



## 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Newsletter No. 2 July 2013



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### 2013 REUNION UPDATE

Good progress has been made relative to the Tempe, Arizona Reunion (October 17-19) where we will be joined by the 99<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, the 301<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group and the 455<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. Registrations have been received covering more than one hundred individuals of which the vast majority are 451<sup>st</sup> members. The notifications on our joint meeting are only now being provided to some of the other Bomb Group members. We anticipate good representation from these units as well.

The Tempe Reunion will be truly special. We have an outstanding speaker platform arranged headed by Brigadier General David Woellner, two sit-down dinners including a 16 piece orchestra playing 1940's Big Band Music, and an optional trip to a large air force museum. Please refer to our Reunion Website (<http://www.gordons.ws/reunion>) for more information and to obtain Registration Forms. For those members still undecided about attending, do go ahead and promptly make your hotel reservations. The greatly reduced \$89 room rate may not be available for registrations made later in the year.

There are many reasons for attending our reunions. Perhaps some of the benefits are best captured in the following memorandum submitted by Bob Anderson. (Pilot, POW) who had a number of family members accompany him to our 2010 Reunion in Chicago:

*"Dear Win,*

*Time really flies by, it's over a month since the reunion and I am still enjoying the effect it's having on me and mostly my family, they are still talking about it, sharing pictures and a DVD they made of your talk and mine. We have a close knit family and this reunion has made us even closer. Thanks to you, your family and staff you have made this possible.*

*This reunion also caused the following take place for my family:*

- 1. They came from New York, Florida, South Carolina and Massachusetts and met in Illinois.*
- 2. Shared meals together.*
- 3. Had room parties.*
- 4. Toured down town Chicago. Barbara and I pass on this one.*
- 5. Met many 451sters.*
- 6. My grandchildren met and obtained autographs from "Woody" Williams and Colonel T. Kirk Jr.*
- 7. I danced with my daughter; the last time was at her wedding, also my granddaughter for the first time.*
- 8. My grandson danced with his aunt for the first time.*
- 9. My granddaughter danced with her uncle for the first time*

10. And most of all they have a great understanding of the 451<sup>st</sup>.

*Gratefully, Bob”*

## **2008 REUNION HONOREES**

At our Fifteenth 451<sup>st</sup> Reunion in Chicago, we honored our National Director Bob Karstensen along with the five members who had attended all of our Reunions to that time, namely Ralph E. Helmericks, Roberta “Bobbi” C. Kelly, James R. Martin, Harry O. Rohde and A. Mike Stauth. As you know, James R. Martin passed away in 2012. Ralph E. Helmericks and A. Mike Stauth are registered to attend out Tempe Reunion in October. Harry O. Rohde while progressing on a relatively good basis will not be joining with us in October and sends his best wishes. “Bobbi” Kelly is fairing reasonably okay, still undecided about traveling to Tempe. As many know, “Bobbi”, along with her family members, Karen, Michael & Tom have been active supporters of the 451<sup>st</sup> since the very inception of our alumni organization.

In recent years, Randy Jones, A. Mike Stauth and Win Jones have met together in Phoenix on a regular basis. More recently they were honored guests at the Phoenix grand opening of the movie “Red Tails” which covered the role of the Tuskegee pilots in WWII. Randy had his 451<sup>st</sup> historical collection on display which was well received by the large crowd in attendance.

## **THE “JACKET”**

In our first Newsletter in January we asked for help in finding a WWII vintage leather jacket hopefully that had been worn by a 451<sup>st</sup> member. If found, this was to be added to the 451<sup>st</sup> historical collection maintained by Randy Jones with the ultimate objective of contributing the collection to a suitable Air force Museum.

We were more than pleased to receive a telephone call from Wilma Bennett (widow of the late Jack I. Bennett) indicating that she had such a jacket which turned out to be very suitable. We now have “The Jacket” properly stored in Scottsdale, Arizona, and it will be on display at our October Reunion. Wilma along with family members will be our guests at Tempe.

Jack Bennett served as Radio Operator-Gunner on the B-24 named Patsy Jack. He flew 36 missions (51 sorties) beginning January 30, 1944, including the first high level raid on the Ploesti Oil Fields.

This is Jack’s brief recap of that mission.

*“The morning of April 5, 1944, I went to the briefing and when the map for combat came up, there was a loud roar. It was the first high level raid on Ploesti Oil Fields. It was a very early morning when we started taxiing for takeoff. We were down at the end of the runway when the first two B-24s ran together on takeoff. They immediately started to burn and the bombs blew up. Eighteen out of 20 died. Two were helped out and survived. James White is buried in the Hillside Cemetery at Purcell. We stood by on the runway until it was clear enough to take off, and then we took off and joined the remainder of the group. We had German fighter planes fight us all the way to the approach point for Ploesti. They came out for us out of the sun and got over our low flight of four planes (40 people).*

*We were flying Sod Buster since our plane was out being repaired. The German planes were coming at*

us. Apparently, someone hadn't cleaned my 50 caliber. I would get a few shots and it would freeze. I only realized our low flight was gone when some parachutes came by. We got into flak with some bad hits, but we made it back to Brindisi.

One lieutenant wanted a debriefing, but as for me, I went to bed.

*We flew 50 missions from Italy--- Gioia Del Colle, Brindisi, Foggia. I did one extra mission flying with Col. Eaton to Remini, for which he received the Distinguished Flying Cross. I was injured over southern France on June 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944. We finished our missions July 1944, and our replacement crew took over. Apparently, they didn't last long--- they went down in our plane on August 2, 1944. This crew and plane were honored by the French later."*



Jack Bennett  
Radio Operator-Gunner



Front Row: Jack Bennett, Dello H. Newkirk, Wethy Farless, Clarence Drons & Ebbert P. Fare  
Back Row: Gabriel Bowdzinski, Ronald Cook, John J. Kavanaugh, Paul C. Malone & Fred Reitz

## DONATIONS

Unlike a number of other Bomb Groups, the 451<sup>st</sup> has never assessed member's dues or other charges. Further, all assist personnel now involved in our operations (primarily my wife, Diane, and my daughter, Marsha Morris) contribute their time and effort. The printing and mailing and other costs associated with publishing our newsletters and maintaining our files are funded strictly by donations. We want to thank the relatively small group that makes periodic contributions to keep things going. We would encourage all members on our mailing list to consider assisting with our program. Above all, if anyone receiving our newsletter is no longer interested in our 451<sup>st</sup> activities, kindly let us know.

Special memorial tributes recently received are as follows:

Ernest W. Atkins.....From Jack E. Jones  
 Jack I. Bennett.....From Wilma Bennett  
 George Braverman.....From Shirley Braverman  
 James Burns.....From Jack E. Jones  
 John D. Friedrich.....From Ms. Lee Mac Cleery  
 Philip (Herky) Hershkowitz.....From Lois Hershkowitz  
 Jack Tudor.....From Sedgfield Hill

Other donations have been received from Gerald Apple, Emory Arnold, Blaine A. Briggs, Stephen S. Cushner, Robert Gust, Achilles Kozakis, Louie Lopez, Wilma A. Macomber, Allen Mann, Frank T. McNerney, John B. Miller, Seabert Nelson, Rossman N. Shaffer and Frank Tedesco.

## LAST FLY BY

The following represents the death notifications received subsequent to our January 2013 newsletter:

<b>451<sup>st</sup> Member</b>	<b>Duty Position</b>	<b>DOD</b>
Bennett, Jack I.	Radio Operator-Gunner	07/14/2012
Braverman, George	Waist Gunner	07/14/2012
Carter, Melford S.	Pilot	10/31/2011
Ciensi, Walter R,	Flight Engineer	2012
Cohen, Stanley S.		12/10/2011
Esser, Harold L.	Armament	12/27/2012
Friedrich, John D.		07/25/2011
Head, Louis	Pilot	09/09/2011
McBeth, Ralph M.	Group Communications Officer	02/07/2013
McCullen, Charles H.	Pilot	1/21/2001
Nelson, Seabert J.	Tail Gunner	11/16/2012
White, Robert L.		06/11/2011
Winski, Sidney		

## GETTING THERE

Upon completing crew training, the next task was to get the newly assigned B-24 and the crew members overseas to our airbase in Italy. This posed major problems since there were virtually no radar or other external navigational aids available—each aircraft was pretty much solely dependent

upon the cooperative effort and skill of the pilot and navigator. It was more than tense after a long over water flight to descend through the cloud formations hoping to view an Island airfield that could provide fuel for the next leg of the trip. The navigators and pilots of our 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group registered high marks regarding this. However, some other WWII air units didn't fare as well inasmuch as on an overall basis approximately one thousand planes were lost in this phase of operations.

It should be noted that before our airbase in Italy could be operational, the ground support staff also had to be relocated from the States. For most personnel this involved assignment to cargo ships that became part of large transatlantic convoys. While enroute there was the ever present danger of being attacked by German submarines.

## **THEN and NOW**

Nearly seventy years have all too swiftly passed by since WWII and the subsequent lifetime accomplishments of our 451<sup>st</sup> survivors are no doubt individually and collectively most significant. Yet, nothing along the way seems to compare with the experience of having been part of the 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group in WWII. The Air War in Europe carried out by our Army Air Force units contributed greatly (perhaps was the single most important factor), to the triumph of the Allied Forces. This, of course came at great costs, loss of life and injuries associated with our losing over 8,000 heavy bombers in combat along with 3,000 fighter planes.

At recent Reunions we have greatly enjoyed the harmonica music provided by our very special survivor and friend, Louie Lopez. He had registered to attend our forthcoming Tempe Reunion; however new health factors now preclude this. We do want to wish Louie and his family the best for the period ahead, and to extend our thanks for their strong support of the 451<sup>st</sup>.

Notification has been received that Mrs. Robert W. Mochamer, affectionately known as "Bess" has passed away. She was a true American Patriot, always ready to assist and be a part of our Military heritage proceedings, including our Reunions.

## **BOOKS**

Achilles M. Kozakis (Nose Turret Gunner) has recently authored a book titled "The Best Seat in the House". As a veteran crew member with the 451<sup>st</sup>, "Achi" has no doubt presented a vivid first-hand account of some of our challenging missions. In his senior years, "Achi" has given talks at many high schools in an endeavor to inform students about the WWII Air War. Hey, he still looks fit and trim in his original WWII uniforms!

John H. Dayton (Pilot) also will soon be releasing his book titled, "Put Your Boots on Johnny". You may recall that on Friday, October 13, 1944, John's B-24 was one of seven planes dispatched from the 727<sup>th</sup> squadron with the tragic result of only one other B-24 in addition to John's plane returning to base.

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