

# ★ 451 ★ AD-LIB

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

ISSUE 10

MARENGO, IL

## GENERAL EATON AMENDS MARKERSDORF RAID

*(The editor is deeply indebted to Major General Robert E. L. Eaton, USAF Retired, 1st Commanding Officer of the 451st Bombardment Group, for his interest and effort in clarifying certain errors that were printed in regards to the Markersdorf Airdrome Mission of 23 August 1944. (Issue 9 — AD-LIB) The editor, in his researching, thought he had obtained a total and accurate accounting of the facts, as on file in the Albert F. Simpson Research Center, Maxwell AFB, Alabama, but as the following two letters from General Eaton will show, all the facts were not at hand. My apologies to the brave men that participated, and I may have slighted in the past accounting. And my thanks to General Eaton for his fine recapping of the event, and for not "chewing me out" as could have been expected in more adverse times....Bob K., Editor)*

### THE OVERALL PICTURE

July 27, 1983

Dear Bob:

I have received the recent copy of the publication, "451st AD-LIB" and have read it with considerable interest. First, I would like to congratulate you and those responsible for getting out such items. On a nostalgic basis, they are of great interest and those who work at putting them out merit our deep appreciation.

In this instance, the description of the Markersdorf Raid is extremely interesting, but I find some errors in the account. Perhaps the most important one relates to who led the Group on that occasion. As you perhaps know, normally command of the Group on a particular raid rested by rotation with the Commander of the Squadron furnishing the lead box — in this case, Ted Walkey. The Commander routinely rode as co-pilot so that he could devote full attention to executing the duties of command, and the flying of the airplane rested with the pilot who was usually the pilot of the best lead crew available. Before taking command, I had taken the B-24 Instructor Standardization Course and was convinced that the



1944  
M/Gen. Nathan F. Twining, 15th AAF Commander  
Col. Robert E.L. Eaton, 451st BG Commander

demands of flying the airplane were such that one pilot could not at the same time fly the airplane effectively and properly exercise command. In our Group normally the lead-navigator was the Squadron Navigator and the lead-bombardier was the Squadron Bombardier — all this is properly reflected in the write-up which I assume is based on the file copy of the flimsy.

When the Group Commander flew as leader, the pilot of the lead airplane of the lead flight Squadron flew the airplane with the Group Commander in the co-pilot's seat. The Group Navigator and the Group Bombardier (Byers and Hughes) normally accompanied the Group Commander and performed in their capacities in the lead. By 15th Air Force orders the Group Commander was limited to four leads per month and I regularly led only when our Group led the Wing. After my four missions each month the Group Operations Officer (Leland Younkin) flew the lead command posi-

tion when by rotation our Group led the Wing. To clarify the record, although on this mission we were not in the Wing lead, for reasons not relevant here, I elected to lead the Group. The airplane originally scheduled in Number 2 position flown by Lieutenant Eckenroth (misspelled in the account, "Echenoff") and his crew was changed to the lead airplane. The airplane was originally scheduled to fly on the wing of the Squadron Commander's airplane with the Squadron Operations Officer riding in the co-pilot's position and acting as Deputy Group Commander. In accordance with normal procedure, in this mission I rode in the co-pilot's seat and Byers and Hughes took over as Navigator and Bombardier. Walkey, acting as Deputy Group Commander, and his crew flew on our wing. Your write-up does not reflect this change in the operations order. For obvious reasons, the accuracy of the particular article is of considerable interest to me and to those who flew on the mission and I bring up this matter only to assure that the history of the 451st is accurate.

On this occasion the objective of our Wing mission was diversionary. We were to make an attack on Markersdorf Airfield before the main body of the 15th Air Force attacked the oil refineries and other major targets in Vienna. Our diversionary role was a complete success since we absorbed all the enemy fighter attack allowing the main thrust on Vienna by the remainder of the 15th Air Force to operate without significant fighter opposition. As we approached the target area we were above a broken cloud deck in close formation behind the 484th. The 461st screwed around and allowed a cloud to come between them and the formation so that they lost their position as 3rd group in the formation. Therefore, they attacked the correct target several minutes later than we did. As we approached the I.P., Byers (the Group Navigator) called to my attention that the 484th had not properly identified the target and were about to head for a vacant field or some other place. My instructions to him were precise... "Hang on as long as you can, but peel off when our turning to the correct target becomes

(Con't Page 2, Col. 1)



**"AD-LIB"**

451st Bomb Group, Ltd.  
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TAX EXEMPT # 36 307 0772

**Eaton Amends (con't)**

jeopardized." This is what we did and head-  
ed towards the correct target. Our rear was,  
of course, uncovered because the 461st was  
lost and the enemy began their main attack  
as we began the bomb run.

Previous to that, a few enemy fighter  
airplanes had come through the overcast  
and all of our friendly fighter cover had  
dived after them. The enemy fighters went to  
the deck, drawing our fighters down in pur-  
suit. Hence, we had no fighter cover. My  
frantic efforts to raise our fighters after the  
enemy attack began (radio silence was no  
longer important) were of no avail. I called  
the tail-gunner in our airplane to find out if  
we were strung out and his answer was, "We  
are so close I can reach out and touch  
them." Hence, the attack was not generated  
by poor performance on our part in any  
respect. The remainder of the article is  
essentially accurate. Of great importance to  
the success of the mission was the perfor-  
mance of Byers, the Group Navigator, who  
early on picked up the error of the 484th in  
not properly identifying the target, and that  
of the Group Bombardier, "Honest"  
Hughes, who demonstrated great strength at  
a most critical time. The performance of  
Lieutenant Eckenroth in flying the lead  
airplane was flawless throughout.

As you may also know, I was subsequently  
Deputy Director of Operations in General  
Spaatz's headquarters in London and Paris  
and learned more about the operation of the  
German Luftwaffe's "Storm Group." The  
Luftwaffe only had one such crack Group  
and it moved about in Germany depending

on their overall strategic defence require-  
ments. I learned that at Markersdorf the  
451st was treated to one of that Group's ef-  
forts. The methods of their attack were gen-  
erally as the article described. The 109's  
were top cover and the waves consisted of  
190's. The 190's came in from slightly above  
so that the pilot was protected by the radial  
engine and armor on the bottom of the air-  
plane (the 109's had liquid cool engines). As  
they came through our Group we saw them  
roll over, turn upside down and go straight  
down to regroup later in smaller flights to  
work on our cripples and stragglers. Their  
maneuver was to take advantage of their ar-  
mor which was on the bottom of the air-  
plane, but not on the sides. History has  
shown it was a very effective Unit, brilliantly  
led and manned by the highest calibre per-  
sonnel in the German Air Force at that time.

My comments on the article are intended to  
set the record straight and in no way are  
meant to detract from the performance of  
Ted Walkey and all the other fine men in-  
volved or the honor of our comrades who  
sacrificed their lives in the Raid. Just to have  
been there constituted bona fide qualifica-  
tion as a hero. In the matter of awards, the  
15th Air Force had determined that I was not  
eligible for more Silver Stars. Their words  
were, "In order to qualify for another Silver  
Star, Colonel Eaton has to get killed." Un-  
der those conditions, I was not anxious to get  
another Silver Star! We gave the Silver Star  
to the pilot of the lead airplane — Lieutenant  
Eckenroth. I am not certain, but I think that  
Byers and Hughes were under the same lim-  
itation as to additional gongs and recom-  
mendations for additional awards probably  
failed to get approval at 15th Air Force.

In the matter of getting this Distinguished  
Unit Citation through and thus, properly re-  
cognizing the efforts of the Group as a  
whole, the maneuver was orchestrated by  
our swift-footed Ground Executive, Don  
Jones. The Wing put in for the Award and  
the defending papers were probably pre-  
pared by Don Jones. Since I had already ex-  
ceeded my number of missions for the  
month allowed under 15th Air Force re-  
strictions, the originally submitted opera-  
tions material probably and intentionally left  
the change in Group lead out of the record.  
Hence, the recommendation for the Distin-  
guished Unit Citation probably went for-  
ward without reflecting the change in opera-  
tions order which is clearly reflected in my  
personal flight records.

After the people in Naples announced the  
award of our Citation for this Raid, the War  
Department sent out a message to all The-  
aters that too many Unit Citations were be-  
ing given out. Naples' solution to that was to  
"deep six" this particular Citation. When I  
came home from the European Theater of  
the War in May 1945 I was assigned Execu-  
tive in Personnel at Air Force Headquarters  
(the staff section which handled awards).  
One of my first acts was to query the Air  
Force Headquarters in Naples as to the stat-

us of the particular Award. They hastily dug  
it out and forwarded it to the War Depart-  
ment where it was appropriately confirmed  
and issued in War Department orders.

I hope that my comments are helpful in re-  
calling the story of this outstanding perfor-  
mance by our Group.

Sincerely,

ROBERT E. L. EATON  
Major General, USAF (Ret.)

cc's: Thomas E. Walkey  
Leland A. Younkin  
Lynn J. Bartlett



1982  
M/Gen. Robert E.L. Eaton USAF (Ret.)

September 16, 1983

Dear Bob:

I received your letter of August 5th and have  
been delayed in my response to it because  
of some individual ongoing research relat-  
ing to the Markersdorf Mission.

After writing you the very precise letter de-  
scribing exactly how "the cow ate the cab-  
bage" I began to have doubts as to the iden-  
tity of the bombardier on the Mission. In  
pursuit of the matter, I obtained a copy of  
"Honest" Hughes' flight record and find that  
indeed he was not the bombardier. I then  
talked to General Davis, the 726th Squad-  
ron Bombardier, by telephone and he con-  
firmed that he was the bombardier, as I  
at that point had begun to remember, and  
we agreed that Byers, the Group Navigator,  
was the navigator on the Mission.

This corrected information in no way takes  
away my credit to "Honest" Hughes for the



many fine missions on which he performed in an outstanding manner. He only flew one mission after that date, finishing him up, and he departed for the States. At that point General Davis succeeded him as Group Bombardier. The outstanding performance which I attributed to "Honest" Hughes on this Mission certainly applies to General Davis who kept his "cool" on the bombsight destroying the target when airplanes were falling out of the sky all around him. All the other things I said about the Mission remain firmly correct.

As to publishing my letter in your next bulletin, you have my permission provided you also publish this letter straightening out my faulty memory.

Best wishes and congratulations on your continuing efforts.

Sincerely,

ROBERT E. L. EATON  
Major General, USAF (Ret.)

*The previous description, as offered by General Bob Eaton, gives us the TOTAL PICTURE, as would be seen from the Command position in the lead ship. But for as many aircraft that participated in the Markersdorf Raid, there are as many stories that can be told.*

*One that crossed my desk and merits a retelling, is that encountered by Chester Ennis, flying his first mission in the capacity of co-pilot with an experienced pilot, Harvey Clapp. As you may, or may not, be aware it was normal procedure for a new, or unexperienced aircraft commander to receive his baptism into combat by flying a couple missions with a qualified and experienced veteran pilot. Thus it was that Chester tasted his first encounter with the enemy. After reading the following letter, I'm sure we'll all have to agree that from that mission on, the rest of the tour would have had to be anticlimactic.*

#### THE INDIVIDUAL PICTURE

20 August 1983

Dear Bob,

I was extremely happy to receive Issue 9 of AD-LIB, in which you had a review of the mission of August 23, 1944. It was my "BIG" mission, my first. Though I am not mentioned by name, I was there!

Since it was my first mission, I was assigned to fly as co-pilot with Harvey Clapp, in the 726th Squadron formation. Notice from your write-up that we were the first ones hit. We were flying #5 in the squadron formation, which put us ahead and above the formation containing "Extra Joker," so we were gone by the time the

much published pictures of that plane were taken. There are some slight inaccuracies in the story you printed, but nothing very serious. Our tail was not shot off, but nearly so. Our rudders were practically gone. We fell sideways for 3000 feet before Harvey and I could get control of the airplane, then, flying in a twenty to thirty degree bank, we were able to stay in the air for approximately an hour before bailing out over the island of Krk, just south of Trieste. Though there were nine chutes out of the airplane, they could not have been observed from the Group formation.

The story of our survival and eventual return to duty is a story in itself. We lost one crewmember who panicked and bailed out early, landing in water between islands. To this date, I don't know what happened to him. The other eight of us survived and returned to base after a week with the Yugoslav Partisans. We had four wounded. Corporal Manuel R. Sanchez, a member of my own crew, nearly lost a foot when the fighters hit his ball turret before he got it into the down position. Still, Sanchez took over a waist gun and got two fighters, then bailed out with the foot hanging by the Achilles tendon and wearing two tourniquets. After landing, he cut off the foot and threw it away. For the following six days, I was his doctor. I knew very little about what to do for him, but managed to keep him alive. We were rescued by a Catalina and returned to Foggia. Sanchez was awarded a Silver Star for that mission, which to that date was the second highest award given for a first mission. Of the aircraft lost that day, we were the only ones to return to the unit.

I am sorry to say that I lost contact with Sanchez in 1949, but he survived to that time and was using an artificial leg. I keep watching for his name to appear on one of your lists, since I would like very much to renew contact with him.

I have stayed in touch with Harvey Clapp, actually drove to Missouri five years ago for a get-together with him, thanks to your publications of address lists. On the same trip, I visited in New Mexico with Ed Walkey, who was the Deputy Lead for the Group that day and who first put me in touch with your organization. Ed was our Squadron Commander at the time. From Ed, I got prints of three of the pictures of "Extra Joker," and had negatives made. I will be glad to lend you those negatives if you can put them to any use. I believe one of the pictures shows the airplane in which I was flying, though I can neither prove nor disprove it. The pictures I have are different from the one you published. They were taken while "Extra Joker" was in position on George Tudor's right wing.

I send my sincere thanks to you for your efforts in keeping all of us informed on the old unit. I enclose a check to help with the costs.

Sincerely,

Chester H. Ennis

*(Corporal Manuel R. Sanchez has been very recently located, and the identity of the "unknown crewman" has been verified. He was nose gunner Corporal John J. Pelcher, of Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. By the facts found in the Missing Air Crew Reports, he was rescued from the waters between the islands of Krk and Cherso by Italian soldiers, and imprisoned. The present location of John Pelcher is unknown. . . . Editor)*

#### AND FROM HARVEY S. CLAPP (Pilot of the aforementioned aircraft)

The report on page 4 (issue #9, AD-LIB) of losses on the Markersdorf raid interested me. I was the pilot on one of the planes shot down. As a matter of fact, we did not bail out as told in the report — we were badly shot up, but were able to keep the plane in the air, diving into the clouds after feathering #2 and jettisoning the bombs. We limped back to Yugoslavia, lost another engine, and then bailed out. All but one crew member, returning to Italy courtesy of Tito's underground. It was a most interesting adventure, but we safely returned to Italy and I soon flew again, completing my 35 missions in November 1944.

#### COMMENTS FROM JOHN E. LAHEY (1st Lt., Navigator)

. . . . I also read with interest about Mission #109 to Markersdorf A/D. This was my 8th mission and is a little hard to remember the details, but my memory says that I flew as nose gunner to assist Woody Davis (Bombardier) in target identification. It is also my recollection that Colonel Eaton flew as Command Pilot in that plane. Also, I find it hard to believe that Harvey Clapp was MIA after that raid. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT HARVEY WAS NEVER AWAY FROM THE OFFICER'S CLUB, ALL THAT LONG.

#### "84" DAYTON REUNION GAINING MOMENTUM

History is about to repeat itself. From the notes and letters received, we're going to have a good attendance, again. Most everyone is marking their calendars for the dates of 10 thru 12 August 1984. Many are making contact with crewmembers and buddies to assure their desire to attend. Just so your not disappointed that your buddy didn't make it, why don't you do your contacting, NOW!

A new innovation will be introduced at this reunion. We have engaged a professional photography company ("Reunions") out of Orlando, Florida. Their method of operation is to "set-up" a backdrop, and to photo each couple (or individual) during established hours during part of the reunion. They will also take "candid" shots during some of our special events. These, along with whatever pictures we may wish to offer, will be put into

(Con't Page 4, Col. 1)



## Dayton Reunion (con't)

"quality" pamphlet form and offered to our members at a cost of around \$10. I have seen samples of this company's product, and find the results to be of merit and quality. They use a layout of our own design, with stiff cover and high grade picture pages. So, be prepared to be photographed. . . . You'll be on Candid Camera.

Although many of our details have not been finalized, we have received word from General James P. Mullins, Commander, Air Force Logistics Command, that he will offer us whatever facilities we may need to fulfill our reunion requirements. The Air Force Logistics Command is located at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, close by to Dayton, Ohio.

A letter of welcome and cooperation was also received from Colonel Richard L. Uppstrom, Director of the Air Force Museum. He has pledged to work with our committee in making our visit one of memory and interest.

Final instructions and information on attending the Reunion, will be forthcoming in the next newsletter.

## MEMORIAL WORK CONTINUES

Much of the important work has been accomplished, regarding our planned Memorial Dedication at the Air Force Museum. Under the dedicated supervision of Bob Horn (726th) a healthy, well shaped Tulip Tree (member of the Magnolia family) has been planted. The tree, now well established, was planted early last spring, allowing its roots ample time to become established in its new soil. Bob has maintained a close watch, from the time of planting, to see that no injury or disease should befall it.

Bob has also seen to the casting of our Memorial Plaque. With appropriate wording supplied by this office, Bob has "walked" the casting through the many phases of approval, by the Museum, and the Dayton Stencil Works, from where the plaque was purchased. The plaque is now finished and in the care of Bob Horn. It will be installed, at the site, prior to our Memorial Ceremony.

Another avenue of historic merit, that is being explored by this office, is to gain a listing of all the members of the 451st Bomb Group that were Killed In Action, or died while serving in the 451st. This may, on the surface, sound like a simple task. You would think that a simple phone call, or letter, to the right department in Washington, or other "keepers of the archives," would bring these names forth. But NO, I have found NO department, anywhere in the nation, that has a complete and accurate listing of our KIA's. But in my research I have found several departments that do offer different portions of what I requested.

In the Air Force Museum Research Center, Dayton, Ohio, we have uncovered a

volume set of books, entitled Register of WW-II Dead. These list those that are still interred in overseas military cemeteries, or listed as Missing In Action, with their names engraved on the WALLS OF THE MISSING. These books do not list those that were re-interred back in the States, at the request of family, after the war. We do have a small committee established in Dayton that are going through the books, page by page, gleening such information as necessary to fulfill part of our search.

In another direction, I have managed to obtain a listing of all aircraft that were lost due to combat operations. From this list of more than 114 "lost" aircraft I have gained the Missing Air Crew Report (MACR) numbers. And with these numbers I am working towards obtaining all the reports, and from them to glean more of our KIA's. In this venture I have enlisted 19 of our senior grade retired officers to request 6 MACR's, since if I requested them they would come in allotments of six only, and the next six would only be issued upon a new request. My thanks to the gentlemen who, without hesitation, came to my aid when I was sorely in need.

Still more help has come from my Congressman, Tom Corcoran, 14th Congressional District, Member of the United States House of Representatives. Congressman Corcoran, when told of my dilemma, offered to work in our behalf. He has, since our first communications, made available to our effort, the facilities of the Personnel Division, St. Louis, Missouri. This section of the government archives are reviewing our MORNING REPORTS and recording those names we seek. My thanks to Tom Corcoran for his interest and ability.

In all, even with three sources of information, I have found that none are all that complete, or correct. It will be my job, when all names are assembled, to verify each list of names against the other lists. And when I encounter a name in question, the Veterans Administration, Washington, D.C. has volunteered to check that name against their alphabetical listing of deceased veterans.

Now with all that effort, from all those sources, it would seem that a complete and accurate listing could be compiled, and hopefully it will. But the fear of omitting one, just one, of our brave comrades, puts me in a mood of apprehension. I don't want to fail this important task. I wouldn't wish to look forward to seeing you after the Memorial and having to admit that I missed one of your comrades in our tribute. So, I offer you this opportunity to give me the name of your "Killed In Action" crewmember, or in the case of groundcrews, the name of a tentmate that was killed, or died of disease, while serving with the 451st Bomb Group. Remember, I only want names of those that died while serving with the Group — not those that have passed on since the war!

## 15th AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION CONDUCTS FIRST REUNION

Last November 10 thru 13, 1983 saw the first flexing of the recently formed 15th AF Association. In a well organized, and truly spectacular four days, yours truly, had the privilege to mingle with, and "eye-ball" some of the former Commanders of the "recent" 15th Air Force.

March Air Force Base (Riverside, Calif.) once again echoed the footsteps of us WW-II guys. Not quite with the snap and firmness of step, but with a great deal of pride for that portion of the new Air Force that we helped to create.

The organizing, and the carrying out of this excellent "tight formation" gathering, was efficiently handled by the Association's President, B/General Murray Bywater, and it's Executive Director, Lt. Colonel C.E. Ben Franklin. Those of us in attendance will attest to the merit of these two retired (only from the military) gentlemen. I would guess they are pondering the fact that in retiring they may have stepped from one demanding job, only to become involved in a more "demanding'er" job.

In choosing to attend the reunion, I had a very definite purpose in mind. Not only would I represent the 451st Bomb Group, but I would have the opportunity to meet, and exchange ideas with other WW-II era Group Leaders. And, too, to firm up friendships that have been created, through correspondence over the years, with those allied to the 15th Air Force cause. I did get to meet, and rub elbows with, Bernie Barr, Pres. of the 99th BG, George Coen, Exec. Sec'y of the 99th BG (a B-17 outfit, by the way — but I forgave them for their indiscretions) I also gave a slap on the back to a new member of the 15th AFA Board of Directors, Frank H. English (again, 99th BG). I met, and "broke bread" with Howard and Marguerite Woodyard, editors of the 485th BG Newsletter.

I was hoping to find Ped Magness, of the 97th BG, and Bud Markel of the 461st & 484th BG, but I found out that health problems kept them away.

I was pleased to encounter two authors, one with a current publication, TARGET: PLOESTI, a Mr. Ted Newby. And the other, a Mrs. John (Carol) Rizzo, now engaged in another book of significant importance to us 15th Army Air Force guys — a book about the 15th. This young lady, hailing from Kalamazoo, Michigan, is an astute and dedicated authoress, and has her sights keenly placed on her goal in bringing the history of the 15th alive again. Carol is now involved in research and the completion of the tome is still more than a year away.

Of course, the most important people I met out there were the 451st guys. Of our membership were; Archie Piirainen (727th), George Tudor (725th), Sam Miller (725th)



and Harry Beegle (725th). You may note that the 725th Squadron was well represented, but wait till you hear this. To you original cadre, 725th, I located (or perhaps they wish to say they located me) a Bert Brown, pilot; Hugh Hedger, co-pilot; and Richard Gould, navigator...all from the same crew. Needless to say I'm working to get them involved. They may yet appear on the enclosed Roster Update.

What pleased me, and reflected credit on the 451st, was the reading of some material that has been printed in some of the past AD-LIB's. Colonel Franklin, hosting as Master of Ceremonies for the Saturday Evening Memorial Program, credited the works to the 451st, and made known to the world that the 451st was "rip, roaring and ready."

The next planned reunion of the 15th AFA will be in early 1985. It is tentatively set for Seattle, Washington. The plan is to help celebrate Boeing's (?) anniversary.

Membership to the 15th AFA is always open to those interested. Cost is \$10 per year, or a Life Membership for \$150. Their mailing address is: 15th Air Force Association, P.O. Box 15, March AFB, CA 92518. Be sure to list your Group and Squadron when sending in your membership fees.

## WORDS FROM THE FLIGHT DECK

It happens about two or three times a year that I'm asked, "Why not have a membership fee, or dues, to belong to the organization?" And I guess it's about time I put that question to rest.

Pete and I have discussed, debated and analyzed the merits of going with contributions or assessing dues upon the membership. Our decision was predicated on the assumption that if dues were necessary to maintain the organization the drop-out of members would be sizeable. Not from disinterest, but from forgetfulness, and in some cases, the inability to spread the family income far enough to cover ONE more assessment. And, as in all organizations, when the dues are not forthcoming, those members are purged from the rosters, and all further contact is lost.

The loss of these members is not what the 451st is about. What kind of a roster would we be able to put out if we purged the membership of those that failed to mail in their dues? It wouldn't be what you have now! And assuming we delete the unpaid, and we lose a potential candidate from membership, cause of dues; there goes your chance to renew, or maintain a contact you had hoped to have. Suppose this office should locate one of your tentmates, or crewmembers, and that person elected to forgo membership because we were asking for monies "right off the bat." This candidate might have been the guy that has been

foremost in your mind and you've been looking all over the country for him. But without the hinderance of dues, that candidate will be more willing to become involved, and thus a new member is gained, and that new member may be the one you are seeking.

Also, under our present system, when mailings are made to all members, their location is confirmed. In the event that a mailing is returned, then this office can make an effort to relocate the lost member and pass on that new location in the next Group mailing. It is a burden on this office when a member does not contact me to offer me the new address, but I try my best to relocate him, and in most cases have success.

And furthermore, — and this is very selfish, on my part — I (ME, myself alone) would have the added task of maintaining the extra bookwork involved. For those of you not privy to the operation of this 451st Headquarters, Peter Massare would like me to inform you that it is pretty much a one person operation. I, Bob Karstensen, do the "AD-LIB", maintain and publish the Roster, seek historical 451st data, conduct correspondence with other 15th Air Force Bomb Group Associations, and in general, (between Pete and myself) try to hold the whole thing together. I'm not relating this to earn your plaudits, rather to show you the burden that would be placed upon me in the event we went to the dues arrangement.

In the past, when I have asked for your contributions, you have come across in an excellent manner. I have more often than not been scolded for omitting "how to make the check out, and where to send it." So, starting in this issue we are incorporating our MASTHEAD (that's newspaper talk for "Who's doing it, and from where").

## GROUP HISTORY PLANNED

Starting in the next issue of "AD-LIB" I will be offering the history of the 451st Bomb Group (H) in serial form. I propose to make the middle pages of the AD-LIB removable, allowing for you to assemble them into booklet form as each publication is made. It was my intention to try, with this issue, to launch this project...but for a lack of photographs depicting our earliest days (Dyersburg, Tenn., Fairmont, Nebraska, and Wendover, Utah) I was forced to abandon the attempt. If I may call upon you, if you have such photos, to offer them on loan, it would be much appreciated.

The history of the Group will be taken from the files of the governmental archives, and will, to the best of my ability, be as accurate as I can make it. I know from past readings that the material will reflect the dedication and courage of, both, the ground crews and the combat crews. I feel that this will be memorable reading for all.

So, those of you that have pictures of the earliest days of the Group... send them in and lets share them with the rest of the gang. Please make note as to what they represent...remember I wasn't with you at that time — It just seems like I was!

## ITALIAN TOUR "SCRUBBED"

Due to a "dragging tail" (lack of information) and without proper "airspeed" (time allotted) I have been forced to fire the "red flare" (abandon mission) relating to the pending Italian Tour.

I am sorry to say that the proposed trip had to be aborted, since I found it impossible to continue with what little information as was offered by the associate Group.

I have sent the following letter to the 456th Bomb Group Association, explaining our reason for withdrawal.

If our Group may wish to examine the possibility of a Tour, on our own, say 1985, I'm sure that we have the potential to make the plans from within our own organization. This time we would have a tighter grip on the situation. But, in the event that some of you are still wishing to go this year, then I'd advise you to contact the address listed below, and see if they would accept you.

Thank you for your indulgence in this matter, and I hope I hadn't built you up for this Tour, only to shoot you down.

25 November 1983

456 Bomb Group Association  
11415 Manor Drive  
Kansas City, MO 64114

Dear Sir,

Upon receipt of this letter, please accept our withdrawal from any further planning to include our 451st Bomb Group within the itinerary of your Group's Italian Tour.

We have based this decision on the lack of solid information (e.g. firm price & route schedule). Everything that has been offered, to date, has been tentative and without verification by letter. Your newsletter editor, Norv Gage, (my good friend from just over the Illinois/Wisconsin border) has done his best to keep me informed and up to-date, but his powers only extend so far. Without more valid information I cannot present our Group the details necessary for their individual planning. Furthermore, the time left between now and the June departure, allows us precious little time to plan our overseas program.

(Con't Page 6, Col. 1)



Tour Scrubbed (con't)

I have been further informed that this tour is not intended for just our two Groups, but rather is an invitation to anyone that would wish to join. This, too, has caused some of our enthused to withdraw from the proposed trip.

If you offer no objections, I shall print this letter in our upcoming newsletter (AD-LIB), explaining to our Group the need to withdraw from your kind offer.

We hope that your Group, and all others attending, will find the Italian Tour rewarding.

Sincerely,

*B.K.*

CC: Norv Gage  
Ed Moore

*Echoes From Yesteryear*

..... I pause  
*I rest my eyes and dare to dream,  
of ventures long since past.  
When youthful courage masked my fears,  
and my role for life was cast.*

..... I join  
*Through lowered lids I see again,  
those brave men, tried and strong.  
Who shared with me an awesome task,  
to free a world gone wrong.*

..... I sense  
*In darkness now, with shadows deep,  
my senses seem to hear,  
the roar of engines, the bite of cold,  
..... the acid taste of fear.*

..... I view  
*I can see the coastline fall away,  
as our bombers turn and climb.  
And remember well my single prayer,  
"God, bring us back this time."*

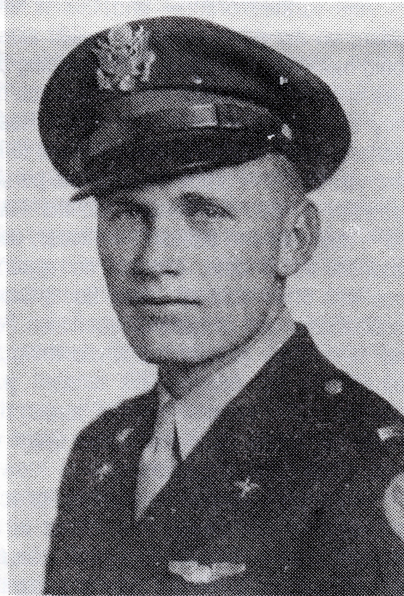
..... I honor  
*No matter how I aim my thoughts,  
a tear will seem to form.  
In tribute to those brave young men,  
who've flown beyond life's storm.*

..... I rouse  
*And now my thoughts are broken,  
as my visions slip away.  
For little footsteps on the stairs,  
give me cause to love each day.*

(by: Bob K.)

LT RUSHING'S DEATH REVEALED

As presented in the last newsletter (AD-LIB, Issue 9, Page 7) I asked the membership if they had any information concerning the death of 2nd Lt. Lawrence M. Rushing, co-pilot for McAllister's crew. I requested this information in the name of Robert A. Rushing, Jr., nephew to Lt. Rushing. After almost 40 years, and with little information to go with, other than the brief information offered by the government, Bob is now renewing the family search to clarify, and to re-establish the circumstances of his Uncle's death.



2nd Lt. Lawrence M. Rushing  
Died 7 February 1944

To give you a little background, as offered by Bob Rushing, Larry Rushing was "called up" to military service when his National Guard outfit received its orders early in the war. He was stationed in the Seattle, Washington area and held the rank of Corporal. He was offered, in August 1942, the chance to become an aviation cadet. He trained at Santa Ana, Calif., graduating in the class of 43-E (May 1943). Took B-25 instruction at Sacramento, Calif. B-17 schooling at Hobbs, New Mexico, and finally brought together with the B-24 at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. But the B-24 proved to be too much an adversary to the youthful Aircraft Commander, and by his own admission, claimed his landings, "weren't all that consistent." Realizing that his inabilities to master the B-24 was placing his crew in jeopardy of being split-up, he requested from his superiors, the chance to be relieved of his position and a more capable pilot to take over his crew. This unselfish gesture transferred Lt. Rushing into the 451st Bomb Group and into the crew of Wilfred B. McAllister. (Crew #52, 727th Bomb Squadron)

In the last AD-LIB (Issue 9) I had wrote that there was one crewman, who, at that time was unknown, unaccounted for, and unlocatable. In the interim the "unknown gunner" has been located. He is Milton Wexler, S/Sgt, Tail Gunner for the McAllister crew. Milt has, along with others, shared his remembrances as to the Lt. Rushing death.

The following are excerpts from his letter;

Dear Bob,

Thank you for your prompt response to my request for a roster of the 451st Bombardment Group. I was pleased to receive it.

While reading your enclosure (AD-LIB, Issue 9) I came across an article about Lt. Rushing's nephew seeking information about his uncle. Lt. Rushing was the co-pilot of my plane which was called "Hop Scotch." Our crew was #52 and I was the sixth unknown gunner. Lt. Rushing was killed while he was walking on, or near, a road at some field where we were stationed at that time.

A truck was pulling a trailer and the trailer swerved and hit him and killed him. I do not recall where this was but if you fill me in with the date of his death, I will try to check whatever records I have and try to locate the field.

I have a picture of our crew and plane when we landed overseas, which I believe was Italy. I am having it enlarged and if Lt. Rushing's nephew will contact me I will be more than pleased to send him a copy.

Besides myself, only David Love, our navigator; Alphonse Szymanek, bombardier; Charles Bistline, engineer are still alive.

I hope this will be of some assistance to the family of Lt. Rushing.

Very truly yours,

Milton A. Wexler  
135 Jules Drive  
Saten Island, NY 10314



"FLYING OVER" — (Rear row, L-R) Capt. Young, Lt McAllister, Lt Rushing, Lt Zraick, F/O Szymanek, Lt Love (Middle row, L-R) Unknown, Sgt Garde, Sgt Schermerhorn, Sgt Oprisko, Sgt Bistline, Sgt Massa (Front L-R) Sgt Wexler, Sgt Wood (Photo from Wexler)



And from another source we have this accounting:

Dear Sirs:

This is in reference to the inquiry concerning Lt. Rushing in Issue #9. AD-LIB.

Lt. Rushing was a barracks mate at Gioia. I was navigator on Lt. Monningers crew.

The day of the accident, Lt. Rushing and Lt. Beale, a close friend, had gone to town and were returning when Lt. Rushing was struck by a truck. The accident happened on the road about a block from our barracks.

Lt. Rushing suffered massive head injuries and he died in about an hour. Captain Joe King was on the scene shortly after the accident. King was our Squadron Doctor.

If you could contact Lt. Beale, he could supply more details. However, the above is basically what happened. I was at the scene moments after it occurred.

I am hazy as to the crew of his plane, but I believe they shipped home after their missions in July 1944, along with the other original crews.

Hope this information is of some help.

Sincerely,

Roger T. Fox  
127 Southbrook #4  
Waterloo, IA 50702

And from yet another source we have this;

Bob,

Lt. Rushing was walking across the road about two paces behind bombardier F/O Charles C. Beale. (son of C.C. Beale the famous illustrator for the old *Colliers* magazine. He did front covers and inside story illustrations like Rockwell) Beale made it across but a PUP (a small water tank trailer) behind a regular G.I. truck skidded on a patch of ice, swung out and hit Lt. Rushing and killed him.

Lt. Rushing was well liked and highly thought of by the enlisted men on his crew.

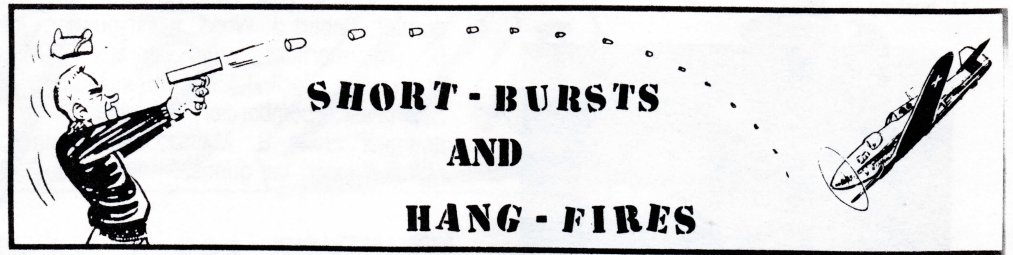
John B. Massa was a P.O.W. and I saw him in Illinois as late as about 1946 or 7.

Lt. Story, co-pilot; Lt. McAllister, pilot; and S/Sgt Schermerhorn I know were killed on the April 5th Ploesti raid. Per Massa — Lt. Story was killed trying to help Mac (who was wounded) get out of the airplane. Massa told me he saw that, just before bailed out. Lt. Story had been the co-pilot for Forest N. Jones (Group's 1st Silver Star recipient) and was highly regarded by all members of his crew.

Thanks for the great work you are doing,

Art Morin

(Con't Page 8, Col. 1)



#### HEADQUARTERS:

**LEROY STEFEN** — (when asked about the Group Insignia, as designed by Sgt Robert McAvin) "So help me I cannot shed a bit of light on where the paperwork stood at the end of the war. My guess is that if we were in the mill of trying to get the logo approved officially, the end of the war preempted all such gyrations. I imagine the war department attitude was, 'Why bother to process such a request for a Group that is about to be broken up?' Sorry I can't be of some help." . . . **ED RASMESSEN** — (when questioned about the Lackland AFB B-24, thought to be from the 451st) "The B-24 has an interesting story. When I first saw it, I recognized the tail insignia immediately: 49th Bomb Wing — 461st Group. I should know, Stef and I designed the tail insignia for the 49th and the 3 Groups. In any event, the insignia has been changed because the B-24 was dedicated to General George S. Brown, the late Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, who flew a B-24 in that first famous low level raid over Ploesti. So, the aircraft (which really was a 461st B-24) now carries the insignia of then Major Brown's Group (I believe it was the 97th)." . . . **DANA STREET** — "Expect to see Leo Stoutsenberger after January 3rd. . . Bill Mattes has a condo at West Palm Beach, told me he would be down this week . . . Bill Bennett has been in the hospital. Now has diabetes, according to a card & letter from Nan." . . . **JOE STRAUSS** — "I'm really enjoying my mailings. Keep up the good work, I hope to make the next reunion."

**724th SQUADRON:**

**LARRY MARCH** — "I hope you could fill me in on the events that took place at the 15th Air Force Association Reunion in Riverside, CA. Did you know that March AFB was named for a relative of mine? Lt Peyton C. March, Jr. was the son of the US Army Chief of Staff during WW-I." . . . **CHARLIE PAINTER** — "is nearly blind and is now in Room 125, Tecumseh Hall, Indiana Veterans Home, LaFayette, IN 47901. I was appointed Guardian and pay his keep down there. I forwarded recent mailing from you to him." (signed C.C. Frazee, Counsellor at Law) . . . **LLOYD KNIGHT** — "Do you remember an old B-24 named 'Toonerville Trolley?' I was assigned to this plane. We used the plane as a transport plane." . . .

**726th SQUADRON:**

**TOM CASEY** — "Please send a picture of PATCHES. She took us back and forth many times, and we have a sincere historical interest in her." . . . **DAN KAUEAUF** — "Called Pat Sturman last month . . . had lunch with Zig Winski . . . stopped in to see Ray Moser (He has remarried to a lovely gal, Sue.) . . . Bill Bias stopped in to see us . . . on his way to Dallas and California." . . . **HARRY PASCOE** — "Had a very pleasant surprise last week when Dave Eagles dropped in with Audrey, and we heard all about the reunion . . . It looks as though Marg and I might make it to Wright/Patterson, Dayton." . . . **HAROLD MOORE** — ". . . although I was a member of the ground

**DON RYLAND** — ". . . really enjoyed seeing his name in the newsletter (Issue 9). He is doing rather well this summer. However, he will be entering the hospital in the next couple of months to have his 1972 total hip replacement RE-DONE." (signed Doris) . . .

**VERNE JOHNSON** — "Keep your wings level and don't bounce your landings." . . .

#### 725th SQUADRON:

**WILLIAM C. ANDERSON** — "Things are going well here, am enclosing a promo flyer for BAT-21 to be published in paperback by Bantam come September. The book has done very well for us, reprinted in READER'S DIGEST, DOUBLEDAY BOOK CLUB, and many foreign markets, and has been optioned for a theatrical flick by TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX. (Yes, Bill, and the Military Book Club had it, also. Right up till the time I requested a copy. . . then they ran out! — Bob K.) . . .

**PAUL SCHRIEBERMAIER** — "Last week I retired from the General Electric Company, and now that I have time to think — I remember the 451st." . . . **DICK GOULD** — "Everyone sure had a good time at March Field, and especially because we ran across Sam, Archie and you from the 451st. All in all, we had a wonderful time there." (Yea, Dick, the 15th DID a job, back then — and has proven it still has the STUFF, now. — Bob K.) . . .

**SAM MILLER** — "was glad you made it to California (sunny??) Bob." . . . **FLASH!!** . . .

**PAUL KRUEGER** was elected President of the FORMER PRISONERS OF WAR IN ROMANIA — Nice going, Paul. . . .

#### 726th SQUADRON:

**TOM CASEY** — "Please send a picture of PATCHES. She took us back and forth many times, and we have a sincere historical interest in her." . . . **DAN KAUEAUF** — "Called Pat Sturman last month . . . had lunch with Zig Winski . . . stopped in to see Ray Moser (He has remarried to a lovely gal, Sue.) . . . Bill Bias stopped in to see us . . . on his way to Dallas and California." . . .

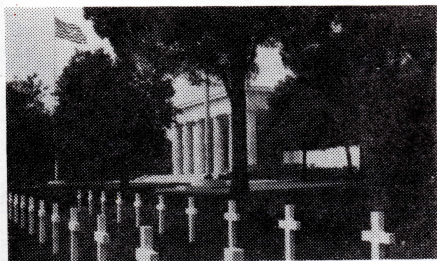
**HARRY PASCOE** — "Had a very pleasant surprise last week when Dave Eagles dropped in with Audrey, and we heard all about the reunion . . . It looks as though Marg and I might make it to Wright/Patterson, Dayton." . . . **HAROLD MOORE** — ". . . although I was a member of the ground

. . . although I was a member of the ground

(con't Page 8, Col. 2)



Lt. Rushing (con't)



Sicily-Rome Cemetery

There, but for an occasional comment by other, are the facts surrounding the accidental death of one of our wartime comrades.

Larry Rushing was born and raised an Arkansas boy. He was a lad that enjoyed the out-of-doors, and spent many hours with his friends hunting the wily game of the region. His entry into the military service did not diminish his keen interest in the outdoors. He had often written his family of his desire to once again hike his favorite trails, and was awaiting the day when he would be, again, "on the hunt." But the "hunt," now the "hunt for man," ended for Larry on the 7th of February 1944, beside the frozen roadway in Gioia del Colle, Italy.

Though Lawrence Rushing's death may not bore the prestige, nor the nobility of a combat casualty, I am drawn to the comment of General Eaton, who, earlier in this newsletter stated, "Just to have been there constituted bona fide qualification as a hero." I think we all reflect that feeling. Lawrence Rushing lies buried in the Sicily-Rome Cemetery, in Italy.

As to the fate of the rest of McAllister's crew, those that flew the Ploesti mission (5 April 1944), we can report that there were five killed in action and five were reported as POW's. The five killed were McAllister, pilot;

Wm. Story, co-pilot; John Oprisko, ball turret gunner; Robert J. Wood, waist gunner; Joe D. Schermerhorn, radio operator. POW's listed were: Jack T. Sargent, navigator; Al Szymanek, bombardier; Charles Bistline, engineer; John B. Massa, waist gunner; Milton Wexler, tail gunner.

**SHORTBURST (con't)**

crew, our war record, reflected on our discharge papers, gave a big impression on those people I needed to show it to for jobs and benefits. With 3 Presidential Citations and 12 Battle Stars is unbelievable." . . . .

**727th SQUADRON:**

**JACK HOPPOCK** — "Have recorded Aug. 10-11-12, 84 in planning diary. Will work on Reichenbach and Biggs — know Stef will make it." . . . . **ARCHIE PIIRAINEN** — "I plan on being at the 1984 Reunion at Dayton, Ohio. So I am sending a check to help in organizing it." . . . . **EARL MONNINGER** — I am sorry to report that another member of the 451st, and my crewmember, has passed away, Abe Zuber. Died Feb. 25, 1983 (heart attack)." . . . . **DICK PROUTY** — "Yes, as you guessed I finally retired, as of the end of July (1983) and moved here to Florida." . . .

**ARMAND FAZIO** — "I retired early in January (83) of this year and my wife and I are living in Florida. I missed the last reunion, but hope to make the next one." . . . . **BILL GOIN, JR.** — "I did have a bit of hard luck, in that the section of the National Records Center in St. Louis that contained my father's flight records burned back in the 1960's and all was lost. However, after digging through some more boxes at my mother's home, I came up with all of the "original" orders and "individual flight records" in mint condition. With this, the Albert

F. Simpson Historical Research Center at Maxwell AFB, Alabama can now supply me with all of the flimsies, route maps, etc., for all of my dad's flights." . . . .

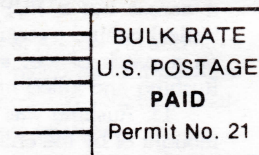
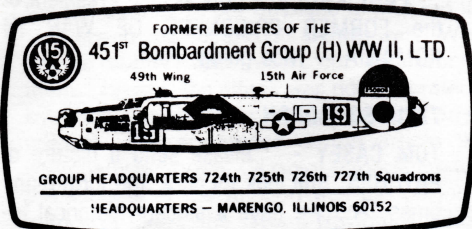


B-26-Summer 1944-?

Anyone have information on this B-26, Marauder, that "belly landed" after making a couple low passes over Castelluccia airfield? What Group did it come from? Were there dead and wounded aboard, as rumored? Our Group had just come in from our own mission when this aircraft did a couple "buzz runs," checking out the terrain. It was badly damaged by the enemy, over the target, and was looking for a suitable landing area (grassy strip with rescue equipment). I (Bob K.) saw the incident, but never thought to get the details. I guess I looked on it (with the eyes of a youth) as another link in the chain of war . . . . not my link, nor even my chain.

**JEST A RUMOR**

Colonel Eaton endeared himself to the 49th Wing Headquarters by having all the Squadrons submit their MORNING REPORTS. . . . the night before.



Harry F. Fryar  
1665 Albion Lane  
Longmont, CO 80501

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**REMEMBER: AUGUST 10-12, 1984, DAYTON, OHIO: REUNION**