us by miles. I strained for sounds, expecting someone in the brush would be looking for me; since someone had shot at me and he probably marked my landing in the woods. I heard nothing close by, but there were faint sounds of gunshots, probably a skirmish. "Best to avoid it," I thought as I headed towards the Adriatic Coast.

The woods made the blue sky barely visible through the treetops. Limping, my only chance for escape was to find some local sympathizer, or make contact with the "Partisans." It was early afternoon, plenty of daylight left, but my leg was keeping me from making the headway I so desperately needed. I was not hungry or thirsty, just filled with anxiety. It was cool in the shade of the forest; I was thankful for the protection from the hot August sun. I was wearing my flight suit over my Army sunbats, and I thought it would be wiser to keep it on. The pockets

were filled with many items I would need and the extra covering would protect and keep me warm on night fell.

I could not continue much longer on my injured leg. I looked around for a heavy branch or limb to use as a crutch -- found one -- trimmed it and continued limping. I must have been trudging for more than an hour when I decided to rest. Too frightened to be hungry, I began to recall the grim reality of the events of the day.

We had been cruising at 27,000 feet, all on oxygen, all manning our positions and keeping the chatter on the intercom limited. As I looked out the aircraft window, I felt secure to see our P-38 fighter escort in position. We were still a way from our target; you could feel the tenseness in the air as we all began our final check of oxygen masks, flak suits and parachutes while the gunners gave a final burst to check their machine guns.

Then the fighters wiggled their wings to acknowledge that they were breaking formation and rolled over in a steep bank to begin their return home. Our escort had just left; reaching their maximum range, they were required to return to their base. We were on our own, and this meant we had about 15 minutes to target. Every now and then, a puff of black smoke appeared; the anti-aircraft batteries did not have our range yet. The sky was very clear so there would be no difficulty in observing the IP (Initial Point) or the target area. As we neared the IP the puffs of black smoke began to intensify and I could see the advance section of our Group encountering heavy anti-aircraft fire. The run from the IP to target required the Bombardier to take control of the aircraft. During that 5-minute run, he had to maintain air speed, direction, and altitude, while precisely dropping our bomb load. It was during this period of action that we were the most vulnerable; the enemy had time to lock onto our altitude, ground speed and direction to more accurately fire their guns.

As we approached the IP, our plane was completely engulfed in black bursts of anti-aircraft fire, causing bouncing, veering and extreme erratic motion; everyone was thrown from side to side. It was almost impossible to maintain a controlled course. Remarkably our Bombardier hung on long enough to release the bombs, and as he did, we plunged into a steep downward bank as we broke from the

formation. Two loud explosions hurled shrapnel throughout the interior of the aircraft and I could feel the Pilot struggling with the controls. We were well below the anti-aircraft barrage, and as our plane pitched I could see burning planes going down, parachutes opening and billowing smoke reaching upwards from the destruction we had just delivered.

We had lost two engines over the target, and the Pilot was feathering (changing the pitch) the propellers to reduce the drag and vibration. Number one and number four, both outboard engines had been hit with anti-aircraft fire, and this limbering "Liberator." with its limited wingspan was rapidly losing altitude. By now, separated from our Group and the combat area, I gave the Pilot a southwest heading across Yugoslavia to the Adriatic, towards our base in southern Italy. I had pinpointed our position but the big question was, "Would we make it?"

After using flaps in an attempt to maintain our altitude, the Pilot gave the order to jettison everything -- that meant everything; machine guns, ammunition, flak suits, anything that wasn't attached to the ship, any and all items that could lighten the load and help maintain the altitude we so desperately needed to get home. We were leaving Hungary and nearing Yugoslavia, losing 1,500 feet a minute and we were at 5,000 feet. We had no chance to make it home!

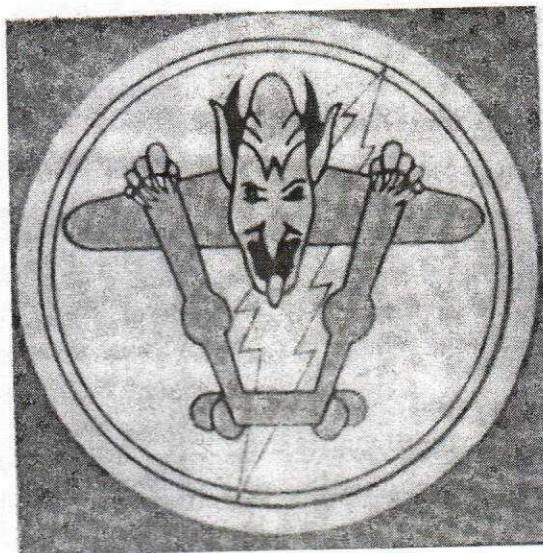
Suddenly over the intercom boomed, "Enemy fighter at three o'clock!" From a distance, I saw a German ME 109, a single engine fighter, bearing down on us. Using the international signal for distress, our Pilot lowered the main landing wheels to avoid the imminent attack, set the controls to automatic pilot and opened the bomb bay doors. He announced the order to abandon ship over the intercom, immediately we began to evacuate the plane; there was no time to waste. Fortunately, the German fighter pilot respected the distress signal and we abandoned ship without a shot fired.



"LITTLE FRIENDS:" THE 49th FIGHTER SQUADRON (Continued 18th Installment by Dr. Royal C. Gilkey)

A day's rest from operational flying meant relaxing time for the Squadron's pilots on October 15, 1944. Routine duties were performed by other base personnel. This being a Sunday, religious services were held in the Group Chapel for the benefit of professing Protestants and Catholics. Such was the custom on the Sabbath day. Few troops cared to dismiss religion from their lives. Even those who did not attend formal services would hardly discount the importance of religious considerations. A belief in the need for God's help under wartime stresses was widespread.

It was back to combat operations for "Hangman" Squadron the next day. On Monday, October 16, 1944, take-off time was 0830 hours (8:30 a.m.) for 16 "Hangmen" assigned to give route-cover for 304th Wing heavies and cover over targets at both Valentin and Steyr in Austria for that Wing and two others; the 47th and 55th. This was a big order for the 49th Fighter Squadron, which was to fly the first position among the Squadrons of the 14th Fighter Group. Two of the Forty-Niners returned early, one for mechanical difficulties and the other for cockpit trouble. In general the formations flew the briefed route. Our fighters made rendezvous with the 304th Wing B-24s over Eisenerz (4733N 1452E), southwest of Steyr, Austria. The time was 1059 hours (10:59 a.m.); at the altitude of 26,000 feet. Bombers of the 47th Wing were met at 25,000 feet over Radenthein (4601N 1352E) at 1035 hours (10:35 a.m.). 55th Wing bombers, constituting a third formation, were met at 20,000 feet over Idria (4601N 1403E), southwest of Ljubljana (Slovenia's capital) in northern Yugoslavia, at 1010 hours. Our P-38 entered and left the target area at 25,000 feet, providing target cover for the bombers at 1104 hours to 1145 hours (11:04-11:45 a.m.). Our fighters then started back, following the briefed route, and made their departure from the bombers at



25,000 feet over a place called Inner Leoben (4655N 1342E) at 1204 hours (12:04 p.m.). Flying home from Austria, the P-38s landed on Triolo Sanding Ground at 1345 hours (1:45 p.m.). Their trip had covered approximately 1,020 miles, the fighters maintaining a good formation throughout. The bombers were reported to have flown good formations within their groups, although the groups themselves appeared to be rather strung out at times. Our

pilots would see bomb smoke arising over both targets at Steyr and Valentin.

During the mission, enemy air put in an appearance. Six unidentified aircraft approached the Lightnings at 6 o'clock to their flight path 25,000 feet over Seitenstetten (4802N 1439E) at 1145 hours (11:45 a.m.). These bogies appeared to have come from Vienna, only to turn tail and scatter into cloud formations when our P-38s turned into them. They showed little stomach for fighting. Our pilots never got closer than a mile from the threatening formation. Approximately 15 contrails, consisting of single white streamers, were observed 30,000 feet over Wallsee (4810N 1442E) in Austria. These indicated single-engine aircraft in the area. When our planes pursued them, the contrails rose to 31,000 feet and lost themselves in clouds at 1130 hours (11:30 a.m. Evidently, there was no desire to tangle with the P-38s.

Flak was thrown up at our planes at Amstetten (4808N 1452E), northeast of Steyr in Austria. It was heavy, accurate and intense. Less so was the flak fired over northern Yugoslavia from 4518N 1415R. (located near Rijeka).

Pilots reported seeing a bomber jettison its bombs over Villach (4637N 1350E) in southern Austria. Bomb strikes were seen on the side of a hill just beyond the town's limits. That occurred at 1205 hours (12:05 p.m.) and was seen from 22,000 feet.

Weather varied during the mission. Over the Adriatic, it was virtually clear. Haze hung over the mountains. There was haze, along with stratus clouds between 20,000 and 30,000 feet. In the target area, middle and high clouds accounted for 6/10 coverage.

Generally speaking, radio security was good. It was reported, however, that in the neighborhood of Fiume (also known as Rijeka), fighters made contact with the bombers, the latter indicating they were on time and on course. Bombers did make radio contact with fighters. Over "A" channel, a masculine voice speaking in German could be heard over the Austrian town of Eisenerz (4743N 1452E0 AT 1100 HOURS (11:00 A.M.)), while the fighters were flying at 26,000 feet.

The 14 Squadron pilots finishing this mission received sortie credit. Two others had taken off but

one had to return early because of mechanical trouble, and the other by reason of pilot sickness.

(Editor ... Although the 49th Fighter Squadron was not our escort on 16 October 1944, we flew a mission to Linz, Austria to bomb a 'Benzol Plant.' (Group's micro-film history does not record our escort on that day) Nevertheless we lost one aircraft to flak over the target. Aircraft #42-78683, piloted by Captain Albert W. Johnson (725th). Of the 11 onboard one crewmember was KIA. The fatality that day was T/Sgt Valentine B. Lawless. The 10 others became POWs. Thirty five 451st aircraft took part in this mission. The 451st led the 49th Wing, followed by the 461st and the 484th Bomb Groups. This was the Group's 136th mission.

HOW "ACHI" SPENT CHRISTMAS 1944

By: Achilles Kozakis

December 24, 1944

The day was wet and cold, the grey clouds hug the high hill tops as the blistering winds blow in from the choppy seas of the Adriatic. Dreary as it is, this time of the year my thoughts and feelings remind me of home and family. We would sing Christmas Carols and enjoy the days we spent that tied us together. I felt my sadness more agonizing during this important holiday.

But this is 1944, and although my father and sister, along with my aunts, uncles and cousins, were keeping the home fires burning by working in the defense plants of Lynn, Massachusetts, my brothers and I are far from home taking care of business overseas. My brother, John, is in the Navy, on submarine patrol in a Corvette, somewhere in the North Atlantic. My oldest brother, Nick, is stationed in Assam, India. And my youngest brother, Milton, is a Radio Operator on a transport aircraft flying somewhere over Europe. I am stationed in Southern Italy on the Foggia plain as a Nose Gunner on a B-24 heavy bomber of the 451st Bombardment Group.

At this juncture of my tour of duty, I have been credited with 10 missions and 17 sorties; received my first Air Medal and Purple Heart. The month of

November was my favorite -- I HAD SURVIVED!

During this morning's briefing, we are told this winter has been the worst winter recorded in 60 years! Freezing temperatures, cold, harsh rains with ice and sleet, snow, and -- worst of all -- mud up to our ankles that makes walking at times almost impossible. I didn't feel so sorry for myself when I think of the G.I.'s ("dogfaces") on the front lines in their fox holes, cold and wet, with mud up to their ears.

"The good news is," my Commander's voice snaps me back to attention, "We will not be flying any missions on this day, nor on Christmas Day because bad weather conditions over our target areas have hampered the success of our missions."

This news is worthy of a celebration -- and celebrate we do! On Christmas Eve my crewmates and I go to the Squadron N.C.O. Club to join the Christmas festivities. I am not a drinker of alcoholic beverages, but my crewmates entice me to have a couple of Italian cherry brandies. The drinks are sweet and mellow, easy going down, easy going down, and before the festivities end, I have had more than a couple. We enjoy the party and at approximately 2400 hours, we leave the N.C.O. Club, trudge to our tent and hit the warmth of our

“sacks.” I don’t remember who undressed me as the cherry brandy had taken its toll. All is suddenly quiet, and we are all sound asleep. I snooze comfortably, secure in the knowledge that a well-deserved rest will follow.

WRONG!! At approximately 0300, the Company Clerk comes bursting into our tent and call out our names. Each of us respond, knowing that we will fly a mission on Christmas Day! “What happened to our day off from combat?” I ask myself. Later, during the day’s briefing, we are told that the weather is clear over the target area. We are briefed to bomb the Marshalling Yards of Brux, Czechoslovakia, located close to the border of Germany and north of Prague, Czechoslovakia.

Four hours of high altitude flying follow. We’re on oxygen and enduring extremely cold temperatures (-48 degrees C). Finally we arrive at Brux.

The target is completely obscured by cloud cover. the Group leader decides to bomb an alternate target -- the Wels, Austria Marshalling Yards. After another hour or so, we arrive over the target area. the weather is C.A.V.U. (ceiling and visibility unlimited). We hit the Marshalling yards with 92% accuracy, knocking it out. (Our Christmas present to Hitler and his gang!) Flak is scattered and moderate. Our escort fighters (P-38’s) are with us all the time. A Christmas present to us from the 15th Air Force Fighter Command, I assume.

As the events of Christmas Day 1944 unfold, I must say it’s not so bad after all. We all arrived back to our Base safely, and I earned my 11th mission and 19th Sortie.

If my luck holds out, I should finish my tour of duty by April.



CHATTER FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

Bob Karstensen

It’s again a case of lost members. Seems that from each mailing from this Headquarters I get a bunch of Post Office returns. This last mailing was no exception. Try as I will, using the Internet to relocate these members, I don’t seem to have much luck. Oh, I find a few, but the lag between, either the person relocating and having his new address posted on the Internet, or being listed in the Social Security Death Index, may not occur for months.

I have a theory on some of those lost. Many, because of age, are relocating closer to their children, or close family members. Or, maybe in a Nursing Home. Perhaps they’ve relocated several States from where I was mailing to, and not leaving a ‘Forwarding Address.’ Then too, the Post Office has a time limit on offering this Headquarters the new address, or for forwarding any mail; Bulk or First Class. Also, if the member is living with their offsprings, the Internet may not carry the same name as was previously listed in the phone book.

Another theory. The lag between the ‘death of death’ (DOD) of a member and when it gets put

into the Social Security Death Index on the Internet is also a waiting game. And it could be that some of our deceased may not have paid into Social Security, being a railway employee, or such, with other forms of retirement benefits. Thus, they are never listed.

Then I wonder that some are suffering from Dementia, or Alzheimer. That being the case, the next of kin may think that our mailings have little value to whom the mailing is intended and do not pass us the word.

Finally, there are member may have little interest in the ‘ol Group’ and what’s going on. “SO ... Why bother.”

In this regard, I’ll ask for your help in relocating the LOST. Any knowledge of the following listed names, would you please pass that information on to this Headquarters. I will now list them in alphabet order with Squadron number and last city of residence.

Armstrong, Harold L. - 724th - Fremont, WI
Beasley, Joseph I. - 725th - Oviedo, FL

Chiavelli, Ralph A. - 726th - Lakehurst, NJ
 Gerrity, Frank R. - 725th - Scranton, PA
 Gold, Leon - 726th - Congers, NY
 Grace, Joseph F. - 726th - Brewster, NY
 Henthorn, John R. - 727th - Beloit, WI
 Hipple, William F. - 726th - Southern Pines, NC
 Hoffman, Louis S. - 724th - Big Lake, AK
 Kearney, John L. - 724th - Hayden, ID
 Lackey, Homer E. - 726th - Edmond, OK
 Larson, Merle D. - 727th - Martinez, CA
 Lipkey, Lloyd H. - HDQ - Lake Placid, FL
 Markowitz, Anthony - 726th - Toms River, NJ
 Maybay, Duane C. - 724th - Irvine, CA
 McClure, Chris M. - 727th - Tucson, AZ
 McGinn, Willard O. - 724th - Garden City, KS

Moore, David S. - 726th - Sun City West, AZ
 Nicastre, John P. - 724th - Bristol, CT
 Reitz, Earl F. - 727th - Midland, TX
 Sherman, Edward J. - 726th - Wilton, CT
 Travis, Raymond T. - 727th - Augusta, KS
 Vorpahl, Wayne A. - 727th - Apopka, FL
 Ward, Hugh F. - 727th - Rosston, AR
 White, John S. - 726th - Waco, TX
 Withers, Theodore N. - 726th - Johnson City, TX

There you have it - some 27 that have been lost since the previous mailing. If you can assist in any way to find these "LOST SOULS," it would help make up for the 73 that I have listed in the following "Diminishing Ranks" column.

OUR DIMINISHING RANKS -- THEIR FINAL FLY-BY

REPORTED SINCE OUR LAST NEWSLETTER

Headquarters

Raymond R. Kaufman - 19 September 2006
 James B. Law - 5 April 2007

724th Squadron

Marvin B. Bassell - 11 May 2005
 Ronald F. Bluhm - 2 September 2003
 James J. Dougherty - 4 March 2006
 James R. Dublin, III - February 2008
 Robert B. Johnson - 14 March 2007
 Harry F. King - 17 July 2007
 Samuel H. Rosenblatt - 24 January 2008
 Francis S. Russell - 14 February 2008
 Paul F. Vanderpool - 13 May 2007
 John O. Winden - 26 April 2006
 William F. Womack - 22 October 2005
 William H. Woods - 12 November 2007

725th Squadron

Kent G. Blackman - 25 September 2006
 Ausby G. Brewer - 1 November 2007
 Xen K. Critchfield - 25 December 2007
 Darvin Friedland - 12 January 2008
 Milton Fineberg - 13 February 2007
 Charles M. Hawkins - 3 March 2008
 George Held - 12 March 2006

Albert P. Kienzle - 14 February 2008
 Stanley Kozdron - 21 January 2008
 Harvey R. Metsger - 8 November 2006
 William H. Meyer - 13 August 2005
 Samuel R. Miller - 30 October 2006
 William Puglielli - 6 May 2008
 Raymond A. Roethle - 25 December 2005
 Albert M. Sites - 12 September 2007
 Joseph Spalla - 10 March 2006

726th Squadron

Marvin A. Aschenbrenner - 5 June 2008
 George T. Barrett - 19 October 2005
 John C. Bownds - 2 January 2007
 Carl A. Bensinger - 29 December 2006
 Billy R. Bolin - 16 July 2007
 Jack E. Clifford - 13 March 2006
 John V. Cummings - 18 November 2007
 William C. Ershler - 7 June 2007
 Robert W. Finkle - 27 August 2007
 Homer E. Gardiner - 10 December 2007
 Jack M. Garrison - 5 February 2008
 Charles W. George - 20 December 2005
 Val R. Goldsmith - 16 August 2005
 Leon P. Gutierrez - 29 April 2007
 Benjamin A. Kramer - 4 June 2008
 Andrew J. Polarek - 26 September 2006
 George E. Sweeney - 6 September 2007

727th Squadron

William C. Booth - 6 May 2006

Allen R. Cast - 15 February 2007
 Robert A. Caven - 11 April 2006
 Stanley Cisz - 23 August 2007
 Leonard J. Dumas - 21 November 2007
 Kenneth Edwards - 14 April 2007
 William R. Glynn - 10 May 2008
 Harry W. Grater - 8 March 2007
 Daniel H. Greenberg - 2 December 2003
 Michael J. Haley - 20 March 2005
 William J. Kennedy - 12 March 2008
 Everett L. Kipp - 27 January 2007
 Raymond R. Kravetz - 22 November 2006
 Edward J. Leahy - 9 September 2005

Gordon C. Lingren - 15 May 2008
 William O. Newell - 16 March 2007
 Carmine J. Paceleo - February 2007
 Joseph M. Plaxco - 8 January 2008
 Roy M. Ritota - 30 November 2005
 William J. Rudolph - 2 January 2008
 Russell Ruoff - 28 January 2008
 Thomas J. Sullivan - 15 April 2008
 Keith J. Westphal - 30 May 2008

60th Service Squadron

John F. Brackett - 17 February 2004
 William R. Coles - 21 May 2007
 Joseph Zoldak - 1 August 2005

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

Joseph F. Arsenault, 725th - From Comrade,
 Harvey Brown
William R. Coles, 60th - From Sister, Marjorie
Perry M. Davie, 724th - From Wife, Nadine
Francis J. Fagan, 726th - From Crewmate,
 Harry Rohde
**Jack M. Garrison & Members of the Goosey
 Lucy Crew**, 726th - From Cindy (Feil) Arnevik
Philip Hershkowitz, 727th - From Wife, Lois
 & Children
Frank J. Lather, 727th - From Wife, Sally
Stanton Leiter, 725th - From Wife, Florence
Sidney S. Levenson, 726th - From Crewmate,
 Harry Rohde

Donald Milligan, 724th - From Wife, Phyllis
Terrell G. Prewitt, 727th - From Philip &
 Tracy Andrew
Edward B. Rasmussen, HDQ - From Daughter,
 Kaye
Alvin G. Reise, 725th - From Sons, David &
 Jeffrey
Forrest A. Rinehart, 727th - From Daughter,
 Janet
Samuel H. Rosenblatt, 724th - From Wife,
 Trudy
William J. Rudolph, 727th - From Crewmate,
 James Ivey
Oakley Waite, 725th - From Wife, Nita
Alphonse E. Witwicki, 726th - From Crew-
 mate, Harry Rohde
A. J. Woods, 725th - From Crewmate, Robert
 Campbell
To All 451st Veterans - From Nina Waite



REMEMBER

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

TECH SERGEANT LINDLEY MILLER'S MISSIONS

(Editor ... Upon receiving (former) T/Sgt AEG Lindley Miller's, 725th Squadron combat journal, and perusing it pages, I was reluctant to offer it in publication. I found too many inconsistencies and errors within its text. I reasoned that Lindley had put it together some time after the war, and was using limited diary entries and some mental recall of facts. I realize that as time goes by we have a tendency to enhance and create a more exciting story about our time while in combat. But the more I pondered on it, the more I was inclined to include it in the Ad Lib. Including it would give me a chance to add my footnotes (as I have them in my database) and set the record straight. Also to flesh out some facts to make it more historical to the reader. Lindley passed away in March of 2002, some two years after sending me his journal.)

His 725th crew consisted of:

George E. Tudor, Pilot

Gustave H. Meissner, Copilot

Nathan U. Feuerstein (aka Firestone) Navigator

Lindley G. Miller, AEG

Raymond L. Fisher, ROG

Harold D. Graham, Gunner

Ted S. Gosinski, Gunner

Dick L. Moreau, Gunner

Orville W. Richey, Gunner

June 22, 1944 - Trieste, Italy

On our first mission we set out to bomb Trieste, Italy. Our target was covered by an overcast; although we did get a lot of flak and saw five enemy fighters. We then set out to bomb our alternate target, Rimini; and hit our objective well. Our Squadron suffered no losses, but I took a hit in my top turret from a spent cartridge case.

June 23, 1944 - Ploesti, Romania

Today we set out to bomb the fields which contribute a major supply of oil to the Reich. We had excellent fighter coverage from P-

38's and saw only one enemy fighter. The flak over the target (250 guns) was terrific, and I really began to crouch down in my turret. I know they haven't made the bullet that can kill me; however, it's the flak that worries me, as it is often addressed "To whom it may concern." I saw one B-24 go down near the target and no chutes were seen. We hit the target well and could see dense black smoke billowing up to our altitude, We had an uneventful trip home during which I took a nap!

(Editor ... Although Sergeant Miller saw no parachutes from the aircraft in distress, it nevertheless had 9 survivors. The Aircraft, 41-29530 "AMERICAN BEAUTY," was piloted by 2Lt Charles W. McCutchen. Nose Gunner Francis J. Kluebert KIA)

June 25, 1944 - Avignon, France

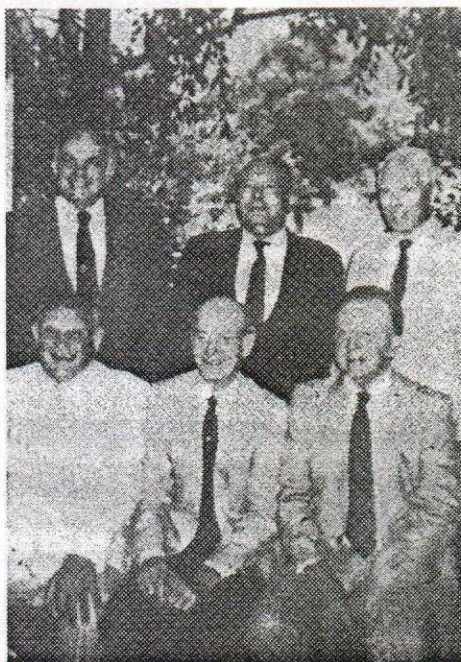
Today we set out to bomb the Marshalling Yards and Telephone Exchange Center at Avignon. We were told to expect moderate flak and a few enemy fighters. However, we never completed the mission as we were forced to turn back over Corsica because of bad weather.

June 28, 1944 - Budapest, Hungary

Our target today was the Oil Installations and Railway Yards at Bucharest. However, while over Yugoslavia we had to feather our number four engine because of a severe oil leak and were forced to abort the formation as we were unable to hold position, even after dropping out bombs. We expected to meet many fighters but only experienced heavy flak.

July 2, 1944 - Budapest, Hungary

Today we went after the Marshalling Yards and Oil Refineries in Budapest. The trip was uneventful until we arrived over the target. Many ships had previously



Seated L-R T. Gosinski, G. Tudor, R. Fisher
Standing N. Firestone, L. Miller, O. Richey
CIRCA - 1986

aborted because of various troubles, but ours worked fine. The target was already well bombed and when we had made our run I could see flames and black smoke up to an altitude of 20,000 feet. We witnessed some beautiful vapor trails from our ships and from numerous dog fights. Our escorts were P-51's from the 8th Air Force and some of our own P-38's. We saw many planes go down and one ME-109 made a pass at us but no harm was incurred on either side. The ME-109 is a superb ship and fast as hell. We could have encountered a lot of flak, but Intelligence had briefed us well and we were able to avoid most of it. The return trip saw moderate flak and a few enemy fighters. Beats the hell out of me as to where the vaunted "Luftwaffe" is hiding. Mission successful.

July 7, 1944 - Blechhammer, Germany

Today we set out on a good nine-plus hour mission to bomb the Reich's largest synthetic Oil Plant in Silesia. All the way up and back we were hit by the Luftwaffe, which was out in great strength. At one time we were attacked by some eighty odd twin engine fighters. Some of our bombers were hit, but between our own gunmen and our fighters (P-38's and P-51's) we accounted for many of them. Our Tail Gunner got two and shot at several others, but couldn't see any results. Our fighters hit many as they were taking-off from their bases, and it was wonderful to see. We hit the target well and smoke could be seen to rise high in the air. However, THEY had the target area covered by a dense smoke screen. The flak was amazingly accurate and intense and many bombers were lost at the target. After the target, one blew up close to us, just after the crew abandoned the aircraft. Its like we lost a neighbor.

(Editor ... According to my records that lost aircraft, 42-94808: named the "JESSE JAMES," was from the 724th Squadron and piloted by 2Lt Francis S. Russell. Of the crew of 10, 4 evaded and 6 became POW's. They were downed by German fighters.)

July 11, 1944 - Toulon, France

This morning we headed out to bomb the submarine pens at the great French Naval Base of Toulon. The flight was a long one and we sighted no enemy fighters. Our P-47 coverage was good and

the flak was light, but quite accurate. We passed over Corsica and could see the Swiss Alps quite clearly. We also saw Rome and Naples, guarded by Mt. Vesuvius. We had our Wing Commander, Colonel Lee along and he proved to be a swell guy. Won the Air Medal today.

July 14, 1944 - Petfurdo Oil Refineries, Hungary

Today our target was the Oil Refineries near Budapest, Hungary. This mission would have normally counted as a double sortie, but under the new Fifteenth Air Force regulations, it was only counted as a single. It seems we have to go to Munich or Vienna to get a double. The mission was uneventful. No fighters and very mediocre flak. However our wing tanks weren't serviced because of negligence and we sort of sweated out our fuel supply. I saw a B-24 land with its wheels up. It was a terrific crash which killed one.

(Editor ... I could only find one aircraft, 41-29238 named "SUSAN DIANE" from the 727th Squadron that was lost that day. No description of HOW it was lost, nor of any fatalities. It was removed from our inventory and sent to condemnation.)

July 16, 1944 - Wiener-Neusdorf, Austria

Today we went after the German aircraft engine factory near Vienna. This factory, it seems, makes 50% of all engines for the Luftwaffe. We were Lead Crew for our Squadron and we ran into a number of enemy fighters. I saw a B-24 spin in and blow up. I only saw one chute from that aircraft. These German fighters don't fool around; they hit and get the hell out before our fighters could catch them. A straggling bomber is just screwed and he might as well lower his gear and bail out. The flak was very intense and they tracked us using rockets for the first time. The target was covered by an overcast and we were forced to bomb by radar. I believe we hit the target well and had an uneventful trip home, during which we ate K-Rations.

(Editor ... The aircraft referred to as blowing up; 42-52087 "READY TEDDY," 726th Squadron, was piloted by Captain Francis L. Fort (KIA). Two of the 10 man crew managed to bail out and became POW's, while the rest were listed as KIA.)

July 18, 1944 - Friedrichshafen, Germany

Today we set out to bomb the Monzell-Dormier Aircraft works along Lake Constance in Freidmafen, the home of the German Zeppelins. We went to high altitude immediately because of the overcast and then headed towards our target thirty minutes later. This would mean we would miss our fighter escort and there were some 500 enemy fighters known to be in the area. B-17's hit our target first and sustained a loss of some 18 planes. I saw several go down. The flak was very heavy over the target and the guns were tracking us, rather than laying up a barrage. We hit our target well and had a beautiful trip home with spectacular scenery of the Alps and the Po Rover Valley in Italy. On this mission we used composition P-bombs, which are 50% more potent than T.N.T. One can imagine how we sweated our the take-off with 2,700 gallons of 100 octane gas and 6,000 Lbs. of bombs.

July 21, 1944 - Brux, Czechoslovakia

Today we traveled near to the Sudentenland to bomb a synthetic oil refinery which produced close to 50% of Germany's oil. We led the Group and very few enemy fighters were seen. However, the flak over the target was very intense and accurate and we got badly shot up. We had numerous holes in our plane and had the controls to our number two engine shot out. Four other ships were badly shot up; but, with luck we only had one shot down. On our return leg we ran into bad weather and had to go to 14,000 feet. Over Austria, we again ran into very accurate flak and we could hear it clapping against the sides of the plane. We were only about 2,000 feet above the mountains and would have been out of luck if we had lost another engine. We got back safely however, but several ships had to perform crash landings because of shot-out hydraulic lines or deflated tires. A very exiting trip, all in all, and we heard the results of our bombing were good. We were forced to bomb by radar because the Germans had the target well covered by a smoke screen.

(Editor ... Our records show no losses for that day. Perhaps it was from another Group that Miller saw that plane go down. As an addendum to his entry he notes the loss of a/c #42-72580, named

"GOOSEY LUCY." The Pilot of the a/c was 1LT Charles B. Morfit (KLD). There were only two survivors: Sgt's McGoldrick and Gumbert. Miller wrote: "Today, 22 July 1944 we lost a plane on take-off. It crashed and blew up with 6,000 lbs of bombs and 2,700 gallons of gas. I was at the crash site and saw several bodies afterwards and it was a horrible sight. Furthermore, it accentuated the risks we were taking, though few realized it. They think we only have to contend with flak and fighters; but, that's not the half of it.")

July 25, 1944 - Linz, Austria

Today we went to Austria to bomb the recently constructed Herman Goering Tank and Iron Works located on the south side of the Danube River. We were first attacked by some 150 German fighters, mostly FW-190's and ME-109's of the Goering famed yellow nose Squadron. The FW-190's came at us from 9 o'clock, but overshot and attacked the Group in front of us. We saw some 14 B-24's shot down, one bursting with flames right in front of us. Our Nose and Tail Gunner each got a fighter, but I didn't get off many shots as the fighters were below us. Our P-38's appeared to avoid contact with the FW's. They sat above us then turned to attack the ME-109's in the rear. The flak over the target was very heavy and accurate. We were hit in our number two and three turbos, losing a lot of power from those engines. We really demolished the target, mainly because of the fine work of our Bombardier who was recommended for the D.F.C. and was subsequently lost in action the next day. The fighters continued their attack during the flak and our group was recommended for the Presidential Citation because of this raid.

(Editor ... Although the Group may have been recommended for the Distinguished Unit Citation, none was awarded. In the case of the unidentified Bombardier that may have been recommended for the D.F.C., I have no record of this. That Bombardier was 1Lt Abbott Sydney (initially a member Captain Albert W. Johnson crew) and he was POW'd on the 26th of July while flying with the 2Lt William F. Schaidt crew on mission to Berat, Albania.)

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

July 28, 1944 - Ploesti Rumania

Again today we set out to bomb the great oil fields at Ploesti, one of Germany's chief source of oil. The flak over the target (now some 300 heavy guns) was intense and accurate, but in barrage form. We took numerous hits and on the return trip ran low on fuel and had all but decided to bail out over Yugoslavia. Instead we threw everything overboard; guns, ammo, flak suits, etc., and managed to get over the drink. We were the only plane to return to the Squadron today. It seems that the lead ship (a Mickey ship) carried only two bombs and we were forced to maintain a high R.P.M. and manifold pressure to hold position and stay up with him. The target was very well hit and I could see thick black smoke rising to an altitude of some 20,000 feet. Some of our planes were lost over the target, but others didn't get back to Base because of 'lack of fuel.' I flew Right Waist position today and liked it a lot.

(Editor ... On 28 July my records show that we lost 4 aircraft; 2 from the 724th Squadron - 42-523 78, 1Lt Frank Vernon, Pilot .. all crew returned to Base. Plus aircraft 41-28950, 2Lt Robert A. Duncan, Pilot .. all became POW's. The 725th Squadron lost 41-28933 (FERPS FINESCO), 2Lt Glenn A. Kerres, Pilot .. 3 POW'd, 7 EVADED. The 726th Squadron -41-29541 (ICE COLD KATIE II) 2Lt Jack G. Holtz, Pilot .. 9 EVADED, 1 POW.)

August 2, 1944 - Le Pontet Oil Storage Plant, France

Today we visited Southern France again. City was Avignon and we received a warm reception. We were out to hit the Oil Storage Plant, but they screwed us - No oil! The flak was relatively intense and quite accurate. Three aircraft in the High Flight were hit and one went down. It was a beautiful trip but very long and tiring. We took several hits, and I again flew Right Waist.

(Editor ... The one loss was from the 727th Squadron; A/c 42-64445 (PATSY JACK), 2Lt George S. Cappleman, Pilot .. 1 KIA, 9 EVADED, with the help of the French Resistance.)

August 6, 1944 - Miramar, France

Today we went up to France again. The whole Fifteenth and Twelfth Air Force combined to pull a

complete sweep before the impending invasion of Southern France. We were assigned the task of rendering useless the great Marshalling Yards at Miramar above Toulon. We hit our target well and the flak was relatively severe, but inaccurate. On the way back we saw hundreds of ships of all types, especially concentrated at Naples, preparing for the invasion. We were forced to land at Bari, Italy because of shortage of fuel - some 40 gallons per tank by our sight gauges (inaccurate) - and the weather had closed in on our field. We were relieved on landing as we were afraid our engines might cut out at any time.

August 15, 1944 - Frejus Beach Area, France

Well, today was D-Day for the invasion of Southern France and we once more set out to bomb gun emplacements, bridges, munition yards, marshalling yards, roads, etc. Our target was a road junction and marshalling yard just below the town of Frejus. We had to have split-second timing on our target as our troops were to move in ten minutes later. We hit our target well and right on time without any opposition from flak or enemy fighters. We toured Southern France and came out over San Ramo, Italy. There were numerous gliders and paratroops concentrated below us, and off shore were vast numbers of ships of all types. This was the largest invasion in history and it was exciting to be a part of it. At four o'clock that morning, B-17's headed for the invasion coast flying in formation. They appeared to be covered with phosphorous (probably moonlight reflecting) and they provided an eerie sight, especially since they kept shooting flames from their engines. Two of them locked wings and crashed in flames close to us. We also lost a B-24 from our outfit on take-off. She crashed on take-off and blew up killing many of her crew. All in all, it was a day of activity and spectacular sights. It reminded me of the fourth of July celebration.

(Editor ... The take-off incident Sgt Miller had to be referring to happened on 14 August, as no a/c were lost on the 15th. It happened to a/c 42-78102 (CANNON FODDER) piloted by 2Lt Wilbur F. Miller from the 726th Squadron. Of the crew of ten, four were KIA.)

August 18, 1944 - Alibunor Airdrome, Yugoslavia

Today we set out to bomb the airdrome in Yugoslavia near the Rumanian border. This trip was a finite "milk run." No flak, no enemy fighters. We carried anti-personal fragmentation bombs and covered the target well, hitting many grounded aircraft. No losses for a change. It was a swell raid, but pretty boring as an 'active' mission.

August 23, 1944 - Markersdorf Airdrome, Austria

Today we went after the Markersdorf Airdrome at St. Polten, thirty miles west of Vienna, Austria. We started in a six ship flight, but two of our planes had to abort over the Adriatic. The flight went along smoothly until we hit the I.P. Then we were jumped by some 150 German fighters - mostly FW-190's. Our number two ship, EXTRA JOKER, was hit by rockets and 20 mm shells and burst into flames, later blowing up. She was our plane, having named it, and it was really a horrible and terrifying sight to see her get it and to see the men crumpled up. I was flying Right Waist at the time and could see the whole incident. She flew on our wing for a while, like a Roman candle, and then dropped down below us and blew up. Then our number four man was badly hit and banked off towards five o'clock. They cut him in half at the ball turret. Then his wings flew off. She broke into pieces and no chutes were seen. A short while later our number three man was hit and went down with five chutes seen. Our Group lost eleven planes that day and the Air Force lost forty six heavies. Our crew got seven 'kills' that day and I was credited with an FW-190 destroyed. A short while later we were hit by intense and very accurate flak and took hits on the flight deck, bomb bay and ball and waist sections. With two 20 mm hits and over 150 flak holes, we limped home for a crash landing with a gas tank punctured by one 20 mm and our rudder hit by the other. Our whole waist was shattered and a whole

section was blown out next to the ball turret. It was a miracle none of us were hit. The target was well covered; I guess it was one of the most disastrous raids of the war and we were really lucky to get back. We also couldn't get our ball turret down, which was bad as we were open for attacks from below. It is ironical to note that it was only a few days ago that we were told that the Luftwaffe was through because of gas shortage. We were the only ship to return to our Squadron - 31 men lost out of 421 which is a 75% loss. Our Group lost 11 out of 22 planes. We were also attacked by German manned B-17. Everyone fired at her for a while and then she left escorted by 3 ME-109's and had two engines shot out. Our Group received a Distinguished Citation for this raid and Captain Tudor won the D.F.C. in recognition of a good job.

(Editor ... Upon researching the information I have on this Markersdorf mission, my records show 9 aircraft lost; at the target, near the target, or en-route back to our base at Castelluccio.

Those lost: from the 724th

42-51729, Pilot R.L. Beach - 2 KIA - 8 POW.
42-78523, Pilot J.H. Powers - 6 KIA - 5 POW.
42-78471, Pilot C.E. Donoghue - 4 KIA - 6 POW

From the 725th

42-7763, Pilot W.H. Malakowski - 10 POW
42-95379, Pilot K.A. Whiting - 10 KIA
42-78171, Pilot G.S. Panyity - 4 KIA - 6 POW

From the 726th

42-51334, Pilot H.S. Clapp - 1 POW - 8 EVADED
42-52429, Pilot A.R. Kozsuch - 10 EVADED

From the 727th

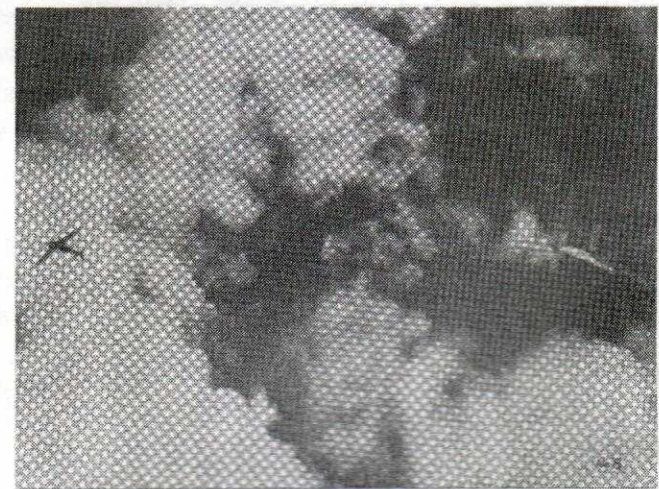
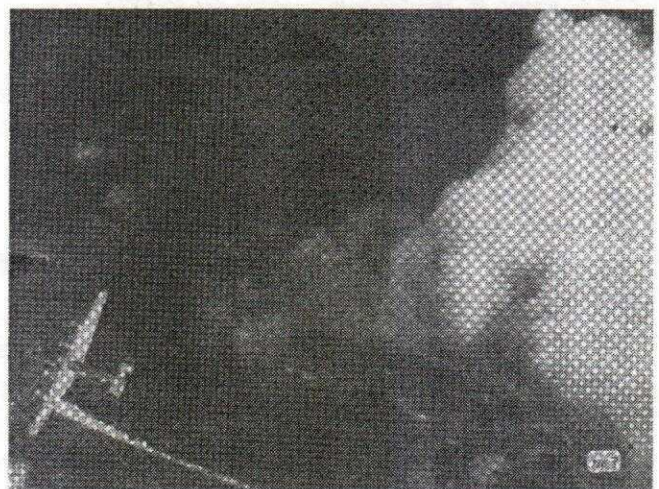
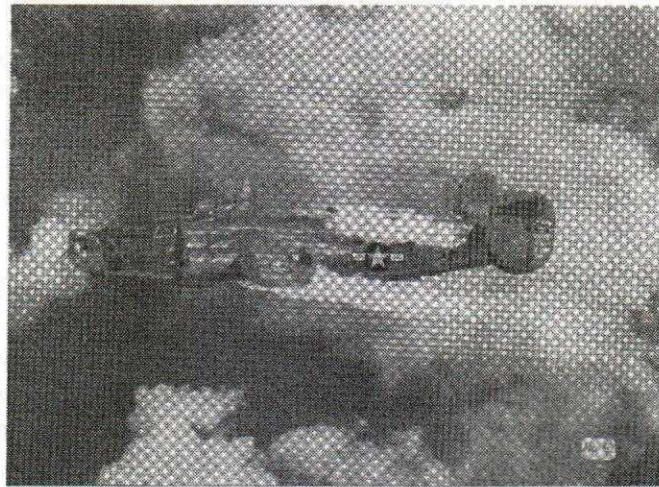
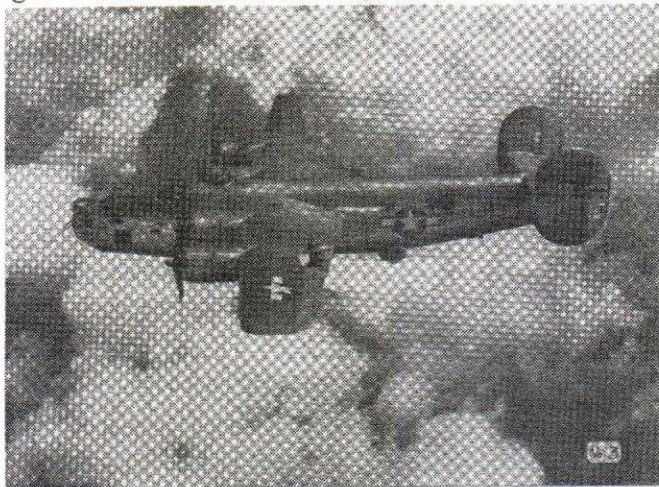
44-40196, Pilot R.J. Anderson - 4 KIA - 5 POW

Demise of the "EXTRA JOKER" follows on page 18.

As to total losses by the 49th Wing, I have no record of that.)

To be continued next issue.





All these photos were taken by Leo Stoutsenberger, Combat Photographer, flying with the crew that brought the EXTRA JOKER overseas and so named it. EXTRA JOKER was substituted as lead ship and flew as deputy lead because it carried the wrong bombsight for that particular mission. Its initial crew was that of Lt. George Tudor.



DEMISE OF A/C "HEY MOE"

By Charles Trumper

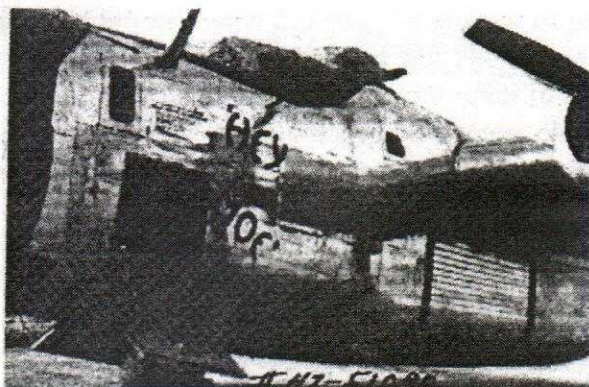
Dear Bob,

A while back, Harvey Brown, my Copilot, asked you for any information that you might have on "HEY MOE." The only information that you had at that time was that it had flown 67 missions in 69 days and that it had crashed. That joggled my memory to the extent that I remembered that shortly after takeoff, while being flown by another crew, the left wing had separated between the No. 1 and No. 2 engines. It appeared that a patch had been riveted to the main spar to repair battle damage and that it had come loose and caused the crash.

I have since secured some additional information about the crash, which I think you will find interesting. Back in March, I wrote to the Air Force Historical Research Agency at Maxwell Air Force Base to see if they had any records on 'MOE.' I have enclosed copies of the package I received from them which you might like to add to your archives. I have sent a copy to Harvey and I would have sent a copy to Ernie Cummins, had he not passed away. As you will recall, Ernie hitched a ride on 'MOE' back to the Base from Bari on the evening before the crash.

To me, the most interesting piece of information is the fact that the battle damage sustained to the left wing main spar, occurred as early as July 21st, and the report read, "The airplane had participated on 26 combat missions with a total of 288:50 hours since the wing was repaired." The report, probably, should have read "'and' 288:50 hours," because it must refer to the total hours from the repair until the crash. If it were just combat time it would make each mission over 11:00 hours long.

Another fact that I had never heard of at that time, was the indication of an electrical fire and the possibility of an internal explosion. Also, the skin was forced forward (not backward) when the wing separated. The report makes interesting reading.



"HEY MOE"
(42-51090)

It also lists the names of the ten crew members and one extra person, whom I must assume was the Gunnery Instructor. Though I do not recognize any of the names, the total number on board agrees with my recollection of the event. To the best of my knowledge, they were a new crew that had just arrived and had no combat experience. However, it appears that the First Pilot was well experi-

enced. He graduated from Cadet School in the class before me and had 949:20 total hours and 193:55 hours of B-24 time, so he was no neophyte. He was probably an instructor in the States.

(Editor ... The following is a brief synopsis of the Accident Report that 'Chuck' Paddock passed on to me.

(1.) LOCATION OF CRASH: 4 mi E Ortona, Italy -- (2.) DATE: 14 November 1944 -- (3.) TIME: 1224 -- (4.) TYPE & MODEL: B-24 H -- (5) A.F. No.: 42-51090 -- (6.) STATION: Castelluccio Air Field -- (7.) ORGANIZATION: Fifteenth AF, 451st Group, 725th Squadron

PERSONNEL

2Lt. William N. Sellers, Pilot (sometimes spelled 'Sellars' in the reports)

2Lt. Alfred A. Haynes, Copilot

2LT. David W. Huck, Jr., Navigator

2Lt. Harry F. Anderson, Bombardier

Sgt Lawrence W. Myrick, AEG

Sgt William H. Davis, ROG

Sgt Allen P. Fournier, Gunner

Sgt Richard W. Swain, Gunner

Sgt Eugene J. Colvard, Gunner

Sgt Robert W. Dennehy, Gunner

S/Sgt Clinton E. Cross, Gunner

All were listed as "FATAL." Term used in place of KIA since it was not a combat mission loss.)

Continued on page 20

DESCRIPTION OF ACCIDENT

Examination of the wreckage indicated that the left wing became separated from the aircraft while in flight. The left wing with number one engine was found approximately one-half mile from the remainder of the aircraft. The wing was broken off at a point between number one and number two engine at station number ten. The break extended from the leading to trailing edge of the wing through reinforcement plates on the lower surface of the wing where sometime previous flak damage had occurred.

Detailed inspection of the section of wing which broke loose showed the skin was forced outward. This, along with the indication of a small electrical fire in number two engine nacelle, and with the clean shearing of the rivets on the patch would seem to indicate the possibility of an internal explosion with an immediate break occurring rather than a gradual weakening of the wing.

Subject airplane was repaired by the 60th Service Squadron for flak damage received on 21 July 1944. Subject airplane had participated on twenty-six combat missions with a total of 288:50 hours since wing was repaired.

In the opinion of the accident board it is impossible to determine the exact cause of the accident since the airplane was completely destroyed.

RESPONSIBILITY

100% Material Failure

(Signed by) James B. Knapp, Colonel Air Corps .. Jack Reichenbach, Major Air Corps .. Clyde L. Wagner, Major, Medical Corps .. Francis J. Hoermann, Major, Air Corps - Aircraft Accident Officer.

MEDICAL OFFICER'S REPORT

(In brief, offering Pilot and Copilot's medical review)s

Pilot Name - Sellers, William N.; ASN 0-813073 - Age; 27 - Rating; Pilot

Total Pilot Hours; 949:20 - Number of Precious Accidents; None - Date Last Physical Exam.; 21/Aug/44

- History of Physical or Nueropsychic Defects; None

Copilot Name- Haynes, Alfred A.; ASN 0-777667 - Age;- 27 - Rating; Copilot

Total Pilot Hours; 484:35 - Number of Previous Accidents; None - Date Last Physical Exam.; 21/Aug/44 -

History of Physical or Neuropsychic Defects; None



PADDOCK CREW

Standing, L-R: Taylor [AG], Jackson [AG], Milnor [ROG], Seigel [AG], Barden [AG], Bonney [AEG]

Kneeling; Brown [Copilot], Trumper [Pilot], Shumard [Bombardier], Christensen [Navigator]

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



James W. L. Park, 727th [PILOT: AIR-CRAFT COMMANDER]

As the pilot of 'Con Job' I enjoyed the log that Ray Kravetz kept. I had no idea that he was doing this. I kept a flight log book and mostly we agreed on missions.

I regret to inform you that Ray passed away on November 22, 2006. His wife, Sylvia, notified me by mail sometime after his demise.

Ray had another role on my crew: he related to the Enlisted Men in a very personal way and worked to solve their complaints.

(Editor ... Another case of too little, too late. Ray's journal surfaced [from my material collection] shortly prior to the recent Ad Lib. I included it not knowing of his demise. It wouldn't have made much difference as I thought it was a very informative bit of 451st history.)

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

Over the past few years I have been corresponding with, and finally spoke with, Harvey Brown who lives in Lake Elmo, MN.

Somehow, out of the blue, Harvey contacted me and noted that on August 22, 1944, he was in formation with our B-24 and gave me his account as to what happened to our plane after it was hit by a ME-109. His observation was quite detailed and actually was the best report of what happened to our plane: noting the explosion and parachutes observed, etc. It was the best reconstruction of that incident that I have found.

(Editor ... I was pleased to hear that Harvey was able to give you an eye-witness account of what you endured that day. His accounting was, of course, from an outside perspective. The inside situation must have been even worse with 10 of those aboard listed as KIA. In all, we lost 5 aircraft that day.)

Robert Roberts, 724th [BOMBARDIER: CHARLES L. SMITH'S CREW]

I can understand why the next reunion might be

the last. I have not attended any reunions for quite some time now. For awhile I was traveling in the wrong part of the country at the time of the reunion. I have not traveled at all for the last four years as my constant doctor appointments have not left much free time to travel. My eyes and ears are not anywhere as good as they once were and all the joints are sub-par, too.

(Editor ... Sorry to hear of all your infirmities are keeping you from enjoying your old lifestyle. I recall that 'traveling' was your thing. I remember that at the Norfolk reunion you parked your motor home across the street from the hotel ... with permission of the lot owner, of course.)

Sherman O. Shields, 726th [INTELLIGENCE S-2]

Enclosed is a token, not adjusted for inflation. Sorry about that. Glad to see that you are still out and about - keep it up. I'm sure everyone appreciates your efforts on our behalf.

Was thankful to see that Albert Roemer is still with us. I don't recognize too many of the other names anymore, but everything about the 451st is of interest.

(Editor ... Your (non-adjusted for inflation) donation was warmly received. It's hard to explain how much it helps our cause. Now if some of the others felt as you do about our past affiliation with our wartime entity, they'd get off their 'duffs' and help support us, too.)

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

At this stage in our lives, I didn't really know if another issue of the Ad Lib would be forthcoming. But to my pure delight, Ad Lib #43 was deposited in my mailbox on 2 January 2008. I knew then, I would have some interesting days ahead reading it. I regret I don't have any real exciting stories to tell of my days in the 724th. I just flew my 26 missions and was able to return to my home. Nevertheless, they are very much imbedded in my memory.

(Editor ... What can I say ... Memories are

about all that's left; except for our visits with our doctors and trying to abide by their wishes. As to the Ad Lib, I'll try and keep it airborne as best I can. Your annual donation is a great help.)

Gerald L. Honaker, 724th [GUNNER: MARTIN UHL'S CREW]

You have created a fine legacy by keeping these civilian-soldiers together for almost 70 years. Soon WWII will be known only in the history books and video tapes. Our personal experiences will disappear. I had so many things happen in France, behind the lines and on the long march from Nuremberg to Mooseberg as a POW, that I have told no one because some actions were harsh to save my life and others were acting out of anger at the German people who had allowed the war to happen.

(Editor ... Thanks for the 'kudos' on my efforts in keep us as a 'wartime family.' It has always been my pleasure to work with you guys in keeping the 451st a viable organization.

As to your time as a POW, I can only commiserate with you as I made it through my missions okay. But, on that fateful day, 29 December 1945 (over Udine, Italy) our crew lost our Radio Operator, T/Sgt Anthony Paonessa, who was flying as your Replacement Gunner that day. Like you say, our history will soon be forgotten and the only links will be some old and yellowed newsletters, such as ours, stuck away in someone's closet. P.S. Thanks for the donation to further our cause.)

Sallie J.E. Elliott, Complimentary Member [COL. EATON'S DAUGHTER]

We were sorry to hear that you had to back out of the 451st biennial reunion. We can well understand the reasons. It was nice that someone stepped forward and that the event will go on! We do hope it is a success.

You do (and have done) so much for the Group over the years and it is wonderful that you'll continue writing the "Ad Lib" newsletter. We really do look forward to receiving it and love reading the articles. We hope our contribution check will help you to continue the good work!

(Editor ... Thanks for your support, both financially and morally. Its been a blessing having you and your husband, Earle, as part of our post war membership. Give my regards to your brothers, Henry and Bob.)

George E. Tudor, 725th [PILOT: AIR-

CRAFT COMMANDER]

I was wondering if you knew that Lindley Miller, our Flight Engineer was partially blind. Most of the time his vision was 20-20. I didn't know it until one mission when a bunch of Germans came at us from 10 o'clock high. I called Miller, who was in the Upper Turret, "Where are they?" He couldn't locate them.

Some years prior to the war his parents had sent him to Switzerland to school. While there he had gotten involved with a new process for making contact lens' from glass. And he was fitted with some. Back in the States he got into the Air Force wearing those lens'. He could only keep them on for a short time. So now our lookout in the Upper Turret is blind most of the time to what was taking place. I moved him to the Waist Position in the back and put Teddy Gosinski in the Upper Turret.

A mission that I clearly remember was on the August 15th invasion of Southern France. The whole Air Force was there. There was a long line of planes bombing the coastal gun installations. We were moving so slowly it was hard to stay behind the planes ahead. I had to keep pulling back on the throttles. The anti-aircraft shells were going off all around us. Finally I had to just about pull the throttles off. When I did that, Gosinski shouted into the intercom, "JESUS CHRIST, DON'T STOP HERE." We all had a good laugh over that.

(Editor ... Funny, George, that you bring up Lindley Miller's name. I was going through some Journals that had been sent me from our membership. Lindley's Mission Record came to my attention. I am including it, starting in this issue, for the benefit of our members. Oddly, I see that Lindley ended up in the Korean War and became a 1st Lieutenant, regardless of any sight deficiency. I also noted that Lindley passed away in March of 2002 after serving in the Military, and in civilian life as a Lawyer, Judge and a Financial Advisor.)



Interludes and Visions

By Bob Karstensen

The die is cast, the bell has rung,
the parade has ended, its finale sung.
The engines have "shut down" one by one.
The cockpit is empty, its job now done

But wait,... is that cockpit really still?
Don't you hear the cadence of a check-list drill?
Can't you hear the starter begin its whine;
can't you see the props, cut an arc so fine?

Does your body recoil at the noise you hear,
as those four big engines put a charge in the air?
Can you sense the power that's the pilots' tool
when he "walls" the throttles to "pour on" the fuel?

Do you feel the tension, or has it dimmed by time,
when you sat by the runway, all revved and prime;
and to know the pilot, on the final roll,
is lining er'up, with his rudder control?

Can you feel the drama, as you lift and climb,
n' search for your leader; fighting the time?
Can you see the earth slip away 'neath our wings,
and not remember just some of these things?

Does the tone of those voices, spoke in haste, not in dread,
give an uneasy feeling of what lies ahead?
Could that knot in your stomach return once again,
to the words, "I see fighters...keep an eye on 'em men!"

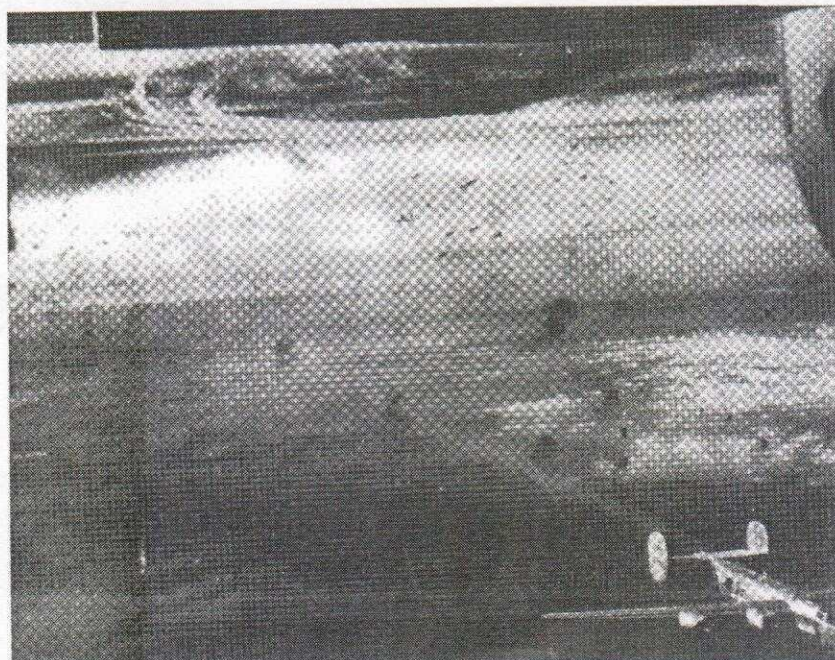
Would the smell of raw cordite, in that high atmosphere,
give you feelings of anger, or tremors of fear?
Could you forget the numbness of the subfreezing cold,
would your blood run hot, from these visions retold?

Would you still feel compassion, for the ship and its men,
who are drifting away, trailing smoke without end?
Do your thoughts still evoke those pleas turned to shouts,
"Tom's ship really had it!....why don't they bail out?"

Do you still count the chutes, as you did way back then?
"...that's seven and eight..... com'on nine and ten!"
Does your mind still consider, "If that had been me,
would my comrades remember, would my folks pray for me?"

So, could a look in the cockpit that is empty and still,
brings back shadows of comrades, dangers, and thrills.
Tho we close down the hatch, turn away engines' roar,
but forget what has happened?..

I can guess, nevermore.





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