



## 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Newsletter No. 23 August 2023



Published for the preservation of our 451<sup>st</sup> heritage.

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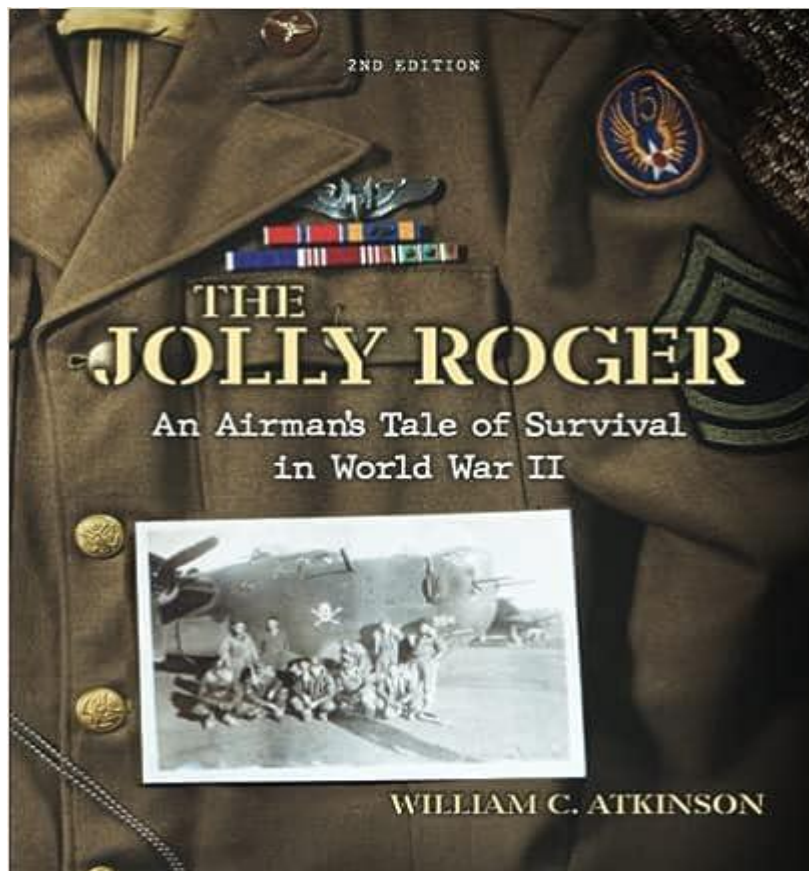
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### MANAGERS MESSAGE

This edition of the newsletter includes several member submitted articles, and a birthday message on page 14.

A “new” (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) book written by William C. Atkinson, son of 451<sup>st</sup> veteran James C. Atkinson is now available. I recently finished reading it and thoroughly enjoyed. Here is an excerpt:



*There were no visible flames, only intense, searing heat. At once, his entire flight suit caught fire, and with no conscious thought he reached for his parachute at his feet against the waist window bulkhead. Instinctively, he tucked it under his arms like a football and dove through the open window, the force of the leap tearing loose the attachments to the airplane of his headphones, throat microphone and oxygen mask.*

*Through a hurricane of wind rushing past him, he frantically ran his right hand over the chute searching for the metal clips to snap onto the D-rings on the front of the parachute harness he wore. The wind burned his eyes, and he was unable to see anything clearly. With his left hand, he maintained a death*

*grip on the chute's carrying handle, instinctively unable to let it go. The ground was getting ever closer, although he was unaware just how closely it was approaching.*

*Suddenly, he felt the clip in his hand, gripped it, and gave it a forceful snap onto the D-ring of the harness. There was no time to search for the other clip. Nearing panic, he grappled for the ripcord, finally finding it and tearing it away from the chute pack. The canopy and shrouds streamed out carrying the chute pack with it, his left hand still gripped tightly to the carrying handle. The sudden upward force of the streaming parachute snapped his arm overhead resulting in a sudden, severe pain in his left shoulder. He released the handle of the carrying case which was carried overhead along with the shrouds.*

*Throughout the struggle with the parachute, he had only one conscious thought. He feared that the canopy would be ablaze, and he would plunge to his death beneath the burning chute. He glanced up, and through the haze of his limited vision, could see the outline of the streaming canopy overhead. Suddenly, and with tremendous force, the canopy opened, abruptly arresting his fall. His head snapped back violently, causing immediate pain in his neck. He looked up to see the huge silk canopy bellowing open.*

*Then there was complete quiet. Attached to the parachute by a single clip, he listed slightly in his harness and felt the straps digging into his groin. He glanced down only to see the ground rushing up toward him. With a sudden jolting force, he struck the ground. His knees were shoved to beneath his chin, and he rolled over onto his back.*

*The parachute canopy filled with breeze, and it dragged him a few feet through the soft, loose dirt. Finally, it collapsed, and he lay on his side in the warm dirt. The ground was familiar to him, the texture and aroma well known to him from his childhood. For a moment, he felt safe and secure. Then excruciating pain overwhelmed him.*

If you're interested in purchasing, it's available on Amazon:

[https://www.amazon.com/Jolly-Roger-Airmans-Survival-World/dp/1685931162/ref=sr\\_1\\_3?crid=3JETEWQQ95I2G&keywords=jolly+roger+book&qid=1690228118&sprefix=jolly+roger+book%2Caps%2C209&sr=8-3](https://www.amazon.com/Jolly-Roger-Airmans-Survival-World/dp/1685931162/ref=sr_1_3?crid=3JETEWQQ95I2G&keywords=jolly+roger+book&qid=1690228118&sprefix=jolly+roger+book%2Caps%2C209&sr=8-3)

The 2023 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force Reunion is scheduled for October 12-15, 2023, in Fairfax County, VA. All arrangements have been finalized and details including registration, hotel reservations and itinerary can be accessed from this link: <https://451st.org/Reunion/Reunion.html>

I hope you enjoy the newsletter!

*Jonathan*

## **BUCK – David Eagles**

Note from Dana Eagles – Dad (David Eagles) wrote the following account about his WWII friend, Robert Miller, also known as Buck. He wrote this account on January 21, 2010. Dad's account of events... I made minor edits to his account for the purpose of clarity only.

### (Buck) Robert Miller

In the spring of 1944 while doing my training as an aerial gunner at Tyndall Fld. FLA. I attended an impromptu wrestling match. One of the contestants was Buck Miller from Hawaiian Islands. He won more than one match that evening.

Our training involved handheld 50 cal. Machine guns mounted on a post and 12 ga. Shotguns fired on ranges. Buck was always in competition with me on moving base ranges, shooting shotguns off the back of trucks at high and low projected skeet targets. We lived in the barracks. He was a very neat person and enjoyed competition.

I soon learned he was the lightweight wrestling champion of the Hawaiian Islands. He was always competing, even while doing overseas training in Charleston, S.C.

In August of 1944 my crew was assigned to the 451<sup>st</sup> B.G., 726<sup>th</sup> Sqdn, 15<sup>th</sup> AAF Castelluccio which is near Foggia, Italy. Not long after we had been in combat, Buck arrived in our 726<sup>th</sup> Sqdn with his crew and set up a tent across the road.

On Buck's crew was a fellow from Oklahoma and he loved motorcycles. Eventually he somehow bought a military British motorbike. Often equipment like this became available by midnight requisition. Buck also liked motorbikes. Many times, I went with him to visit friends in other squadrons on the base.

On Nov. 5, 1944 we were assigned on the same mission to bomb Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, mission number 213. Buck and his crew were scheduled to fly on left wing on Charlie flight. The flight to Sarajevo was routine. We shaped up at the I.P. It was close formation with bomb bay doors open ready to drop, but for whatever reason we continued on over the target, but did not drop our bombs after all that tension and flak.

Over our intercom our pilot, Bill Hunter, announced we were going to make a second run at a specific altitude that came over command radio by the group leader. Nothing like informing the enemy about your next move! So around we came. Thank God there were no German fighters to jump us, only our own P-51s. The flak came up medium, but accurate. We took some light hits, but off to our side

planes dropped away and flew at lower altitudes for whatever reasons. Some chutes were seen and drifted off, but when regrouped Buck's plane was missing.

Back at the squadron debriefing, we hear about chutes that were seen coming from Buck's plane. At that was a sigh of relief. Later the next day they came and cleared out the personal stuff from Buck's crew. It was always a sad thing to watch happening to people who became part of your short combat life.

After a day like this, having a shot of whiskey, a cup of coffee and a cigarette, was quite relaxing. It's hard to describe, and after a light bit of food and off to sleep, sheer exhaustion!

For several days after I checked with squadron intelligence and day clerk, but no news.

Sometimes we were assigned the night before a mission, so one would turn in at an early hour. For it was up early to prepare yourself and dress for the next day's duty. If you were not flying the next day, one has a way of not responding fully if woke in the middle of the night.

About 10 days after the Sarajevo raid, late at night, someone shook me awake. "It's me, Al", he said as I looked up at a bearded face, which I didn't recognize. Know the voice, "It's me, Al", from Buck Miller's crew. I then woke to see a man in dirty clothes and very nervous. "How did you get here?" "By car", he replied. My next question was, where is Buck. No reply.

Then as his story came out piece-by-piece, other of my crew woke to listen. They were hit bad and the bail out bell sounded. Al and the rest of the crew bailed out. Upon landing he joined up with Yugoslavian patriots, then in turn led them to others who made it down safely. At some point they led Al to an unidentified body, which was Robert Miller. His chute had never opened.

Sadly, Al and others buried Miller where he fell. Later his body was exhumed and brought back to the USA.

Al turned out was a special operative placed on an air crew and through some unknown means communicated the moral of the air crews back to Washington. Al gathered some belongings from squadron sadly and left our outfit for Bari, Italy. I never saw or heard Al again. The only other fact that I remember about him was that he came from a well-connected political family from Massachusetts.

The mission to Sarajevo was Dad's 17<sup>th</sup> combat mission. The mission took place on November 7, 1944.



**David Eagles standing outside his casa at the 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Airbase in Castelluccio - 1944**

The loss of friends was one of the hardest things for Dad to live with during his combat experiences in WWII. I recall Dad saying that when he arrived in Italy, he quickly learned not to get too close to other airmen on the base. The war forced him to adapt quickly to regular occurrences of death and tragedy. He had just turned twenty years old when he flew his first combat mission in a B-24. He was still twenty years old when he flew his 35<sup>th</sup> and last combat mission seven months later. The war changed him forever.



**LAST FLYBY**

Here are the death notifications since our March 2023 Newsletter:

| 451st Member       | Squadron          | Duty Position                | DOD        |
|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Bott, Fred T.      |                   |                              | 01.01.2003 |
| Clower, Ervin      | 727 <sup>th</sup> | Top Turret Gunner            | 05.06.2023 |
| Gates, Henry       | 726 <sup>th</sup> |                              | 07.12.2012 |
| Martin, Robert R.  | 724 <sup>th</sup> | Waist Gunner                 | 12.06.2013 |
| Rosenfeld, John L. | 725 <sup>th</sup> | Ground Communication Officer | 08.15.2020 |
| Thompson, Harold   | 727 <sup>th</sup> | Pilot                        | 03.03.2023 |
| Wagner, William H. | 724 <sup>th</sup> | Pilot                        | 09.10.2015 |

**THANK YOU, DONORS!**

| Donor              | In Tribute To                                                             |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Chalfen, Marc      | In tribute to Melvin B. Chalfen, 726 <sup>th</sup> Squadron, Pilot        |
| Cosby, Stan        | In tribute to the 451 <sup>st</sup> Bomb Group                            |
| Crum, Norm         | In memory of Capt. George W. Crum, 455 <sup>th</sup> Bomb Group           |
| Jones, Gene Joseph | In memory of Joseph Jones, 725 <sup>th</sup> Squadron, Nose Turret Gunner |
| Walkey, Cliff      | In memory of Thomas E. Walkey, 726 <sup>th</sup> Sq., Squadron Commander  |

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:

451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group  
 c/o Jonathan Tudor  
 12605 Goldenrod Avenue  
 Bradenton, FL 34212

OR

Zelle® to 207-730-0465

OR

Venmo to <https://account.venmo.com/u/jontudor>

## TRIBUTE TO R.C. DEHART by Andrew Wilson

## R.C. Dehart 1922 - 1944



On the 13<sup>th</sup> of November 1922, R.C. Dehart was born in Bessmay, Jasper County in Texas USA. His father Rasberry "Ras" Dehart was a 36 year old farmer, originally from Raleigh in Mississippi and his mother Jettie, a housewife from Buna in Texas. He was their fourth child.

By the time he was 19 he was working for the Kirby Lumber Corp in Bessmay. He was drafted on June 30<sup>th</sup> 1942 when he was described as 6'2" tall, weighing 185lb with a "ruddy" complexion, brown hair and brown eyes.



R.C. Dehart

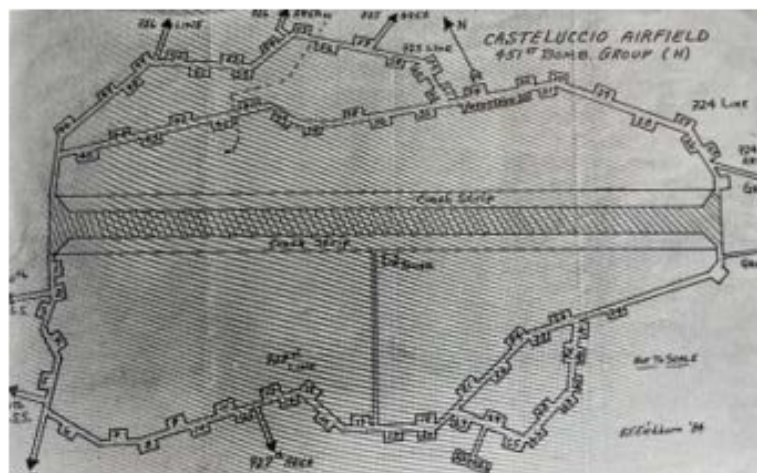
After completing his training as an Air Gunner he attained the rank of Staff Sergeant (S/Sgt) and was posted to the 724<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group, 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force, USAAF. The 724<sup>th</sup> were equipped with Consolidated B-24H Liberator bombers and RC was tail gunner of aircraft serial 41-29251 named "She Hasta/Impatient Virgin". All of the squadron's planes were given names, although the origins of "251" is unfortunately unknown.

The squadron transferred from their base at Fairmont Army Airfield, Nebraska, USA and arrived at their new home at Gioia del Colle in Italy on 20<sup>th</sup> of November 1943, before moving on to Castelluccio in April 1944. Sharing the base were three other USAAF Liberator squadrons from the 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group - the 725<sup>th</sup>, 726<sup>th</sup> and 727<sup>th</sup>.

Castelluccio is approximately 120km east south east of Perugia in Umbria, Italy and the airfield was located on a plateau some three hundred foot above an expanse of wheat fields.

The 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group had carried out 63 bombing missions across war-torn Europe before June 11<sup>th</sup> 1944. Mission 64 was to be an attack on the oil storage depot at Giurgiu in Romania – a round trip (as the crow flies) of approximately 1850km/1150mi/1000nmi.

"251" (Code Letter "N") was one of two spare aircraft listed for the second attack unit of the 724<sup>th</sup> on the Giurgiu raid, although it is not known which aircraft it ended up replacing. Each attack unit consisted of three flights of six aircraft, the second unit flying below and behind the first unit ("high" and "low" flights).



Castelluccio Airfield, Italy – Home of the 451st

The crew for the Giurgiu mission was:

|                    |                                        |
|--------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Pilot              | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt Charles R Haun      |
| Co-Pilot           | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt Laurens A Woodhouse |
| Navigator          | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt Willard R Ginder Jr |
| Bombardier         | 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lt Harold H Egbert     |
| Upper Gunner       | T/Sgt Robert W Saurin                  |
| Left Waist Gunner  | T/Sgt George P Carter                  |
| Right Waist Gunner | S/Sgt Leslie A Cahil                   |
| Nose Gunner        | S/Sgt Gerald R Livesay                 |
| Lower Gunner       | S/Sgt Louis Chused                     |
| Tail Gunner        | S/Sgt RC Dehart                        |



**"MISSING IN ACTION"**

Standing: Saurin, AEG; Cahill, WG; Dehart, TG (KIA); Chused, BG; Carter, WG, (KIA); Livesay, NG  
 Kneeling: Keech, CP (not on mission); Egbert, B; C.R. Haun Pilot; (Woodhouse and Ginder, replacement CP and N not pictured)

*The only known picture of 251's crew*

The vast majority of the crew were familiar with each other, the only difference being Charles R Haun, the pilot, this being his first mission with the already established crew.

The night of June 10<sup>th</sup> will have been the same as for many bomber crews across Europe. The night before a mission was handled in each crew member's own way. Some slept easily, well used to the routine

and accepting of the danger that lay ahead. Others couldn't sleep, afraid of what the next mission could bring. Many thought only of their loved ones and whether they would ever see them again. Countless last letters were written in the hours before rising.

Well before the first light of dawn the crews would have been up and ready, walking towards their fuelled and bombed up aircraft. The first unit started their engines at 0445, with all eighteen Liberators taxiing out from dispersal to the runway at 0455. The second unit, including "251" started their engines at 0455, moving out to the runway at 0505.

From 0505 all anyone for miles around would have heard was the roar of four Pratt and Whitney engines every minute and a half as thirty nine heavily laded bombers struggle skywards for their three hour plus flight to target. Once airborne (all aircraft would be off the ground by 0605) the 451<sup>st</sup> formed up and rendezvoused with a similar number of aircraft from the 484<sup>th</sup> and 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Groups scheduled at 0622. From there, an escort of 40 P-38 Lightnings would accompany them towards the target and rendezvous for the return journey.



0905), dropping six hundred and ninety-six 250lb general purpose bombs from heights between twenty and twenty three thousand feet, before turning for "home". Multiple near misses were recorded against the oil storage tankers, causing blast damage only.

As the formation headed south east and crossed the River Danube it was "very aggressively" attacked by a number of German aircraft numbering fifteen Messerschmitt ME-109's, ten Focke Wolf FW-190's and an Italian Air Force Macchi C.202 Folgore which had a clear run at the bombers as the escort cordon of P-38's were late to the rendezvous. By the time they arrived, the bombers had fought off the attack.

S/Sgt Carl V Heimaster Jr gave a detailed description of how events unfolded:

"On June 11<sup>th</sup> 1944 I was flying as tail gunner in number four position, low flight, of the second attack unit. At 0925 a ME109 made a pass at aircraft 251 at five o'clock, closing within 100 yards and hitting the plane hard at the tail assembly. Fire was returned by the crew of aircraft 251, and I believe credit for the destruction of the attacking aircraft was due to the accurate firing of the men of crew 251.

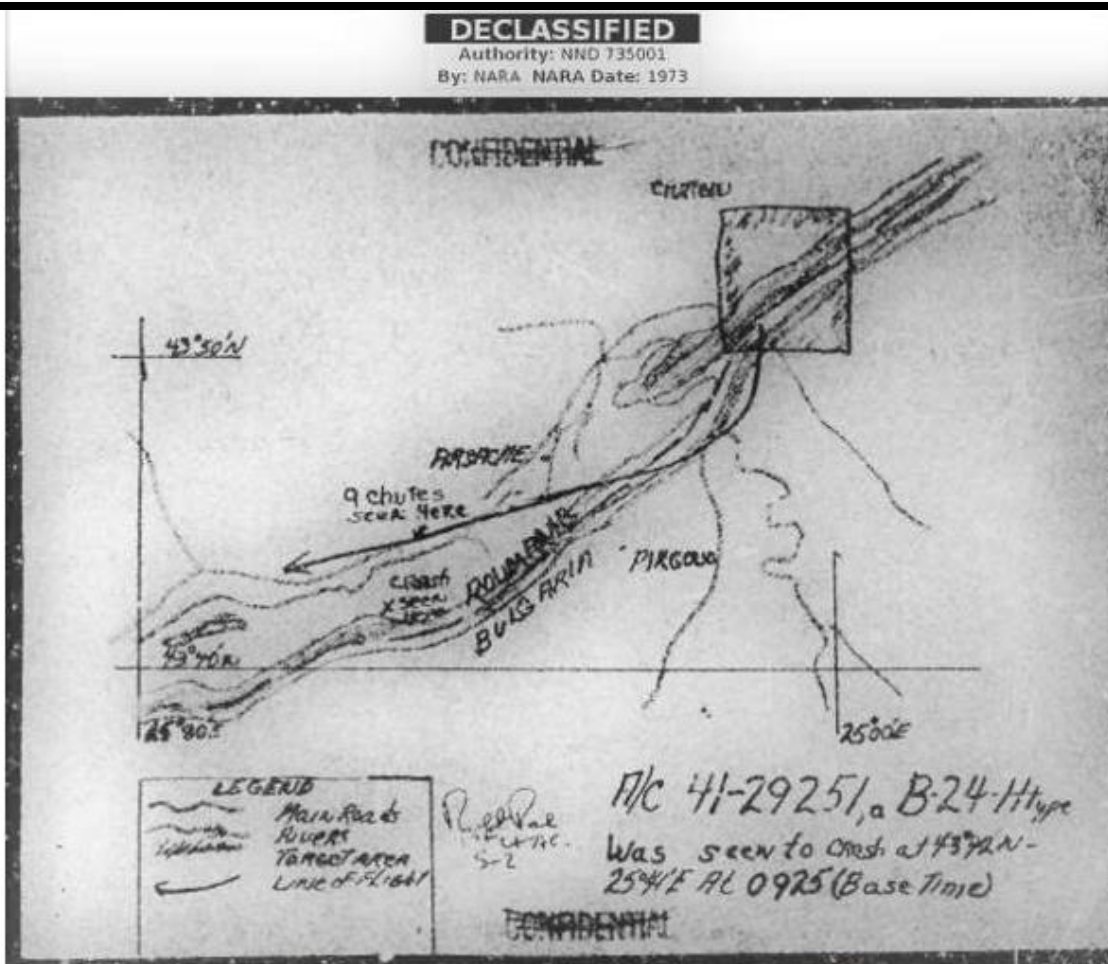
"Aircraft 251 slowly dipped out of formation and nine chutes were seen to open. One failed to open, as far as I could see the nine men who bailed out landed in level territory.

"The plane circled, continued to spin and crashed about ten minutes after being hit."

These events were corroborated by S/Sgt David J Denham and S/Sgt Norman J Steiger who were a waist gunner and tail gunner respectively in the number six position in the high flight. S/Sgt Denham recalled events as follows:

"At about 0925, just after we left the target and crossed the Danube River I saw several enemy fighters making passes at the low flight. Aircraft 251, flying in number seven position in the low flight began struggling behind the formation. When it was about three or four hundred yards back parachutes began opening. The aircraft remained under control and made a bank back in the direction of the target.

During this time I saw ten men leave the ship and nine parachutes open. The man whose parachute did not open may have opened it later but I did not see it. Immediately after the last man jumped, the ship went into a steep dive and I saw it crash and explode".



Hand Drawn Map taken from the Missing Aircrew Report for 41-29251

The attack had come at the cost of one aircraft, 41-29251 against a reported six ME109's "destroyed", one ME109 and one C.202 "probably destroyed" and one ME109 and one FW190 "damaged". The remaining Liberators reached base at 1235.

The fate of "251's" crew can be pieced together through Prisoner of War Interrogation Reports submitted by the survivors later in the war. Haun, Woodhouse, Ginder, Egbert, Saurin, Cahil, Livesay, Chused and Dehart all landed safely and were taken prisoner. After their release Haun, Saurin and Woodhouse provided insight in their "Casualty Information on Former Crews" reports on what happened to George Carter and R.C. Dehart.

It was confirmed that George P. Carter, the left side waist gunner, was the crew member whose parachute did not open. He was last seen in the stricken aircraft by Cahil, standing next to the left waist window with his parachute on. It is thought that he had suffered a head wound but not debilitating. Saurin was of the opinion that he never got out of the aircraft although this contradicts the previous and multiple accounts of all ten men having left but only nine parachutes opening. The two possibilities put forward are that either Carter's chute malfunctioned or he was caught in the plane's slipstream and hit the tail structure either knocking him out or killing him.

The Casualty Report of the co-pilot, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Laurens A Woodhouse gives the most complete account of what happened to R.C. Dehart. He had the last conversation with him on board "251" as he called the approaching fighters over the Liberator's interphone.

"S/Sgt Dehart was grazed on the head by a 20mm bullet. Sgt Cahil threw him from the plane and he opened his own chute".

Upon landing, Dehart and the others were captured by the Bulgarians – although the aircraft crashed in Romania, the parachutes landed on the other side of the Danube. Robert W Saurin's testimony provides insight into what happened next:

"The Bulgarians refused to feed him or treat his wounds and he was placed in a damp, cold cell with other prisoners where he caught what we think was pneumonia. He died on the operating table later due to his wounds".

Charles R Haun, the pilot, came across Dehart at a hospital in Ruse/Rusechuk and noted that "when I last talked with him on June 28<sup>th</sup> 1944 he seemed very weak". A few days later Haun and the others were taken to the prison camp at Schuman, Bulgaria – leaving Dehart behind.

Haun continued; "About three weeks later, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Malachi J Redington informed me an EM (Enlisted Man) answering the description of S/Sgt Dehart had died".

Woodhouse also commented that "It is believed by all crew members that saw Sgt Dehart, that he would have lived had he been given proper medical attention".

On the 15<sup>th</sup> December 1948 S/Sgt R.C. Dehart's body was repatriated from Italy and interred at plot S 141 at the US National Cemetery, Fort Sam Houston, Texas.



Andrew Wilson  
[toonaew@aol.com](mailto:toonaew@aol.com)

**P.S. - Would love to hear from relatives of the members of my Great Uncle's crew.  
Thanks, Andrew**



**Images of B-24 Rear Gun Turret**  
**Images taken at Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum, United Kingdom**





## Sources:

[www.451st.org](http://www.451st.org) :

### History of the 451st

[https://www.451st.org/History/pdf's/History-of-the-451st-Bombardment-Group%20\\_H\\_.pdf](https://www.451st.org/History/pdf's/History-of-the-451st-Bombardment-Group%20_H_.pdf)

### Daily Operations Reports 11<sup>th</sup> June 1944:

<https://www.451st.org/Daily%20Ops%20Reports/Ops%20Reports/440611.1.JPG>

<https://www.451st.org/Daily%20Ops%20Reports/Ops%20Reports/440611.2.JPG>

### Missing Aircrew Report (MACR) for 41-29251 (includes Individual Casualty Questionnaires)

<https://www.451st.org/MACRs/451st%20MACRs/41-29251/41-29251%20Combined.pdf>

### Mission Summaries ("Flimsies")

<https://www.451st.org/Missions/Mission%20Flimsies/451st%20BG%20Pilot%20Flimsies/440611.JPG>

[www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com)

Birth Certificate

Family details

US WW2 Draft Cards Young Men 1940-47

US National Cemetary Interment Control Forms

### Books:

"The Best Seat in the House" by Achilles Kozakis

"The 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group in World War II – A Pictorial History" by Mike Hill

**HAPPY 101<sup>st</sup> BIRTHDAY to ELMER "BROCK" BROCKMEIER**

Happy birthday to Elmer Brockmeier who turned 101 years old in January. Elmer was a Bombardier with the 726th Squadron.

**Elmer Brockmeier Then**



**Elmer Brockmeier Now**



## NEPHEW SEEKS INFORMATION ON UNCLE AND CREW

**Note** – This account is told in 3 parts; Part I Reprint of article from Ad Lib #9, Part II Reprint from article from Ad Lib #10 and Part III, present day.

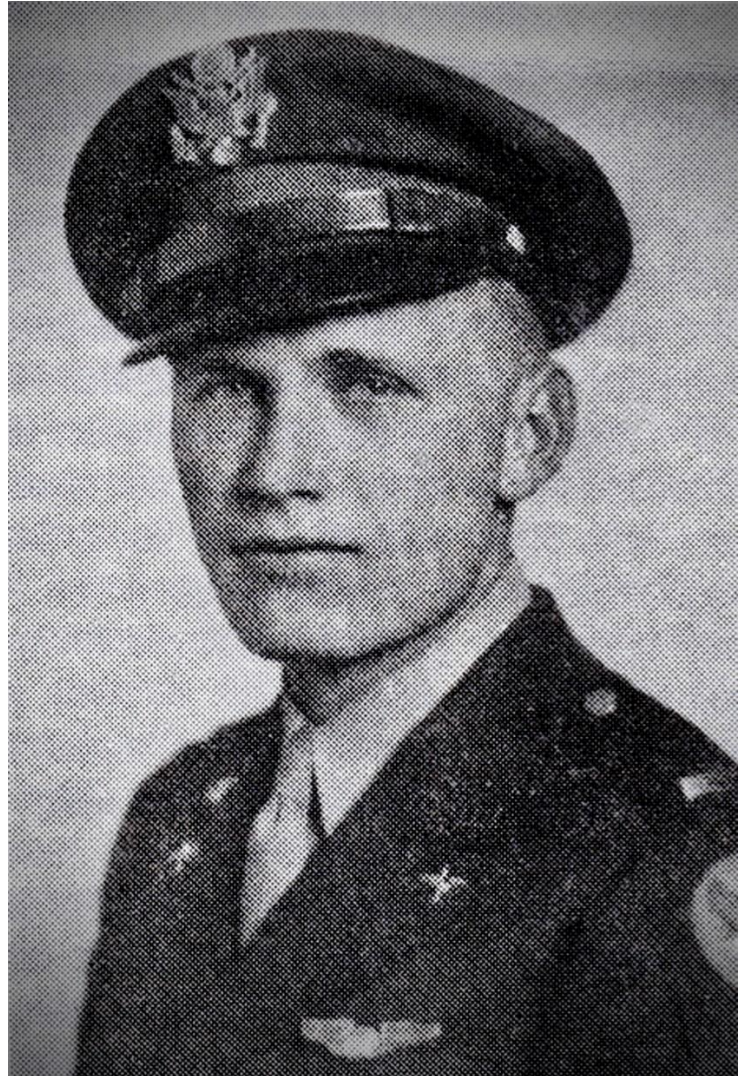
### Part I Ad Lib #9 – Nephew Seeks Information on Uncle and Crew by Bob Karstensen

“2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Lawrence M. Rushing G-747324 of the 727<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron. Anyone recall the name? Lt. Rushing was killed but not as a battle casualty, on 7 February 1944, while the Group was stationed at

Gioia del Colle, Italy. The facts of his death are not clear to the nephew, Robert A. Rushing, Jr. of Spokane Washington and he is hoping someone within our association can shed some light on this (almost) 40 year mystery.

Lt. Rushing served as co-pilot on the aircraft commanded by Lt. Wilfred B. McAllister. Other members of the crew were: David H. Love, Navigator -- Alphonse Szymanek Bombardier. Enlisted crewmembers were John E. Oprisko, AEG – Joe D. Schermerhorn ROMG – Robert J. Wood. AG – Joseph F. Garde, AG – John B. Massa, AG -- sixth gunner unknown.

On the date of Lt Rushing's death, the Morning Report refers to the promotion of T/Sgt. Harry D. Henderson to M/Sgt and the upgrading of Oprisko, Koenigseker, Suszter, Benardini, Henness, Jezek, Arrington, Sallade and Pickett from Staff to Tech. Also included on the report was one AWOL (name withheld) and one Squadron member, S.S. Young, going on Detached Service to Headquarters (poor copy makes it unclear if it was to Sqdn., Group or Wing).



**2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Lawrence M. Rushing  
Died 7 February 1944**

With what information that has been compiled and the time reference hereby referred to, it may be possible that you have the information that Bob Rushing needs. If so, drop that information to this office. I'll see to it that it is forwarded.”



## Part II Ad Lib #10 – Lt. Rushing’s Death Revealed by Bob Karstensen

“As present in the last newsletter (AD LIB Issue 9 Page 7) I asked the membership if they had any information concerning the death of 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 offered by the government, Bob is now renewing the family search to clarify, and to re-establish the circumstances of his uncle’s death.

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 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group and into the crew of Wilfred B. McAllister (Crew #52, 727<sup>th</sup> 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 excerpts from his letter:

*Dear Bob,*

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

*While reading your enclosure (AD-LIB Issue 9) I came across an article about Lt. Rushings 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 that 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 some assistance to the family of Lt. Rushing.*

*Very truly yours,*

*Milton A. Wexler*

**Hop Scotch Flying Over – Crew 52**



**(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 Row L-R): Sgt. Wexler, Sgt. Wood**

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. Monninger's 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,*

*Roget T. Fox*

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). Beal 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 5<sup>th</sup> 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 has been the co-pilot for Forest N. Jones (Group's 1<sup>st</sup> Silver Star recipient) and was highly regarded by all members of his crew.*

*Thanks for the great work you are doing.*

*Art Morin*

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 no diminish his keen interest in the outdoors. He had often written his family of his desire to



**Sicily-Rome Cemetery  
Nettuno, Italy**

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 7<sup>th</sup> 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 the 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. POWs listed were Jack T. Sarget, navigator, Al Szymanek, bombardier, Charles Bistline, engineer, John B. Massa, waist gunner, Milton Wexler, tail gunner.

### Part III Present Day – Bob Rushing

My wife and I went to Italy in 2016 and went to the Sicily-Rome Cemetery where my uncle is buried and took pictures - it was so well taken care of and a very moving experience for me. Many people may have wondered why some service men were sent home to be buried and some buried in the country where they died, and in the case of my uncle his place of enlistment was in Arkansas but at the time of his death all of the family members had moved to Washington because of the jobs available. The military would pay to send a body back to the city of record where the serviceman



**Bob & Barbara Rushing at the marker for Bob's Uncle  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Lawrence M. Rushing**

enlisted but the family would have been responsible to pay for the cost from the enlistment city to the new location of the family and our family just did not have the funds and so they elected to have my uncle's remains buried in country.



During the war, temporary wartime cemeteries were established. After WWII, the temporary cemeteries were disestablished by the US Army. The remains of American military whose next-of-kin requested permanent interment overseas were moved to one of the fourteen permanent sites

on foreign soil between 1947-1954. There they were reinterred by the American Graves Registration Service.

Each grave is marked with a white marble headstone, a Star of David for those of the Jewish faith—a Latin cross for the others. There are 7,371 known burials and 490 unknown burials at the Sicily-Rome Cemetery.

There can be no further burials in the American military cemeteries overseas except for those remains which may in the future be found on the battlefields. The graves with their memorials constitute inviolable shrines.



**LAWRENCE M. RUSHING**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> LT 727 BOMB SQ 451 BOMB GP (H)**  
**ARKANSAS FEBRUARY 7, 1944**

**DEVIL'S DUCHESS – By Gene Jones**

**Note: Gene Jones is the son of Joseph Jones, Nose Turret Gunner, 725<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

Lt. Bert Brown, pilot for Dad's B-24 "Devil's Duchess" gave each crew member a watch with the face showing the Devil's Duchess.

I have Dad's watch and it is still ticking - a memory of that plane and crew





## A GLIMPSE FROM THE PAST

*Note The article below is a reprint of the article by Keith Saliba that appeared in the Albany Herald on May 25th, 2003.*

“Fate lends a helping hand in brining two old war buddies back together.



**Veterans Donald Ten Hagen, left and Ray Barrett reunited at Magnolia Manor assisted-living facility in Americus nearly six decades after they shared a housing tent in Italy during World War II.**

It was the license plate that did it. There, in bold lettering strapped across the car’s front bumper, Ray Barrett caught a glimpse of his past, of a lifelong since left behind: the 451<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group.

Could it be true that a member of his old-World War II unit was living at Magnolia Manor, the same Americus assisted-living facility Barrett had called home since June 2002?

He had to find out.

So, the 82-year-old former U.S. Army Air Corps bombardier began to watch and wait, hoping to discover just who owned the car – and the license plate.

Barrett eventually narrowed his list of suspects to one man: Donald Ten Hagen, a new resident who had just moved in with his wife, Ruth, a few weeks before.

As it turns out, Ten Hagen had indeed served with the 451<sup>st</sup>.

But when neither Barrett nor Ten Hagen could've guessed was that they had done much more than merely serve in the same unit. The two had been roommates.

For three very cold and rainy months near the end of the war, Barrett and Ten Hagen had shared a muddy tent within the confines of the Castellucia Airfield in north-central Italy, piloting their B-24 Liberators on bombing runs by day, and sleeping away the exhaustion by night.

Now, nearly six decades later, fate had again united the erstwhile aviators under the same roof.

"It's what I consider a rather unusual crossing of paths," says the 81-year-old Ten Hagen with a chuckle. "We're talking about 60 years here."

Barrett couldn't agree more.

"You just don't expect to meet someone again that you knew 58 years ago," says Barrett.

The coincidence is rendered all the more striking because neither Barrett nor Ten Hagen are from Southwest Georgia.

Because his wife is from Albany, Ten Hagen, a New York native, chose the area to open a drugstore after the war.

Connecticut-born Barrett relocated to Albany from Florida in 1999 so that he and his wife could be closer to their daughter.

Age and health reasons then brought both couple to Magnolia Manor.

But considering the conditions under which Ten Hagen last saw Barrett, the situation becomes stranger still.



On a cold February morning in 1945, elements of the 451<sup>st</sup> – including Ten Hagen and Barrett – took off for a bombing run over an oil refinery near Vienna Austria.

But long before the big bombers could reach their target, the sky around them filled with deadly anti-aircraft fire from the frozen Austrian countryside below.

Moments later a fiery shell ripped through the nose of Barrett's plane, blasting a gaping hole not 5 feet from where the bombardier was seated.

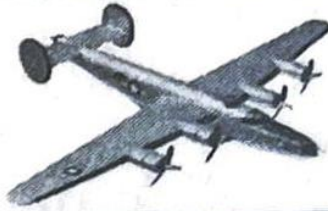
"All of a sudden there was a loud explosion" says Barrett. "About 90 percent of the nose was gone."

Meanwhile, Ten Hagen, copilot aboard another plane, struggled to avoid the burning wreckage of his friend's aircraft.

"We just tried to get out of the way," says Ten Hagen, then just 21. "You're so busy flying, it's hard to concentrate on anything else."

## Hazardous mission

On February 7, 1945, Ray Barrett's 451st bomb group, stationed in Italy, is sent on a mission to destroy an oil refinery just outside of Vienna, Austria. Barrett's B-24 bomber is shot down near the target over Austria.



JOE BELLACOMO/staff

Barrett, who remembers nothing after the shell hit, believe that he was sucked out of the hole, yet somehow managed to pull his parachute ripcord.

He woke up two days later in a German field clinic, shrapnel embedded in his left leg and ankle.

Back at the air base, Ten Hagen went about the grim task of packing up the belongings of a man he assumed would no longer need them.

“When you’re young, things don’t hit you as quick,” says Ten Hagen. “But anytime anyone goes down, it’s a pretty good friend.”

But Barrett was far from the world of the dead, albeit in the hands of the enemy.

Luckily, he drew a kindly German doctor who had earned his medical degree from the University of Chicago.

#### **LEGACY OF THE 451<sup>ST</sup> GROUP**

- Formed Spring of 1943 in Tucson Ariz
- Commanding officer: Col. Robert E.L, Eaton
- Complement: Four squadrons of 18 B-24 Liberators each
- Personnel: 4,500 men
- Based: Italy
- Targets: German strategic interests throughout the Mediterranean and Southern Europe.
- Total combat missions: 245
- Casualties: 245 killed in action, hundreds more captured
- Commendations: Three Presidential Unit Citations
- Disbanded: Fall of 1945

“He was very friendly guy who missed the U.S.A very much,” says Barrett. “He told me he thought Americans were a fine people.”

The doctor repaired Barrett’s wounds, and a week later the then 23-year-old was loaded aboard a boxcar enroute to the storied German prison camp, Stalag 17b.

The only American aboard, Barrett found himself surrounded by 19 Russian POWs.

For three weeks, the men subsisted on nothing more than water and a single load of bread each day.

Barrett recalls making a stop in Vienna. A clock tower visible through the slats of the boxcar told him that it was midnight. Nearby, the voices of singing German soldiers wafted from a raucous beerhall.

Incredibly, none of this seemed to worry Barrett.

“I wasn’t scared at all,” he says. “They were having a good time drinking their beer and I enjoyed the singing.”

Despite the cold and hunger, Barrett says he was well treated by his German captors both during the train ride and after reaching the prison camp.

Luckily, Barrett’s stay was to be a short one. On May 12, 1945, he was liberated.

These days the two old aviators don’t have much time for socializing, even after their curious reunion.

Doctors’ appointments pile up. And in yet another, much more tragic coincidence, both men’s wives suffer from Alzheimer’s disease and require much attention.

But there is still the occasional story, the shared memory of men who have come through fires together.

Time to remember those days so long ago when it fell to young men of the “Fightin’ 451<sup>st</sup>” to take to the heavens each day, braving the black explosions of ack-ack and the whine of preying German fighters to help bring the Nazi juggernaut to its knees.

And for now, that is enough.”

## FINANCIAL REPORT

The 451st Bomb Group Association does not charge annual dues. Your generous contributions help cover expenses for printing/mailing the newsletter, and for maintaining the website, [www.451st.org](http://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

|                                      |                   |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Beginning Balance March, 2023</b> | <b>\$8,805.78</b> |
| <b><u>Income</u></b>                 |                   |
| Donations                            | \$1,400.00        |
| Interest                             | <u>\$144.30</u>   |
| <b>Total Income</b>                  | <b>\$1,544.30</b> |
| <b><u>Expenses</u></b>               |                   |
| May Newsletter                       | <u>\$464.97</u>   |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                | <b>\$464.97</b>   |
| <b>Ending Balance June, 2023</b>     | <b>\$9,885.11</b> |