



451st Bomb Group Newsletter No. 18 June 2021



Published for the preservation of our 451st heritage.

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The Quietest Generation

A common theme which is reflected in some the stories in this edition of the newsletter is the reluctance of our heroes to talk about the war. I remember knowing of Dad's service, but not many associated details. Then one year for Christmas came a shadow box with duplicates of all his medals. Even I knew at this point something historic and heroic had occurred! ¹

"Putting the war behind me", "Just doing my job", "Doing what anyone else would have done", seem to summarize the feelings of many of our reluctant heroes from WWII. We can speculate about why this is so, but in the end memories and history are lost. The movie "What Did You Do in the War, Daddy" (1966, United Artists) was titled by director Blake Edwards when asked the question by his son. I wish I had asked that question more often.

If you're still lucky enough to have a surviving veteran, ask those questions. And don't forget the video/audio recorder.

Jonathan

¹ Replacement military medals, decorations and awards can be requested via form SF 180. This form can be downloaded from <https://www.va.gov/vaforms> and if requested by the veteran are free.

The Joint Bomb Groups Reunion is scheduled for September 9-12 in Albuquerque, NM. For all information associated with the reunion, please refer to the following link [Reunion \(451st.org\)](https://www.451st.org) or by visiting <https://www.451st.org/Reunion/Reunion.html>

What's New on the Website: <https://www.451st.org>

IARC's (Individual Aircraft Record Cards) which reflect the history of individual aircraft, showing the location and status at a given time, have been added. Records for accident reports, daily operations reports, IARC's and MACR's (Missing Air Crew Reports) are now available.

TRIBUTE TO AUGUST GRECO by Gus Greco

I sort of grew up with dad's "My Buddies" as he always called them. I listened to father's (August Greco's) stories about George, Bur Head Fred, Leo, Charlie, Wild Bill, Bob, Tex, Little Swede and Johnny, the crazy Frenchman. Pop told us how he would as a prank pee in the Navigator's (Leo Ponick's) helmet and have George the shy Bombardier, pour it out under the plane to literally piss-off Henry Swamburg, the Ball-Turret Gunner. Dad's urine would freeze on "Little Swede's" glass and he would curse whoever did it out with his Donald Duck imitation. Then Fulton the Pilot would say "Goddammit Gus can't you pee on the ground before we take off!" This happened according to the crew almost every mission, usually just after take-off! Of course, the crew had been up all night drinking the "Dago-Red" wine before a mission. Bob Torbol turned in while the guys had what might be their last party. A monkey mascot drank with them-he was from South America and he slept in one of Johnny Plante's boots.

B-24 Liberator Bomber Crew #19



Combat Air Crew #19 of the 15th U.S. Army Air Corps, 451st Bombardment group, 724th Squadron. Front: Left to Right: Pilot Fred Fulton, CoPilot Charles Haussermann, Original Navigator Bill Priest, Bombardier George Elmer, Back Row Left to Right: Ball Turret Gunner Henry Swanburg, Armorer/Tail Gunner Johnny Plante, Radio Man / Right Waist Gunner Robert Torbol, Left Waist Gunner Willie Gentry, Flight Engineer/ Nose Gunner August Greco, Missing: Top Turret Gunner/Flight Engineer William Dennison, Replacement Navigator Leo Ponick.

The crew also adopted a parrot that kept calling out for his friend after they were shot down. No one wanted to adopt the parrot because he had gone through two unlucky crews! Finally, dad couldn't take it anymore and adopted the bird bringing him into their tent. Soon after their plane was shot-up. When the crew complained that the bird might have had something to do with it dad said, "Gosh-Darn bird (censored) must be lucky for us, none of us were hurt!" Also, dogs would visit their tent often. A particular dog usually snuck into the tent when dad was gone and slept on his high-altitude wool-lined A-2 flight jacket. Dad said the darned dog gave his jacket and the guy's fleas and their tent

had to be fumigated. Some other antics dad told me about they used to shoot up alligators off-of the Gulf of Taranto with their 50 caliber machine guns, and the Pilot Fred liked to tip over the Italian fishermen's boats from a low flying Buzz-job! The fishermen would curse them and throw out some nasty arm gestures! It's funny to hear that a lot of other crews used to do the same crazy things my dad's crew did.

I guess they got ideas from each-other.

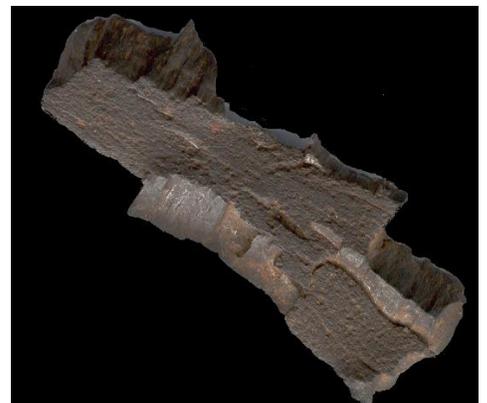
Bob Torbol is smiling here because he has just completed his final combat mission! A photo was taken to commemorate this momentous occasion! Many aircrews did not make it home! Many were killed in action or taken as prisoners after parachuting out of their stricken aircraft. A few made it to the Isle of Vis (in the Adriatic Sea) if they were too badly shot up to make it home. Crew #19 had to bail out of an aircraft upon returning from their May 10, 1944 mission to bomb Wiener Neustadt, Austria's Me-109 Airdrome-hence the little parachutist on Bob's jacket! Each bomb is a Combat Mission. While the crew bailed-out over the base, Pilot Fred Fulton Crash-landed the bomber with his Co-Pilot Charles Hausserman. Fred received the DFC for this mission-it was a belly-landing because the hydraulics were shot-out. My Father August Greco "Gus" suffered a terrible back injury from jumping out with a spare back chute which was full of holes! Gus hit the ground very hard. He was one of the last ones to bail out from over 20,000 feet! Gus jumped out of the nose wheel door and passed everyone else on his descent. In spite of his injury dad said that this jump was "one of the greatest thrills of my life!" He kept quiet about his injuries because he wanted to finish up with his crew! The crew like many others had some close scrapes. The bombardier George Elmer told me a shell exploded under the aircraft and a large piece passed in front of him in the nose making a very big hole in the ceiling-one more step and George would have bought it!

My father "Gus" always sat on his flak jacket to protect his vital areas. This saved him later when he heard a large thump under him. After a mission he fished it out-a large piece of flak from under his seat with a pocket knife. It was about 6 by 2 inches and about a 1/4 of an inch thick. This piece of flak was dull to touch, but would cut a piece of paper like a razor at any side-angle!

Robert Torbol
Radio Operator & Waist Gunner



Flak



LAST FLYBY

Here are the death notifications received since our November 2020 Newsletter:

| 451st Member | Squadron | Duty Position | DOD |
|---------------------------|--|----------------------|------------|
| Barmore, Robert K. | 725 th | Pilot | 06.19.2020 |
| Boulanger, Junior Mitcher | 725 th | Nose Gunner | 02.16.2015 |
| Defino, Anthony T. | 727 th | Ordinance Crew Chief | 12.30.2019 |
| Doherty, Eddie | 727 th | Pilot | |
| Hill, Sedgefield D. | 727 th | Mechanic | 09.26.2020 |
| Horn, Larry | 725 th | Pilot | 01.12.2021 |
| Miller, Wilbur F. | 726 th | Pilot | 08.12.2020 |
| Muth, Phillip | 727 th | Navigator | 03.17.2021 |
| Popok, Herbert B. | 724 th | Navigator | 07.08.2020 |
| Tronoff, Ted | 455 th B.G 742 nd | Navigator | 01.04.2021 |
| Ul, Leo B. | 726 th | Waist Gunner | 12.26.2018 |

THANK YOU, DONORS!

| Donor | In Tribute To |
|---|--|
| Albright, Andrea | In memory of Larry Horn, Pilot 725 th Squadron |
| Falkis, Ruth | In memory of Peter G. Polmen, Tail Gunner, 726 th Squadron |
| Karnas, Mason | In memory of Lt. Robert M. Finehout, Pilot, 725 th Squadron |
| Koslow, Barry | In memory of Harold Koslow, Top Turret Gunner/Engineer, 725 th Squadron |
| Kruse, Ann | In memory of Erhart Kruse, Waist Gunner/Radio Operator 727 th Squadron |
| McKinney, Mike | In memory of Nathan McKinney, Line Chief 727 th Squadron |
| Cary, Peter | In memory of Ronald V. Cary, Pilot, 724 th squadron |
| Miller, Pamela | In memory of Samuel R. Miller |
| The Sewing Club of Dickson, TN (Kathy McKinnon) | In memory of Larry Horn, Pilot 725 th Squadron |

Should you desire to honor a crew mate or family member, please send the full name and duty position of the person being honored. Please send to:

451st Bomb Group
c/o Jonathan Tudor
26 Eagles Mere Way
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HAROLD ROGERS & THE CRASH of A/C #42-52047 by Ron Rogers

“Like many combat vets, my Dad was reticent about answering “what did you do in the war daddy?” All five of us kids knew he was a bombardier in WW2. Italy somewhere. B24’s.

Dad explained that the Liberator was vastly superior to the storied B-17. He did not like the book “Catch 22”. Firework celebrations made him jumpy. And the time I brought home a replica German Iron Cross, he was furious.

Mostly though, he was just “good ol’ Dad”. My personal hero. He died at home on Jan 2nd, 1975, way too early.

That left a lot of service information MIA. But thank goodness for the internet. And for Robert Karstensen, late historian of the 451st Bomb Group. Bob answered a bunch of my early questions and steered me right in my online research.

So with time, “Italy somewhere” expanded into a more complete history: Harold Rogers, bombardier in the 15th AF/451st/724th, stationed at the Castelluccio Air Base, a part of 1st Lt. William H. McKenney’s B-24 crew. My dad returned to the states on June 9th, 1945. Grade 1st Lt. He completed 33 missions in the MTO and was awarded the Air Medal w/3 clusters, 8 Battle Stars, and DUC w/2 clusters. A member in good standing of the Greatest Generation.



#8- Harold Rogers, bombardier, #6- William McKenney, pilot - (photo may be during training in the states)

Here's one of my Dad's stories that I gleaned from research:

December 1944 was a tough month for the war, including the 451st. According to Headquarters 451st Bombardment Group's narrative history, "Eighteen missions were flown by the 451st during the month; results running from excellent to snafu." For my dad, it was mostly snafu, entailing the loss of two assigned aircraft. For the first crash, he walked away. The second required a parachute. I'll just recount the first event today.....

The Crash of A/C #42-52047

"McKenney, with your father onboard had a crash landing (a/c #42-52047 - no nickname) on the Base on 2 December 1944. It was on take-off they developed engine trouble and returned to Base, only to crash-land. The mission that day was to Blechhammer, Germany - they didn't get to go." - *S/Sgt Robert Karstensen (Gunner) 15th AAF, 49th Bomb Wing, 451st Bomb Group, 724th Squadron*

"On this mission all the planes were lined up getting ready for takeoff. I think we were the fourth plane as we were the lead Squadron. Full throttle ahead and going about 100 mph. Our #2 engine ran away and across the field we went. The pilot feathered #2 and bang our landing gear collapsed with ten 500lb bombs in the belly. The plane broke in several pieces and before we stopped, there were several fire trucks close by spraying foam for fire protection. We all got out of the plane real fast or I might say by the speed of light. Again, luck was with us as no one was hurt badly." - *George Olson, Radio Operator-Gunner – 724th (From his article, "I Survived Five Crashes", Ad Lib Issue 46, Fall 2009)*

"I have the Accident Report and it varies somewhat from Olson's rendition. The Report (dated 2 December 1944) reads that the aircraft, Serial Number 44-52047, did make a successful take-off, but had engine trouble immediately after leaving the field. It reads that they salvoed the bombs over the Adriatic Sea and returned to Castelluccio Air Base in an attempted emergency landing. It was then that they lost control, ran off the steel matting, busted up the landing gear, which resulted in the total destruction of the aircraft." - *S/Sgt Robert Karstensen (Gunner) 15th AAF, 49th Bomb Wing, 451st Bomb Group, 724th Squadron, Ad Lib Issue 46, Fall 2009*

Thanks! And good luck to those doing their own family history searches.

Ron Rogers

FYI- If any reader has access to the 451st Loading Lists (detailing specific crew names for each mission), I'd love to get a copy!

Managers note: Thanks Ron and I second that FYI. Bob Karstensen served as the President, Historian and Reunion coordinator for the 451st Bomb Group from 1978-2012.

Photos from the crash landing of a/c #42-52047. Note the firefighting foam that looks like snow, and the inflated life rafts projecting thru the broken fuselage.



TRIBUTE TO 1st LT. LARRY HORN by Mike Horn

1st Lt. Larry Horn honorably served in this Army Air Corps during WWII. He was a B-24 pilot stationed in Italy and flew 35 combat missions over enemy territory in Germany and former Yugoslavia. He was shot down twice. The first time his entire crew bailed from the plane where he was captured, but later escaped and returned to duty. The second time his plane was hit, he ordered his crew to jump and he landed the plane in Yugoslavia. There he

was taken in by locals and kept safe until he was returned to Italy by Allied forces, completed his combat duty in 1945 when the war ended, and he returned to TN to pursue an engineering degree at Vanderbilt. He resided in Dickson TN and will celebrate his 97th birthday later in November. He has four children who honor his service to our country.



Larry Horn, Pilot 725th Squadron



Front: Andrea Albright (daughter) & Larry Horn

Back: David Horn (son), Tamara James (daughter) & Mike Horn (son)

TRIBUTE TO LEO B. UL By Larry Burns

Leo B. Ul (Barney) did his 50 missions as part of the 726 squadron.

Leo's crew and friends knew him by the nickname of "Barney." The story goes is that when asked what his middle initial stood for, and he told them Boleslaus. They laughed and said "Hell no, it is Barney. And so it stuck.

Below is the only picture of him with his fellow crew members. Leo is the second from the right (standing). He served as a waist gunner and volunteered into service. This is notable because he had a deferment from enlisting because he was a machinist by trade at that time. He flew in several planes so the name of one does not stand out. If their plane was being repaired when their turn came up for a mission, they took another available plane. As of 2018 there was only one remaining member of the crew.

As with most of those who served, he did not talk much about his experiences.



Top Row Standing from left to right:

1. Ted Rogal Pilot
2. Phil Haubert Pilot
3. Unknown**
4. Chuck Heckler
5. Bill Kirkendall
6. Leo Ul Waist gunner
7. Unknown**

Front Row Seated

1. Unknown**

**Don Garvey, Louis Hernandez and Dave Rossi are in picture but we do not know their ID.

Below is the flight ledger Leo made which lists the sorties, mission count, date and bombing destination.

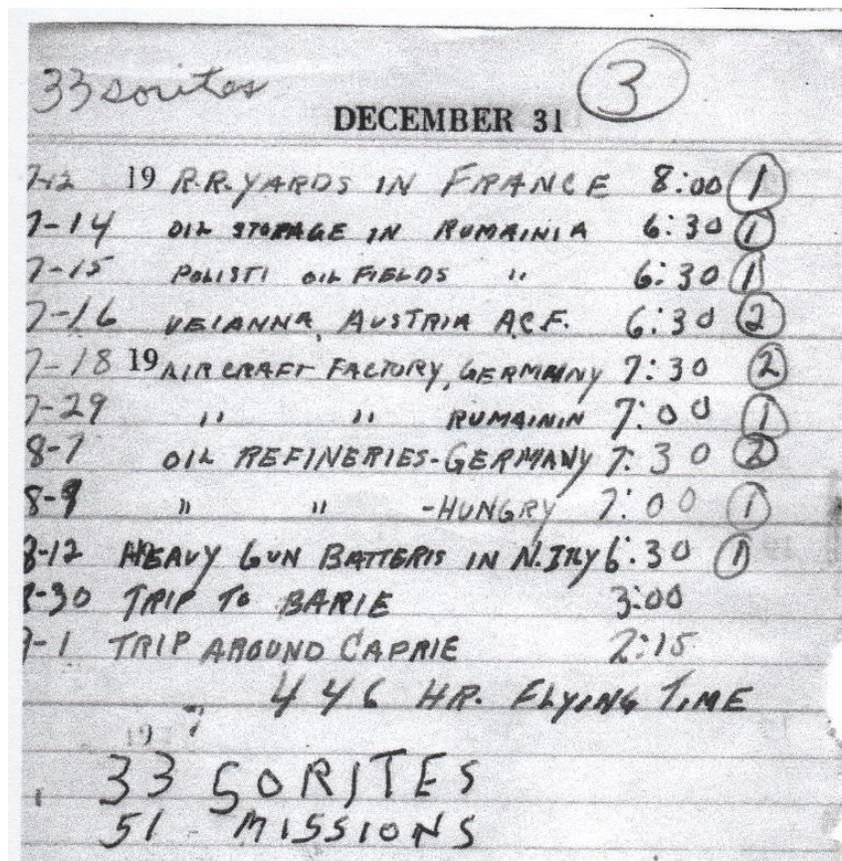
As I am sure you know the mission count was a 1 for low danger flight and a 2 for high danger flight. Thus 33 sorties for 51 missions in a little over 3 months' time.

It is also worth noting that the crew members got their 50 missions at different times. That is due to sickness, injury and filling into other crews for a full flight.

Leo UI Flight Ledger:

| ① 1945 | | MEMORANDUM 7 | |
|---------|-------|--|---|
| 19 | 11:00 | C.C.T.S. Training | |
| 4-16-44 | 8:08 | TUPERA To WEST PALM B. | |
| 4-17-44 | 11:00 | W. PALM BEACH To TRINIDAD | |
| 4-18-44 | 7:00 | TRINIDAD To BELEM, S.A. | |
| 4-19-44 | 10:00 | BELEM To FORT ELIZA. | |
| 4-20-44 | 12:00 | FORT ELIZA To AFRICA ^{DEBAR} | |
| 4-21-44 | 13:00 | DEBAR To AMARACASIA | |
| 4-22-44 | 6:00 | AMARACASIA To ALGIERS | |
| 4-28-44 | 6:00 | ALGIERS To TUNIS. | |
| 5-20-44 | 8:00 | TUNIS To ITALY | |
| 5-3-44 | 4:00 | PATRISSE MISSION | |
| 5-7-44 | 7:30 | MISSION To BUDAPEST, RUMANIA | ② |
| 5-10-44 | 6:30 | AIRPORT IN AUSTRIA | ② |
| 5-12-44 | 6:30 | R.R. YARDS IN N. ITALY | ① |
| 5-13-44 | 6:30 | R.R. YARDS IN N. ITALY | ① |
| 5-14-44 | 6:00 | R.R. YARDS ON ISLAND OFF N. ITALY | ① |
| 5-17-44 | 6:00 | POLESTI OIL FIELDS, RUMANIA | ② |
| 5-18-44 | 7:00 | BRIDGE IN N. ITALY | ① |
| 5-23-44 | 4:00 | ROADS IN C. ITALY | ① |

| ② | | MEMORANDUM | |
|---------|-------|--------------------------------|---|
| 5-24-44 | 7:00 | AIRFIELDS IN AUSTRIA | ② |
| 5-26-44 | 8:30 | R.R. YARDS IN FRANCE | ① |
| 5-30-44 | 6:30 | AIRCRAFT FACTORY IN AUSTRIA | ② |
| 6-1-44 | 6:30 | R.R. YARDS IN HUNGARY | ② |
| 6-2-44 | 12:30 | GUNNERY MISSION | |
| 6-31-44 | 8:00 | OIL STORAGE IN POLESTI | ② |
| 6-3-44 | 7:15 | R.R. BRIDGE IN N. ITALY | ① |
| 6-6-44 | 8:00 | POLESTI - TURNED BACK | |
| 6-10-44 | 12:00 | OIL STORAGE IN N. ITALY | ① |
| 6-11-44 | 7:00 | " " " " RUMANIA | ② |
| 6-13-44 | 7:30 | AIRCRAFT FACTORIES IN GERMANY | ② |
| 6-14-44 | 7:00 | OIL DUMPS IN HUNGARY | ② |
| 6-23-44 | 7:30 | OIL DUMPS IN HUNGARY | ② |
| 6-25-44 | 2:00 | OIL DUMPS IN ITALY TURNED BACK | |
| 6-26-44 | 4:00 | " " " " AUSTRIA TURNED BACK | |
| 6-28-44 | 7:30 | R.R. YARDS IN RUMANIA | ② |
| 6-30-44 | 6:30 | OIL REFINERIES IN GERMANY | ① |
| 7-2-44 | 7:00 | BUDAPEST RUMANIA R.R. YARDS | ② |
| 7-3-44 | 7:00 | OIL DUMP IN " | ② |
| 7-7-44 | 7:30 | " " " " AUSTRIA | ③ |



FINANCIAL REPORT

The 451st Bomb Group Association does not charge annual dues. Your generous contributions help cover expenses for printing/mailling the newsletter, and for maintaining the website, www.451st.org. Please let us know if an electronic version of the newsletter is acceptable in lieu of a paper copy, as that helps lower costs.

| 451st BG Association Financial Report | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Beginning Balance October, 2020 | \$6,837.41 | |
| Income | | |
| Donations | | \$1,995.10 |
| Interest | | \$ 0.78 |
| Total Income | | \$1,995.88 |
| Expenses | | |
| Nov Printing | | \$ 575.00 |
| Nov Newsletter Postage | | \$ 282.97 |
| Total Expenses | | \$ 857.97 |
| Ending Balance April, 2021 | \$7,975.32 | |