

DESERT VICTORY



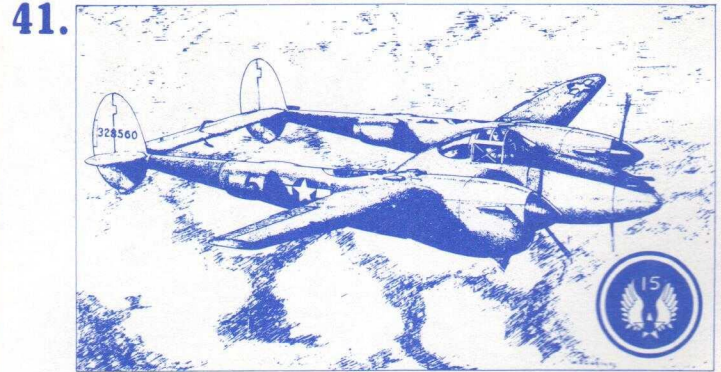
**WELCOME HOME
WELL DONE**

The 15th Air Force Association Post Exchange

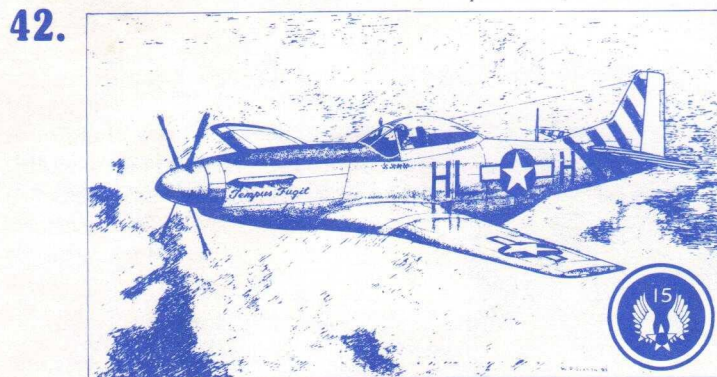
Our new PX is a mail order operation which offers a reasonably priced line of quality concession items useful to promote our history, raise needed funds, and provide another member service, since most of the items are unique and not generally available. Our current offering includes over 50 items. The order form on page 20 has complete listings with prices and directions for ordering. Space limitations prevent a complete description of each item in every edition. This page will be devoted to descriptions and photos of some items in each edition. The item number is keyed to the order form.



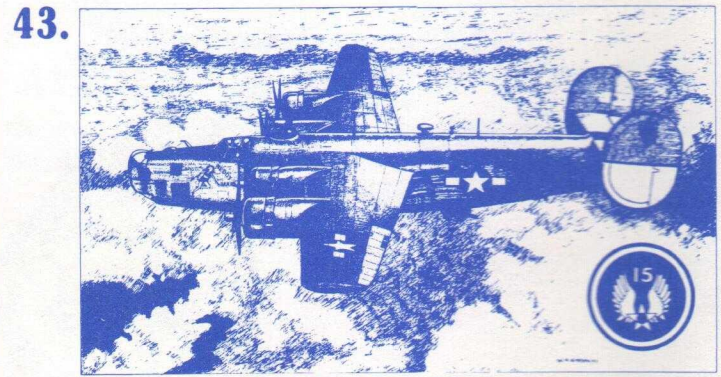
A B17 Flying Fortress Bomber of the 15th Air Force



P38 LIGHTNING of the 15th Air Force



P51 MUSTANG "TEMPUS FUGIT" of the 15th Air Force



B 24 LIBERATOR "REDDY MAID" of the 15th Air Force

Items 39 thru 44

Copper Etchings. Aircraft etched onto copper with acid, highly polished, lacquered, and framed in mahogany finished frame.

Size: 19" X 12"

Price: \$49.95

Copper Etched Integrated Picture Clock. Items 39 thru 44 can be ordered as a clock mounted in a deep box-section rosewood frame with stainless trim and a fitted quartz movement.

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Customer Special Designs. You may customize your etchings with your own design or aircraft type reproduced in exquisite detail. Full details and prices on request to Vogel & Sons, PO Box 1752, Waldorf, MD 20604.

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Copy of authentic first rules for early Army aviators. Extracted from Army orders of about 1920, the 27 rules for safe operation of flying machines include "Don't take the machine in the air unless you are sure it will fly", "Never leave the ground with the motor leaking", "When taking off, look at the ground and the air", "Aviators will not wear spurs when flying", etc.

45. *Bomber Pilot; Memoir of WW II.* \$19.95
A B-24 pilot's first hand account of his war experiences including low level over Polesti, bomber attacks over the Normandy invasion, Berlin, Sicily, and Italy.

48. *50th Anniversary B-17 (Book).* \$15.95
Extensive 99 page guide to the ten year design and development of the B-17. It covers in detail the aircraft's political, combat, and peacetime environments and its WW II role. Military serial numbers, colors, combat group markings, specifications, and performance data.

49. *Flight Manual, B-24.* \$11.95
Development of the B-24 Liberator, cockpit controls, flight characteristics, power plant, crew positions, etc. 164 pages, 115 photos, drawings, and graphs. 8½" X 11" softbound.

50. *Aerial Gunners: The Unknown Aces of WW II.* \$13.95
A long overdue tribute to the U.S. bomber and attack plane gunners who took on the best German and Japanese fighter pilots. First hand accounts from every theater of battle. Pearl Harbor, Polesti, Midway, and more. 256 pages, 26 illustrations. 5¼" X 8¼" softbound.

SORTIE

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE



VOL VII, NO.1

P.O. Box 6325, March Air Force Base, California 92518

DESERT VICTORY!



Welcome Home

We are very proud of our men and women who won such a decisive and swift victory in the Persian Gulf War—and I am sure that I echo your feelings of pride and patriotism as we welcome our 15th Air Force people home from the war. We have always been proud to be Americans, proud to have served our country, and equally proud to have been served in the 15th Air Force, but the spirit of pride that now sweeps across our country seems unique and special. I hark back to the VE and VJ celebrations of WW II to find a comparison. As many of us stood along the streets near March Air Force Base and cheered the returning Marines, we agreed that our 15th Air Force men and women deserved a special welcome home, and so was born our 1991 Las Vegas reunion theme—DESERT VICTORY!

We are working with the civilian communities near our bases to solicit their support and sponsorship to send a cross section of our returning 15th Air Force men and women and their families to attend the reunion as our honored guests—and with a patriotic program to welcome them home as heroes who are appreciated by us veterans and by our nation. Contacts have just begun, so we are not sure of the response although we are hopeful that it can be done.

Our reunion dates are 16-19 Sept 1991 at the Mirage Hotel. We are still trying to coordinate with Wayne Newton's Fall schedule, but the Mirage Hotel dates are now firm—we waited so long trying to fit Wayne's schedule that we lost October dates and were in danger of losing our September dates if we delayed further. We remain op-

timistic that Wayne will make an appearance at the reunion. Regardless, I personally promise to "blow your socks off"! This reunion will be the best—the most patriotic—the most heartwarming—the most fun—and the most nostalgic.

Costs of rooms, meals, and convention space have increased some since our 1989 reunion and we are attempting to hold the line on additional costs to prevent pricing our reunion out of reach of our 15th Air Force active duty people—and of course, you and me.

Your response to my request in the last *Sortie* was overwhelming. We have received the greatest expression of support for our reunion plans of any reunion to date. If your response is an indication of attendance, we will break all records. The war seems to have generated an increased interest in our patriotic programs and our memorial observances. Thank you for your generous compliments and your genuine expressions of appreciation for what we are trying to do. We especially appreciate those who cannot attend due to disabilities or health problems, but still wrote to offer encouragement—thank you so much—you are a special people.

Most details of the reunion are included in the centerfold registration cutout. We are certain that the rooms and convention facilities of The Mirage Hotel will exceed those of any previous reunion. We have cut one night from our usual schedule to reduce your costs, but we have actually added events to our reunion package and believe that it remains the "best buy in town". Our program includes our Combat Theater, our full 45 piece 15th Air Force Band, social receptions, our luncheon with the 15th Air Force Commander, old fashioned big band concert, the 15th AFA banquet and program, a special farewell brunch, our memorial observance with Taps and wreath laying, and of course, our flag waving patriotic celebration of our proud heritage. We are also planning a special ladies program which will be included in the reunion package at no additional cost and which will be announced in the next *Sortie*.

To avoid the long lines and extended waiting for seating at the banquet, as was the case at our last reunion, we have elected to assign seating for both the banquet and the luncheon. There are, of course, some disadvantages to assigned seating, but after the experiences of the last reunion, we strongly believe that you will appreciate and support our efforts to eliminate the long and tiring waiting outside the banquet ballroom. The procedure is explained in detail in the reunion registration centerfold, but basically, we will assign you to seats at a table when you return your registration form and check. Tables will be assigned on a first-come basis in the order we receive your form and check, but seating priority will also be given to keeping Groups together. We are purposely arranging the room and staging events so that there will be good seats in all areas of the room. We are excited about the reunion and look forward to seeing you in September!!

OUR LIFE MEMBERS... WE SALUTE YOU!

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CORPORATE MEMBERS

We salute our corporate members,
 who share in the heritage and are committed
 to the service of our country and the defense of our nation.

**NOTE: New life members
 are bold printed.**

★ The national McDonnell Douglas Corporation ★
 ★ Northrop Corporation ★ Howell Instruments, Inc. ★ Lockheed Corporation ★
 ★ American Sound & Video Corporation ★ Armed Services Mutual Benefit Association ★

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Desert Victory—and what a victory! We are proud of each man and woman who served in the Gulf and contributed to such an overwhelming defeat of the forces of Saddam Hussein. We are working now to include some of our returning 15th Air Force people in our reunion activities in Las Vegas.

Our Board of Directors and reunion committees are working hard to make this reunion a special time of patriotic celebrations, memorial observances, and recognition ceremonies for our veterans of WW II, Korea, Vietnam, and now, the Persian Gulf. With the patriotic fervor sweeping our country, I believe that this reunion will be remembered above all others as we gather to celebrate our common heritage.

I appeal to each of you to assist and cooperate with our banquet committee as we assign seating, so that nothing detracts from our shared spirit of camaraderie and patriotism. I look forward to seeing you in Las Vegas.



MURRAY A. BYWATER
Brig Gen, USAF, Retired
President

SMALL TALK

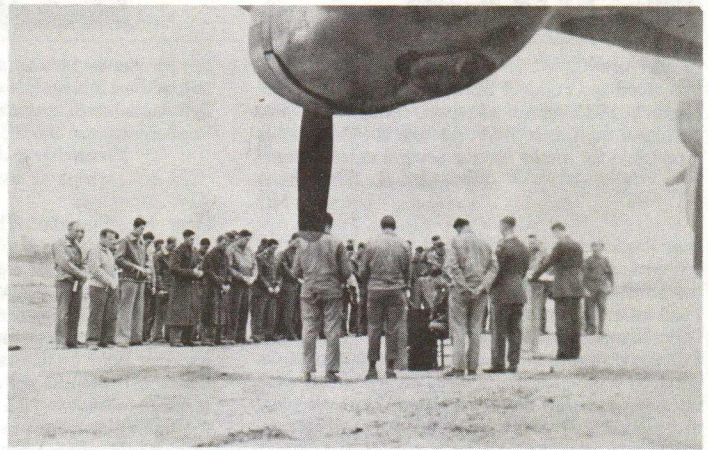
I join General Bywater and, I am sure, all of you in expressing pride in our men and women who served so gallantly in the Gulf. They were well trained and obviously had outstanding leadership. But they also fought with the advantage of a heritage of duty, honor, and country which so many of you pioneered in the skies over Europe, Korea, and Vietnam. They were afraid, as you were afraid; still they fought bravely, as you fought bravely; and they served their country with honor, as you served your country with honor. I salute you all as patriots. But as we remember so many brave deeds, let us never forget those who paid the ultimate price that we might live freely in this great country. Please take a moment to pay respect to our comrades listed on this page. God bless them all.

DUES: With the press of reunion planning, we may not be able to make another renewal mailing before the September reunion date. We have however coded our mailing label to indicate the status of your dues. If your dues are due now (April), your label will show "YOUR DUES ARE DUE NOW". If your dues will become due prior to the reunion (Apr—Sept), your label will show "DUES ARE DUE PRIOR TO RE-UNION". Please mail them to us as soon as possible so we can focus our efforts on reunion planning. Our annual dues remain \$15 and our life dues \$150. Life dues can still be paid in installments which fit your budget.



The *Sortie* is published quarterly on behalf of the members of the Fifteenth Air Force Association, Box 6325, March AFB, CA 92518, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the preservation of the heritage, legacy, and traditions of the Fifteenth Air Force. Contributions are tax-deductible.

PRESIDENT Murray A. Bywater
Brig Gen, USAF, Ret.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/EDITOR C.E. Ben Franklin
Lt Col, USAF, Ret.
WRITER/PHOTOGRAPHER Wayne Corbett
Col, USAF




"455 BG Catholic Church Service at Cerignola." Courtesy: N. M. Steinhauer.

REUNION: I believe that we have provided all the reunion information necessary in other sections of this *Sortie*, but let me emphasize two points. First, all of us are growing older and the opportunities to find old friends and to meet and reminisce are passing much too quickly. I urge each of you to make a special effort to attend this reunion. The poignant letter on page 6 from Rose Johnson says it better than I can. We must make every effort to not be "too late". God bless you, Rose. Secondly, we are making every possible effort to expeditiously and fairly seat you for the luncheon and banquet. Additionally, I am personally working to arrange the staging of banquet events to provide the best view to all tables in the room. This may mean that a detachment of parading marines will march across your table, but at least you will know that you are seated near the action. In turn, I ask each of you to cooperate with our ushers and to take seats at your assigned table. If we work together to get the banquet room seated on time, I promise you "tears and cheers"! Finally, remember to mail the reunion registration form with check for full payment to the 15th Air Force Assoc., P.O. Box 6325, March AFB, CA 92518. Mail your hotel reservation form with payment for one night to The Mirage Hotel, Reservations Dept, 3400 Las Vegas Blvd South, Las Vegas, NV 89109.

I miss you—I look forward to seeing you soon.

Ben

TAPS



**In memory of our comrades
who now rest in honored glory**

<p>William R. Abbott (450 BG) Harry F. Beagle (451 BG) William W. Berg (455 BG) William R. Campbell (450 BG) Jack J. Catton (15 HQ) George E. Crawford (465 BG) Richard W. Cross (376 BG) Ralph DeWolf (449 BG) Frank S. Diangelo (450 BG) L.E. Foran Marvin R. Freeman (450 BG) Kenneth C. Hathaway 459 BG) Edgar A. Haynie (454 BG) John F. Healy (455 BG) Robert E. Hervey (450 BG) Martin J. Hill Edgar F. Jenkins (99 BG)</p>	<p>William R. Johnston (97 BG) William F. Lucas (463 BG) Lloyd C. Luthy (15 HQ) Adrienne Mitchell (US Army) Ida Porteous (464 BG) Russell A. Rae (463 BG) LaVerne D. Rockwell (4128 SW) Charles Rush (450 BG) Ruth Sonkoly (460 BG) James H. Sullivan (484 BG) John Thievon (450 BG) G. Carl Vock (461 BG) Charles C. Ward (460 BG) E.S. Wetzel (15 HQ) George D. Williams (484 BG) Michael Yanos (31 DRS)</p>
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**Our heartfelt sympathy to
their families and friends**

Mail Call



Gentlemen:

I received my copy of Sortie. Lo and behold the March 1, 1945 centerfold reprint contained an article about my father in World War II (456 BG)! Is it possible for me to receive several extra copies?

Thomas A. Sheehan
Towson, MD

Dear Ben: Enclosed you'll find my check for my renewal and believe me, it's an honor to belong to the 15th Air Force Association. Also the wife and I will attend the reunion. I would never miss one. I photocopied a mission (enclosed) that I flew which I think you'll find interesting. The only reason we survived was when No. 1 and No. 2 position were hit, my pilot went down and hard right. We were to fly lead No. 1 position but at the last minute we were put in deputy lead position.

Mario Caserta (450 BG)
Sarasota, FL

Ed's Note: See page 14 "Visit to Vienna".

Ben: Your plans for the 1991 reunion in Las Vegas sound great. My family and I (4) are looking forward to it with a lot of expectation.

Reyes V. Torres (451 BG)
El Paso, TX

Ben: I'm writing for George. You can put us down for three to attend the reunion. Had a great time at the last one.

Mary Skiada (Big Fence)
Crystal City, MO

Dear Ben: Just got the Sortie. Yes, we do intend to attend, and am sure you will be hearing from the rest of the crew.

Sid Schoengold (455 BG)
Cranbury, NJ

Dear Ben: Just read the good news in Sortie about '91 reunion. Looks like you plan to "blow our socks off"! Marge and I plan to attend. Bob Cutler will probably write soon and let you know that, at our recent 460 BG reunion, the 460 BG elected to join the 15th in Las Vegas in '91.

Bob Martin (460 BG)
Minneapolis, MN

Dear Ben: Just a note to say that my wife and I plan to attend the 1991 reunion in Las Vegas. Your plans seem very inviting. Good luck with your work to complete the reunion plans.

Joseph F. Malloy (484 BG)
Leviittown, PA

To Whom It May Concern: I am enclosing a check for 1991 dues. This normally would have been my husband's dues, but he died 12 Oct 1989 soon after he had received his membership notice and his first Sortie. His letter in Sortie brought letters from his 97 BG but they arrived too late for him to read. I've answered each of them with as much information as I could remember. Please allow me the privilege of membership as a "friend" of the 15th Air Force.

Rose E. Johnston (97 BG)
Sun City, AZ

Ed's Note: We join our friends in the 97 BG in expressing our condolences to Rose and have extended to her an honorary membership with dues paid for life. All our widows are honored members and "family" and are always welcome to join us at meetings and reunions. God bless you, Rose.

Ben: God willing and the creek don't rise, my wife and I plan to be at the '91 reunion in Las Vegas.

John P. Jones (450 BG)
Melbourne, FL

Mail Call



Sir: Please send me information and an application to join the 15th Air Force Association. During WW II, I was a member of the 15th and flew as a bombardier with the 97 BG, 341 BS.

Theodore J. Mandro Jr. (97 BG)
West Haven, CT

Dear Mr. Franklin: Thank you for your letter welcoming me to the 15th Air Force Association...The Air Force Sergeant's Association calls me a member-in-good-standing; how can that be when I have only one leg to stand on? I wonder if you could do me a favor. Here in the VA Medical Center is a former WAF by the name of Lola O'Neil. She was stationed at Barksdale some time ago. She is interested in knowing if I can get her the address of the 2nd AFA. She was a SSgt and is very cute!! If you see General Leon Johnson, ask him if he remembers me from 3rd Air Force HQ in South Ruislip, England. I was a SSgt then and assigned to Hemispheric Weather Central...I have been hospitalized here in Bedford, MA since 1969. My right leg is amputated as a result of frostbite and diabetes. I require insulin twice daily. Hanscom AFB is only a stone's throw from here and when I can get out of my wheelchair, I'll take a cab to Hanscom and apply for a commissary pass. I must discontinue because lights will go out shortly.

Henry O. Fagerberg Jr. (9 BW)
VA Medical Center, Ward 2C
200 Springs Road
Bedford, MA 01730

Ed's Note: Henry would like to attend the Las Vegas reunion, but his medical condition prevents it. How about a few cards to let him know we will raise a glass to him—that he will be remembered.

Dear Ben: We are definitely interested in the Las Vegas reunion—especially at the Mirage Hotel!

Billy Lyons (15 HQ)
Aledo, TX

Dear Ben:...I am very happy with the decision to return to Las Vegas: I will take care of reunion notices in all newspapers in Texas again and will contact our members here in the state. Perhaps some of our members in other states would send notices to newspapers in their states to make sure that all veterans of 15th Air Force get the chance to attend the reunion—we are getting older and time is running out. When the roll call of states is made at the reunion, I challenge them all to beat TEXAS!!

Jim Gordon (464 BG)
College Station, TX

Dear Sir: Last week I attended the reunion of the 301 BG and someone told me there was a 15th AFA and gave me your address. Please send details. I served with the 32 BS of the 301 BG in Italy in WW II.

Bob Morrell (301 BG)
Culpeper, VA

Dear Ben: Lamar, Mary, and son Arnie expect to see you in Las Vegas in '91. Hope this card breaks the monotony of your mail!

Lamar R. Landry (450 BG)
Luling, LA

Ed's Note: The card showed a canoeist approaching a whirlpool and said "Keep Paddling—Don't Give Up the Ship". I'm trying, Lamar, but the waves keep getting bigger!!

Ben: Read my copy of Sortie today. We will make every effort to attend the reunion in Las Vegas—life member Leslie M. Avery plus my roommate, wife, and lover for 50 plus years. May god bless

Mail Call

you and yours.

Leslie M. Avery (463 BG)
Washington, MO

General Bywater: Yes, the wife and I plan on seeing you at the next reunion. We enjoyed the last reunion that you put on and worked so hard to make it the great one that it was.

Charles A. Rein (455 BG)
Mesa, AZ

Dear Ben: We had previously let you know that there would be 4 or 5 in our party for Las Vegas, but thought we would include a note again with the dues.

William Jelly (450 BG)
New Monmouth, NJ

Dear General Bywater: Yes, my wife and I plan on going to the Las Vegas reunion in 1991. We enjoyed the one in 1989 so plan on having a good time again.

Harold A. Nehmelman (31 DRS)
Montgomery, IL

Dear Ben: Just a note to you to say that I/we accept your invite to attend the 1991 reunion in my favorite Fall/Winter/Spring time vacation city of Las Vegas. The golf is great there, the food good and inexpensive, the shows are fabulous, and there is plenty to do...

Robert Nugent (376 BG)
Sacramento, CA

Colonel Franklin: Enclosed are some copies of "Stars & Stripes" and 1945 "Sortie" that might be useful for the Sortie. I read the publication with pleasure. It is very interesting and informative. Great job!

Kenneth E. Beane (460 BG)
Fayetteville, NC

Ben: We plan to be at the 1991 reunion in Las Vegas—two people.

Joseph C. Bott (484 BG)
Bedford, OH

Dear Ben: I just received the new Sortie and am happy to hear about next year's planned reunion in Las Vegas. I also noticed your article on page 18 "Heavies Don't Strafe" and can advise you that I not only flew that mission but also ones to the same area on 10/19/43 & 11/26/43. We were trying to disrupt traffic on the parallel highway and rail bridges along the Adriatic Coast and since our crew had practice on the low level Ploesti training, they assigned us to the three missions. The general idea was to go up the Adriatic on the deck (30 ft) and cut inland below Ancona and staying at tree top level, follow the contour of the land until we came to the small rivers heading to the Adriatic and then follow the stream beds down and try to slide bombs under the bridges as we reached the coast. The following accounts are from my diary...I hope this bit of information might be of value and when I got out my diary, it seemed like it was only yesterday. I can still close my eyes and see those bombs following us along the river bed.

Perry E. Zaback (376 BG)
Seattle, WA

Ed's Note: See page 14 for diary accounts. It appears these may have been the first "smart" bombs!!

Dear Ben: My wife and I plan to attend the 1991 reunion in Las Vegas.

Albert Lowe (460 BG)
Charleston, SC

Mail Call ★

Dear Ben: Last year was our first 15th Air Force reunion. We enjoyed it very much. You people did an outstanding job! We will be happy to be at the Sept reunion.

John R. Bozek (450 BG)
Wyckoff, NJ

Gentlemen: Would you please advise me how I may join your Association. Thank you very much.

Joe Spears (301 BG)
West Plains, MO

Sirs: I received your letter and the Sortie. I was glad to see that the reunion for 1991 will be in Las Vegas again. I was at last years and I had a wonderful time. It was my first 15th Air Force reunion and first trip to Las Vegas. This year my wife says she will come with me because Wayne Newton is going to be there. I know that this letter is a little early, but I would like info as soon as possible. You can't believe how anxious I am to be at the next reunion.

Dennis V. Thompson (309 TFS)
Roanoke, VA

Gentlemen: Many thanks for my life membership certificate and card. It will be a great addition for my whole life.

Reiner Nowak
Dusseldorf, Germany

Dear Ben: Just finished reading the latest Sortie cover to cover as is my usual custom. Per your request I'm advising you of Doris and my intent to attend the 1991 reunion in Las Vegas, Just had a quick note from Ted Newby concerning his new book and in closing he said he'd see us in Las Vegas. Can't let Ted down!! Did I send you a photo of my new Oregon license plate? It says "FLY B24". A couple months ago an Oregon State Trooper stopped me for "failing to stop before going out the gate onto a county road". While he was writing, he looked at my license and asked where I flew B-24s. I said, "In Italy". He said, "So did my Dad!" He never even gave me a warning. Thank God for the 15th Air Force and B-24s!

Don Kay (465 BG)
Bend, OR

Dear Ben: My wife and I are planning to attend the reunion in Las Vegas. I will contact a few friends—Col Tom Collins from Colorado Springs and Tracy Denninger from Florida—to invite them to join us. Enclosed is a check to help in some of the cost of preparing for the reunion. You may wish to contact Bob Collings of the Collings Foundation to invite him to fly his "All American" B-24J for a showing at one of the airfields near Las Vegas.

Reed Sprinkel (484 BG)
Newport Beach, CA

Ed's note: We appreciate the generous donation—it helps!

Dear Col Franklin: Received the copy of Sortie yesterday and was proud to see that you saluted the 301 BG. However, you may get a few letters about the name of the target. It was Regensburg not Hagensburg, Germany. I have taken over as the Editor/Publisher of our newsletter and having received past copies of it, I believe you got your information from an earlier one that had the target as Hagensburg. The group received its second Presidential Unit Citation for this mission, the first being a turn-around mission to bomb a German convoy missed earlier off the coast of Bizerte in 1943. We're a very proud bunch, just had a very successful reunion at Dayton, OH and are already planning a big bash in Spokane, WA in 1992 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the organization of the 301st

Mail Call ★

in 1942. Please include my wife and I in your reunion plans for 1991 at Las Vegas. It will be ole home week as I went to gunnery school there in the summer of 1944. I'll try to get you more members and reunion participants.

Joe Baxley (301 BG)
Baltimore, MD

Ed's Note: We appreciate Joe's very successful efforts to spread the word—we have had a record number of new members from the 301 BG—thanks, Joe! Also received more than a few letters about "Hagensburg"—sorry, we goofed.

Ben: We plan on attending the 15th Air Force reunion in Las Vegas.

Ken and June Chapek (463 BG)
Winfield, IL

Dear Ben: Enclosed is self explanatory inquiry from Mrs. Rose Getting concerning her late husband, Capt Harry W. Getting Jr. From his discharge records, the Capt sure had an outstanding record—four Bronze Stars, Air Medal with eight clusters. Must have been quite a guy, particularly since he was overseas from 4 Oct 42 to 9 May 44 with both the Eighth and Fifteenth. I will be posting a copy of her inquiry on the Bulletin Board for attendees to see at our Nov 7-11, 1990 reunion in Colorado Springs. Would appreciate you including in the Sortie...

Michael Geller (463 BG)
Littleton, CO

Ben: All paid up! I am so proud to be a life member! God bless you and keep up the good work—we all love you.

Jim Bates (455 BG)
Aurora, IL

15AFA: I would like two applications to join the 15th Air Force Association. We were both from the 464 BG, 779 BS. I have made attempts to join before but never followed through—this time we are going for it.

Andrew Kolenic (464 BG)
Bedford, OH

Ben: Las Vegas in 1991? You Betcha!

Ed Gross (450 BG)
Ardsley, NY

Dear Ben: Enjoyed the last reunion very much and certainly expect to attend the next one. There will be two in my party.

Gilbert E. Furniss (31 DRS)
Folsom, PA

Dear Ben: My wife and I expect to attend the 15th AF reunion in 1991 at Las Vegas, along with a goodly portion of the 460 BG. Put me down for two spaces for now.

Ben Crawford (460 BG)
Crawfordsville, OR

Ben: We are interested in attending the 1991 meeting in Las Vegas. We enjoyed the 1989 one there very much.

William H. Snyder (463 BG)
Emporia, KS

Dear Ben: We have just received the Sortie with news of the 1991 reunion. It sounds great! We plan to be there and so far our crew attendance at previous reunions has been well attended. We would expect 1991 to be well attended also. The reunions just get better and we wouldn't miss one!!

A.R. "Pete" and Ginger Winter (455 BG)
Tulsa, OK

Mail Call ★

Dear Ben: My wife and I are delighted that Las Vegas has been selected for the 1991 reunion. We will enthusiastically attend. We thought the 1989 reunion that we attended was the best we have ever attended.

Edgar P. Weakley (464 BG)
Tyler, TX

Ben: Marion and I plan to attend the 1991 reunion. We enjoyed the 1989 reunion and met some old friends we hadn't seen in years. Hope to see them again in 1991.

Vince Conway (22 BW)
Riverside, CA

Col Ben: Re: 91 reunion in Las Vegas. The good Lord willing and the creek don't rise, please put two chalks marks on the wall for Mrs King and myself. We have not missed one yet. Keep up the good work.

Bobby N. King (15 HQ)
Sun Prairie, WI

Dear Ben: Plan to attend the 1991 Las Vegas reunion. Expect a party of 3—possibly 5.

Bud Schoene (455 BG)
Eggersville, NY

Dear Ben: A big YES for two at the 1991 Las Vegas reunion!

Tom Moss (461 BG)
Denver, CO

Dear Sir: We attended the 15th Air Force reunion last year and enjoyed the GREAT EVENT. My wife Julia and myself plan to attend in 91.

Willard A. Patterson (464 BG)
Statesville, NC

Ben: Just received the news. My wife and I expect to be there as do some of our old B-17 crew. By the way, I have been trying to locate an ex-15th B-17 pilot named Capt Kenneth R. Wheeler (ASN 0564604). He's originally from Ogden, UT. Any ideas?

Paul A. Theis (97 BG)
Washington, DC

Dear Ben: Las Vegas sounds great! See you there!

Mr & Mrs C.R. O'Donnell (2 BG)
Los Altos, CA

Dear Ben: In response to your request, I am looking forward to attending the reunion with a guest or two. I am sure that it will be as great as the last one which my son and I thoroughly enjoyed. Count us in.

Ernest Conrad (463 BG)
Brooklyn, NY

Ben: I am planning to attend with bells on! See you there.

Bob McFall (460 BG)
Pacific Palisades, CA

Ben: A return to Las Vegas sounds great! You can count on two from our house.

Garvin W. Cooper (325 FG)
Ropesville, TX

Ben: Count me in for the reunion along with two others.

Frank S. Day (459 BG)
Warren, MI

OUR HONOR ROLL

GENERAL JACK J. CATTON



General Jack J. Catton

Retired Air Force General Jack J. Catton, a former 15th Air Force commander and a member of the Board of Governors of the 15th Air Force Association, died in February at Air Force Village West, a military retirement community near March Air Force Base, California.

General Catton retired in 1974 after a distinguished 34-year career which included several aviation landmarks. The general last commanded Air Force Logistics Command at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base where he was in charge of buying, maintaining, repairing, and transporting everything in the Air Force inventory.

"Our Air Force has lost one of its pioneers," said Lt Gen Robert D. Beckel, 15th Air Force commander and a Catton friend. "He was an outstanding leader, aviator, and humanitarian. We will miss him."

General Catton was born in Berkeley, attended high school in Los Angeles, and graduated from Loyola University in Los Angeles. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1940, and served as a pilot and squadron commander.

In 1944, the 24-year-old pilot flew his B-29, "Joltin' Josie the Pacific Pioneer," leading the first bombers to raid the Mariana Islands. American bombers later were based in the Marianas from where they flew bombing missions against the Japanese mainland.

After the war, the general took part in the first two atomic bomb tests in the Pacific. In 1948 he was assigned to the newly formed Strategic Air Command, holding a number of command assignments while overcoming polio in 1950. In 1968, General Catton assumed command of 15th Air Force at March Air Force Base as the Vietnam War intensified. He held the position for only a year, then was promoted to four-star rank and transferred to Scott Air Force Base in Illinois to command the Military Airlift Command. At that time he was in charge of the massive airlift of troops and cargo to Southeast Asia.

After he retired in 1974, General Catton joined Lockheed Aerospace Corporation and retired in 1984 as the company's senior vice president at the Burbank plant. He moved to San Antonio,

Texas, and was active there in United Way programs. He served on many civic boards over the years, as well as being a director of the Air Force Academy Falcon Foundation.

The general and his wife, Jo Beth, moved to Air Force Village West in January of this year. His wife died last month. He is survived by two daughters, Cherie Walters of Riverside, California and Beth Williams of Irvine, California; a son, Air Force Lt Col Jack Catton, Jr., stationed at Elmendorf Air Force Base, Anchorage, Alaska, and six grandchildren. Burial was at the Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

PVT. ADRIENNE MITCHELL

Army Private Adrienne Mitchell, 20, was killed the evening of Feb 25 along with 27 other soldiers when the warhead from an Iraqi Scud missile struck a military barracks near Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. She was staying overnight at the barracks enroute to a Middle East assignment as part of a non-combat supply company.

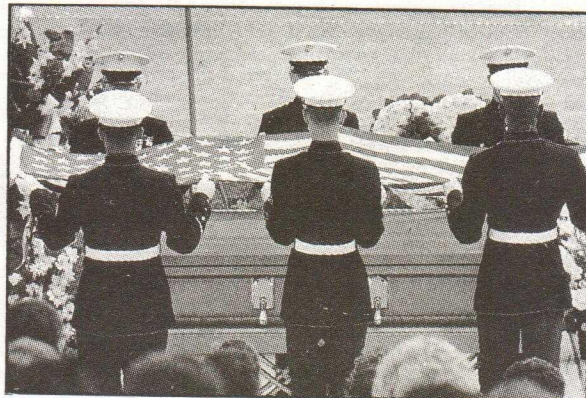
Private Mitchell was the daughter of retired Air Force Chief Master Sergeant Frank Mitchell and his wife, Sammie, of Moreno Valley, California. Chief Mitchell, a 30-year veteran of the Air Force, retired in July after holding the post of senior enlisted advisor at March Air Force Base. Chief Mitchell is a member of the 15th Air Force Association and appeared on the cover of the *Sortie* in the Spring of 1990.

Private Mitchell, a 1988 graduate of Moreno Valley High School, enlisted in the Spring of 1990 under a deferred enlistment program. She planned to pursue a bachelor's degree, for which she had begun studies at Riverside Community College. She intended to go to law school.

She was born in Taiwan during one of her father's many overseas assignments. She had lived in Moreno Valley since the early 1980s. She played junior varsity basketball briefly in high school but decided against a career in sports even though she could have been quite an athlete, said Bertha E. Davis, who taught her physical education in high school.

In Mitchell's honor, the city of Moreno Valley flew its flags at half-staff on March 6, when she was buried with military honors in Riverside National Cemetery.

Courtesy: Articles in The Press-Enterprise by Marlowe Churchill.



Pvt. Adrienne Mitchell

15TH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION REUNION REGISTRATION FORM LAS VEGAS REUNION 16-19 SEPTEMBER 1991

1. Mail this form or a copy with check or money order for **full payment** to 15TH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION, P.O. BOX 6325, MARCH AFB, CA 92518.
2. Make all checks or money orders payable to 15th AFA Reunion.
3. We expect a record attendance and all 15th AFA activities will be reserved on a first-come basis. Reservations will be confirmed by mailing you a blue 15th AFA confirmation card. Allow 4-6 weeks for receipt.
4. Late registration (receipt after 25 August) may not be confirmed, but will be passed to the Las Vegas Committee.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY:

FULL NAME _____

(First)

(MI)

(Last)

STREET _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIPCODE _____ 15AF GROUP _____

TELEPHONE () _____ SPOUSE _____ 15AF SQDN _____

(first name)

NUMBER OF GUESTS _____ **NOTE: (Count guests only. Do not include yourself or spouse. All guests are welcome, but must pay for the \$175 reunion package as listed below.)**

HOTEL RESERVATION AT _____ ARRIVAL DATE _____ TIME _____

DEPARTURE DATE _____ TIME _____

GOLF HANDICAP(S) (IF PLAYING) _____

(First Name) _____ (Last Name) _____ (Handicap) _____

(First Name) _____ (Last Name) _____ (Handicap) _____

(First Name) _____ (Last Name) _____ (Handicap) _____

(First Name) _____ (Last Name) _____ (Handicap) _____

LAS VEGAS REUNION PACKAGE **\$175.00** x _____ = \$ _____
 (See Other Side For Details) (Each Person) (No. Attending) (Total)

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY
GOLF TOURNAMENT **\$ 60.00** x _____ = \$ _____
 (Green Fees, Cart, Lunch, Beer) (Each Person) (No. Attending) (Total)

15TH AFA MEMBERSHIP DUES **\$ 15.00** (Annual) or **\$150.00** (Life) \$ _____
 Please check as appropriate: New Member Renewal

TOTAL (ENCLOSE FULL PAYMENT) \$ _____
 (Total)

CANCELLATION: FULL REFUND WILL BE MADE IF WRITTEN CANCELLATION IS RECEIVED AT OUR OFFICE BY SEPTEMBER 9. AFTER SEPTEMBER 9, REFUND IS SUBJECT TO CHARGES BY CATERERS AND VENDORS. NO REFUNDS CAN BE MADE FOR PARTIAL ATTENDANCE.



**15TH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION
REUNION INFORMATION SHEET
LAS VEGAS REUNION 16-19 SEPTEMBER 1991**

1. LAS VEGAS REUNION PACKAGE: Our reunion package is an all inclusive package of the scheduled 15AFA reunion activities. It includes a welcome reception hosted by the Association (hour free bar with hot and cold hors d'oeuvres); 15th Air Force luncheon and program; a special patriotic concert by the 15th Air Force Band; coffee and rolls prior to the business meeting; special ladies program; exhibits and combat theater; 15th Air Force Banquet with show, dance, and patriotic grand finale; a special appearance by Wayne Newton; a farewell brunch; a memorial service with wreath laying; and all registration fees. Since we have negotiated a package deal with the hotel and caterers, single event tickets are not available. Optional activities listed below are not included and may be purchased separately as desired.

2. OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES: The Golf Tournament is scheduled for a shotgun start at 7AM on Wednesday morning (Sept 18) and is limited to the first 144 players to return the registration form. The \$60 price includes green fees, cart, sandwich lunch, beer, and soft drinks. Please check-in at the golf desk during registration. Las Vegas shows and tours of Las Vegas, celebrity homes, Boulder Dam, and the Grand Canyon will be available at the tour and show desk of the Mirage Hotel.

3. REFUNDS: Full refund will be made if written cancellation is received at our 15th AFA office by Sept 9. After Sept 9, refund is subject to charges by caterers and vendors. No refunds can be made for partial attendance.

4. HOTEL RESERVATION PROCEDURES: We have blocked sufficient rooms at the Mirage to accommodate expected attendance. The room rate is \$90 per night for a single or double plus 7% Clark County room tax. Complete and return the hotel reservation form on page 12 with one night's deposit TO THE MIRAGE. Deposit may be paid by personal check or major credit card and is refundable if reservation is cancelled 48 hours prior to arrival. Our special rate applies from Sept 16 through Sept 20. If you want to arrive early or stay later, reservations will be made subject to room availability. If you have guests or friends, you must return a hotel reservation card and deposit for each room desired. The hotel will accept copies of the reservation form on page 12. PLEASE SEND THE HOTEL RESERVATION FORM TO THE MIRAGE HOTEL, RESERVATIONS DEPT, 3400 LAS VEGAS BLVD SOUTH, LAS VEGAS, NV 89109.

IMPORTANT: The Mirage will only hold our room block until Aug 16. After Aug 16, the Mirage will release all rooms from our block which have not been reserved with a completed hotel reservation form and one night's deposit. Reservations received by the Mirage after Aug 16 are subject to availability of rooms. Please note that check-in time is 3 PM and check-out is at noon.

5. REUNION REGISTRATION: Registration will begin at 11AM on Monday (Sept 16) in the registration area of the Mirage Hotel Convention Center and continue on Tuesday (Sept 17) from 9AM-5PM. Ask for directions to the hotel convention area and watch for our 15th Air Force sign over the registration desk. At registration you will receive a welcome kit which will include name tags and name tag holders. The name tag must be worn at all times since it will be your badge for entry into our reunion area. Entry into our areas and to all events will be controlled by uniformed security. The name tag will serve as your ticket for entry into all activities included in the reunion package as listed in paragraph one. Since the name tag serves as a ticket to all events within our reunion area, guest passes for non-payees will not be available.

6. AIR TRAVEL: American Airlines is our official reunion carrier. Call (800) 433-1790 and use STAR # S06914E for identification to receive a discount of 40% off their round trip, unrestricted day coach fare. AA also offers 5% off the lowest applicable round trip fare including first class, subject to the availability of inventory. Reservations must be made and tickets purchased at least 7 days before departure. NOTE: If you qualify for a Senior Citizen discount, your fare may be lower than the discounts offered above. If that is the case, or if you use the services of a travel agent, please have them place your reservation through the 800 number using the Star # listed above. American Airlines will provide us with an arrival and departure report on each attendee who reserves using this system. This is a great help to us in planning for our reunion.

7. GROUND TRANSPORTATION: Bell Trans Airport Service is located at the Las Vegas Airport on the ground floor in the baggage area and will arrange transportation to the Mirage for \$3.25 per person one way or \$6.50 per person roundtrip. (702) 739-7990.

8. CAR RENTAL: Our car rental for the reunion is U.S. Car Rental located adjacent to the Las Vegas Airport. U.S. has a courtesy phone in the baggage area and buses which will pick you up at the curb outside the baggage area and deliver you to the rental office. An economy car with air conditioning rents for \$56.85 for the three day reunion period (pickup Monday & return Thursday). A mid size rents for \$74.85 for the same period. Rate does not include gas, tax, optional collision damage waiver, or any airport imposed fees. For advance reservations call (800) 777-9377 and use code 15AF to identify you for the discount and to receive your confirmation number. Local telephone number: 798-6100.

9. PARKING: Complimentary valet parking service is available at the main and north entrances (follow the signs). At these entrances the Bell staff will unload your luggage, give you a claim ticket for your bags, and store them until you check in at the hotel registration desk. The registration clerk will arrange to have your bags delivered to your room. The valet will park your car in the valet lot. There are also complimentary self-parking lots on the hotel property, but they are located at a distance from the main entrances.

10. RV CAMPGROUND: Circusland RV Park is located on the "Strip" behind Circus Circus Casino & Hotel and is priced at \$10.70 a night. It is a full service park. Call (800) 634-3450 and ask for the RV Park.

11. SEATING: Seating for the luncheon and banquet will be assigned as we receive your reunion registration form and check. You will be assigned to a table on a first-come basis in the order in which we receive your form. Your table assignment (the same for both the luncheon and banquet) will be included on your blue reunion confirmation card which you should receive within 4 weeks of mailing in your form and check. Please show your blue confirmation card at the reunion registration desk and again to our luncheon and banquet ushers who will direct you to your table. Signs with the table number will be on each table. Additionally, seating diagrams with table numbers will be posted on easels outside the convention ballroom and all ushers will have a complete listing of the members assigned to each table.

While we will reserve your table on a first-come basis, we will attempt to keep members from the same Group together. The logistics of managing the table assignments of more than 1,500 people whose reunion signups will be staggered over several months preclude us from trying to assign specific people to the same table. If, however, friends or crew members send in their SEPARATE registration forms and SEPARATE checks in the SAME envelope, all will be assigned to the same table (ten to a table).

Table assignment listings will be available in the registration area. If you want to make mutually agreeable table assignment swaps within a Group to keep friends or crew members together, you may do so, provided each member has the blue table assignment card for the table at which he/she will be seated.

12. GUESTS: Guests, family, and friends are welcome and will find the program interesting and enjoyable even if not 15th AF veterans.

13. DRESS: Suit & tie are suggested for men attending the banquet. The Mirage is a resort and dress for all other events is casual and we recommend that you dress comfortably.

14. HOSPITALITY SUITES: Arrangements for hospitality suites may be made through the Room Service Manager. Please note that the Mirage does not permit food and/or beverages to be brought into the Mirage for these functions.

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION			
<input type="checkbox"/> NEW MEMBER	<input type="checkbox"/> RENEWAL	DATE _____	
NAME _____		RANK _____	
MAILING ADDRESS _____		NUMBER / STREET _____	CITY/STATE _____
ZIP CODE _____			
<input type="checkbox"/> ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP (\$15)—CHECK ENCLOSED (Tax Deductible)			
<input type="checkbox"/> LIFE MEMBERSHIP (\$150)—CHECK ENCLOSED (Tax Deductible)			
<input type="checkbox"/> LIFE MEMBERSHIP INSTALLMENT PAYMENT \$ _____ ENCLOSED			
<input type="checkbox"/> PATRON MEMBERSHIP (\$1000)—CHECK ENCLOSED (Tax Deductible)			
<input type="checkbox"/> ACTIVE	<input type="checkbox"/> RETIRED	<input type="checkbox"/> SEPARATED	<input type="checkbox"/> FRIEND OF FIFTEENTH
15TH AF UNIT _____	DATE _____	15TH AF UNIT _____	DATE _____
MAIL CHECK AND APPLICATION TO:			
FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION • BOX 6325 • MARCH AIR FORCE BASE, CA 92518			

**15th AFA 1991 REUNION
POCKET SCHEDULE**



16 Sept: Registration (11AM-5PM) * Welcome Reception & Mixer (6PM- 7PM) * Free Evening for Crew & Group Dinners and Las Vegas Shows.

17 Sept: Registration (9AM-5PM) * Combat Theater & Exhibits (9AM-5PM) * Business Meeting (9:30AM-10:30AM) * Ladies Program (9AM-10:30AM) * 15th AFA Luncheon Social Time (11:30AM-Noon) * 15th AFA Luncheon & Program (Noon-1:30PM) * 15th Air Force Band of the Golden West Concert (1:30PM-2:30PM) * Free Evening for Crew & Group Dinners and Las Vegas Shows.

18 Sept: Golf Tournament (7AM-11:30AM) * Combat Theater & Exhibits (9AM-5PM) * Las Vegas Tours as desired * 15th AFA Banquet No Host Social Hour (6PM-7PM) * 15th AFA Banquet & Show (7PM-11PM).

19 Sept: 15th AFA Brunch (9:30AM-10:30AM) * 15th AFA Memorial Service (10:30AM-11:00AM) * Hotel Checkout (11:00AM-Noon) * Departure

Note: All activities are at the Mirage except for Golf Tournament and optional activities.



**RESERVATIONS DEPARTMENT
(800) 627-6667 or (702) 791-7444**

**THE MIRAGE
3400 Las Vegas Blvd. South
Las Vegas, NV 89109**

Thank you for requesting reservations at The Mirage. Our staff would like to take this opportunity to extend a warm welcome to you during your upcoming stay with us.

ATTENDING: **The 15th Air Force Association Reunion**
DATES: **Sept. 16-20, 1991**

**PLEASE DO NOT FORGET
TO ENCLOSED YOUR CHECK
PAYABLE TO THE MIRAGE.
PLEASE DO NOT SEND CURRENCY.**

PLEASE RESERVE MIRAGE ACCOMMODATIONS:

NAME _____ ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____
(Print or type)

ADDRESS _____ TEL. NO. (____) _____

CITY/STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

SIGNATURE _____ SHARING ROOM WITH _____

Please include a deposit to cover your first night's stay, plus tax. This will confirm and guarantee your reservation. (NOTE: Reservations and deposits are not transferable.)
(Deposit refundable if reservation is cancelled 48 hours prior to arrival.)

American Express, Carte Blanche, Visa, MasterCard, Discover or Diners Club credit cards may be used to guarantee rooms in lieu of a deposit.

Card Holder Name _____ Type of Card _____

Credit Card Number _____ Expiration Date _____

Please check preferred accommodation: RATE PER ROOM + TAX

SINGLE (one person) \$90⁰⁰

DOUBLE (two persons, one bed) \$90⁰⁰

TWIN (two persons, two beds) \$90⁰⁰

Room preference is based upon availability.

Check-out time is 12 noon. Rooms may not be available for check-in until 3:00 p.m.

Reservations must be received by: AUGUST 16, 1991

Reservations received after this date will be on a space available basis only. If rate and accommodation requested is not available, nearest will be assigned. All rates are quoted in U.S. dollars and are plus state and local taxes (subject to change).

OUR CREWS

99 BG, 348 BS Crew. ▼

(Standing from the left): Guy Robbins, Tail gunner; Ed Scott, Pilot; Les Porter, Co-pilot, Bob Lantz, Navigator; and Jim Peters, Flt engineer & Top turret. (Kneeling from the left): Art Cooper, Right waist; Zygmunt, Left waist; Jack Kress, Radio; and Defee Nash, Ball gunner. Courtesy: Jim Peters.



455 BG, 742 BS "Stinky" Crew. ▲

(Standing from the left): Dick Milligan, Nose gunner; Paul Lanouette, Waist gunner; Jerry White, Radio; Bob Meyerson, Tail gunner; and Dean Davee, Ball gunner. (Kneeling from the left): Ben Abney, Pilot; Maury Wernick, Bombardier; Pat DeSanctis, Navigator; and Mal Tinkham, Co-pilot. Courtesy: Pat DeSanctis.



2 BG, 49 BS "Tail Crazy" Crew. ▲

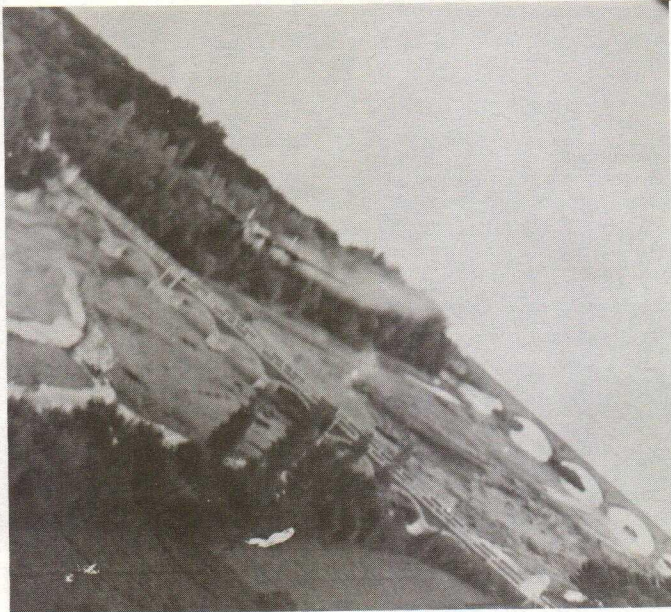
(Standing from the left): William Tatler, Pilot; John Rice, Co-pilot; Robert Unger, Navigator; Walter Lisowski, Radio/gunner; and Thomas O'Connor, Engineer/gunner. (Kneeling from the left): Wallace Wampler, Right waist; Leon Nestor, Left waist; Herman Butko, Tail gunner; Lester Ellinger, Ball gunner; and Thomas Gregory, Bombardier. Courtesy: William Tatler.



460 BG, 761 BS Crew. ▼

(Standing from the left): Warren Shaffer, Radio; Morris Story (deceased), Waist gunner; Kenneth McConville, Nose gunner; J.D. Rylant, Ball gunner; Horace O'Donnell, Flt engineer; and James Hodgson, Tail gunner. (Kneeling from the left): Charles Henry, Pilot; Roy Russell, Navigator; George Fox (deceased), Bombardier; and Watson Clark, Co-pilot. Courtesy: Warren Shaffer.

OUR WAR STORIES



"Low level attack on the bridges at Senigalia. Note the B-24 engine exhaust just left of center." Courtesy: Perry Zaback.

VISIT TO VIENNA

Bomber crews can't remember all the missions they make during their tour of overseas duty, but TSgt Mario A. Caserta, son of Mr. and Mrs. Michael Caserta, Bridgeport, Conn., can distinctly recall one of his five trips to Vienna as engineer-gunner on a Liberator. His bomber and one other were the only two out of a box of seven to limp back to their base in Italy from the Austrian capital. "Flak accounted for the other five, knocking down the entire outfit in less than one minute," Sgt Caserta explained at the AAF re-distribution station in Atlantic City. "It was terrible to see my buddies go down that fast," the sergeant said, "and not be able to do anything about it. The flak was so dense it resembled a gigantic, thick wool blanket and it was deadly accurate. The Lib in front of me was hit so hard it rolled over and over, its bombs flying from it like feathers from a duck hit with buckshot. Our only damage was several broken oxygen bottles and numerous holes in the fuselage and wings." The returnee sergeant wears the Air Medal and three Oak Leaf Clusters and the European Theater ribbon with three campaign stars. He spent seven months in the Italian Theater, is a veteran of 42 missions over enemy territory, and is at the re-distribution station awaiting a new assignment. Sgt Caserta entered the service April 14, 1943 and went overseas June 25, 1944. *Courtesy: Clipping from Mario Caserta.*

COST OF FREEDOM

Lt Gen Ira C. Eaker, Air Chief in the Mediterranean theatre, disclosed today that his command had lost more than 20,750 men during the last year. "When we remember that the combat crew strength of the Fifteenth Air Force is about 20,000 men, it can be seen we've lost 100 percent of our strength in one year," he said. "We take some consolation that these losses saved many thousands of ground soldiers from the loss of their lives in battle," he added.

Some 2,050 heavy bombers also were lost during the year, General Eaker said, but he added that operations by Allied Air Forces against German oil supplies had virtually grounded the Luftwaffe. "Our pilots every day see the modern German fighting force parked on airdromes for want of fuel. They average twenty missions daily. We average more than 2,000," he said. *Courtesy: Clipping from Mario Caserta.*

THE FIRST "SMART" BOMBS

Diary entry, Nov 26, 1943: Today was the day of days! Low altitude attack on bridges in the middle of the town of Senigalia on the Adriatic Coast above Ancona. Group of twelve B-24s divided into elements of three ships each with each element splitting off as we reached our assigned river and attacked the bridges at 30 Ft altitude at 240 mph. One of our bombs bounced along the river bed then went through a building and into the sea. P38s proceeded us over the target and strafed the area so we had no opposition. We each carried three 2000 lb bombs with a 30-second delay. It all happened so fast it was unbelievable. What a show! We got credit for one of the bridges.

Diary entry, March 28, 1944: Well it was another of our famous low level missions which was a formation of 2 three ship elements carrying 2000 lb bombs. We attacked at dawn and entered the coast just south of Ancona at 1,000 feet and proceeded north about 20 miles and separated into two formations and put our noses down and headed for the sea at 240 mph. We had 45 second delay fuses so we could not see the results but it was quite a thrill to see the bombs land so close under the ships and start skidding for the bridges. It all happened so fast at that altitude and speed that you don't have time to think about it. We came back home right on the deck and it's fun not to have to worry about oxygen masks, chutes, or Mae Wests because you wouldn't have time to use them at that altitude.

Courtesy: Diary of Perry E. Zaback.

A ROUTINE DAY OF WAR

Diary entry, Feb 25, 1944: Nine planes of the 419 BS started on a mission to bomb Regensburg A/C Factory. Five planes returned early-three because of getting lost from the Group in weather and two mechanical. The bomb load of twelve 500 pound bombs dropped from 23, 400 feet with satisfactory results. Heavy to moderate flak encountered. Fighters encountered from approximately forty-five minutes from the target until forty-five minutes after the target. At least 200 fighters attacked—ME-109s, ME-110s, JU- 88s, and FW-190s. Our squadron lost two planes, 42-31391 & 42- 38910, and crew of 42-30310. Lt Koch and crew were last seen going down in flames. From 1 to 3 chutes were seen. Lt Thomas and crew are reported to be in Naples awaiting transportation to this field. Lt Thomas led Lt Breakiron (navigator) and Lt Solan (bombardier). Nineteen E/A destroyed and two E/A probable claimed. Sgt Zahn was killed and TSgt Goulden seriously injured (lost one eye). Lt Flathers and crew left formation because of engine trouble near Fiume, Italy. Just south of Fiume, they were attacked by three ME-109s very aggressively. Two E/A were probables. Lt Flathers brought his badly damaged plane back to base on two engines. Missing plane 42-30310 and crew: Lt Koch, pilot; Lt Allen, co-pilot; Lt Parent, navigator; Lt Nyran, bombardier; TSgt Sheils, TSgt Wild, Sgt Watson, Sgt Kimberlin, SSgt Johnson, and Sgt Montecallo.

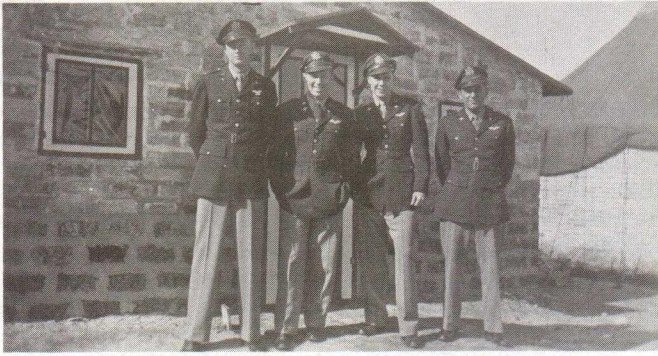
Courtesy: 419 BS War Diary from Joe Baxley.

LOOKING BACK

This is not your usual war story that begins: "There I was at 35,000 feet with 5 ME-109s on my tail." It is merely an account of some rather mundane experiences, and yet maybe it will trigger some recollections of fond memories of forty plus years ago.

THE LONG JOURNEY: Let's begin in mid-Atlantic on the Liberty ship "John Trumbull", one of many ships in a convoy to Europe in 1944. After surviving a fierce storm in which two ships collided, and after the trauma of seeing the rest of the convoy sail off into the sunset leaving us alone with an engine breakdown (we saw periscopes on every wave), we finally sailed through the Straits of Gibraltar into Oran where many smoke pots were burning in an effort to conceal the port from German air attack. After a short stay we boarded the luxury liner "Ile D'Oran" and soon disembarked at Naples where trucks

OUR WAR STORIES



"Tom Follis, Bob Davis, Jack Egan, & Bill Preece at home." Courtesy: Tom Follis.

took us to a "Repple-Depple" at Caserta. A few days later we arrived at our airfield not far from San Severo. This was home for the 32nd Photo Reconnaissance Squadron which flew P-38s to targets across the Alps including Linz, Munich, Brux, Stuttgart, Vienna, etc.

HOME SWEET HOME: Upon arrival we were temporarily assigned to bunk with pilots who were already living in tents near the runway. Soon four of us (Lt Bill Preece, Lt Jack Egan, Lt Bob Davis, and Lt Tom Follis) decided that tent living was not for us so we set out to build our own "house". Of course, it was not possible to go into any war torn town in Italy and buy building materials, so we learned to scrounge what we needed. We hired four Italians for a few cigarettes a day to do the construction and then we began acquiring the materials. For walls, we found an abandoned (we thought) farmhouse made of tufa blocks and demolished it just as the owner arrived shouting curses in Italian. After a satisfactory (?) agreement was arranged, we trucked the tufa away. Then we paid a midnight visit to a brick yard (something I now truly regret and if I ever return to San Severo, I will try to make amends).

For wooden floors and roof, we paid another midnight visit (for which I am also sorry); this time to the squadron area where drop tanks were stored in their wooden crates. Here we scrounged some crates which served as excellent clothes closets and also liberated a drop tank to supply running water for our sink which we had to buy. We paid a mechanic to build a stove out of a gas drum we "borrowed". The control valve for this tank was hard to come by, but after racing to the runway as a plane crash-landed, we beat the salvage crew and had our valve. Our windows were glazed with cleared aerial film and an old tent went over the roof to keep rain out. The only trouble was that this tent had been lying on the ground for awhile and had become infested with centipedes. I remember being awakened one night by a racket and turned the light on to see Bill Preece on hands and knees with a GI shoe in hand, banging away at the foot long centipede which seemed unfazed by Bill's attack.

Of course, we liked our new home, but really came to appreciate it when we visited a B-24 base near Cerignola and saw rows and rows of GI tents that served as home for the crews. We enjoyed living in this comfortable house until the war in Europe ended. I have often wondered what became of it after we left.

Courtesy: Tom Follis.

REUNITED

Forty-five years ago Dr. Joe Bastin and nine other men of the U.S. Army Air Corps were dropping bombs from a B-24 Liberator in an effort to cripple Adolf Hitler's fighting strength in Europe. They completed more than 25 missions together in the plane they called "Leading Lady", and despite more close calls than they care to count, all eventually escaped WW II with their lives. Three of the men have since died.

For the first time in 45 years, Bastin and the six surviving crew members have been reunited. It took three years of planning, but

finally they all got together again recently at Bastin's vacation home on Lake Barkley (KY). "I thought if three guys showed up, we would be doing well. I never expected all six to show up," said Bastin, a Hopkinsville optometrist. Bastin was a sergeant and served as top turret gunner on the B-24 when he was 18 years old. Bastin said he was especially surprised, and pleased, that the entire group was able to reunite since two of the men have recently suffered health setbacks. The seven men are noticeably grayed, and, when they posed for a group photograph, they teased each other about sucking in their stomachs to make themselves look thinner.

But 45 years ago it was a different group of men. Assigned to the 783rd Bomb Squadron, 465th Bombardment Group of the Fifteenth Air Force, Basin and his crew were stationed at Panatella Air Base in southern Italy for one year. They came together as a crew at Westover Field, Mass.

Their job was to knock out oil refineries, munitions factories, and other facilities which the Germans depended on for air superiority. They flew missions over Italy, Austria, Germany, Romania, and Bulgaria. "It was a tremendous mental anguish, stress, and strain on all of us because we never knew if we would come back alive," said Josten. "Needless to say, we became very close that year." Flight engineer Ed Pereira commented, "Every time we came home it was a successful mission."

All said they remembered the time they returned to Pantanella from a bombing run to find 121 bullet holes in the plane. "Any of those could have killed one of us, but we all made it," said James Lawton, the bombardier. Radio operator Doyle Mayo was taken prisoner of war by the Germans when he had to parachute out of another plane over Austria. He was held for only two months, but some of the crew didn't find out until years later that he had survived. Although many of the memories are unpleasant, pilot George Josten said that now he thinks mostly of the men he served with in Europe. "Those are the best memories," he said. In a book titled, "The Fifteenth Air Force Story," which was published in 1986 and includes numerous personal biographies, Bastin relates what he believes was the crew's most dangerous mission. "The one I remember most was over the Brenner Pass and the Alps in northern Italy," he said. "We had just released our bombs and received a hit in the bomb bay. The hydraulic tank had a hole in it and fluid was covering everything in the bomb bay. Ed Pereira, our flight engineer, and I tried to stop the fluid leak, and it was almost impossible to stand on the catwalk or hold on to anything. We didn't have our chest chutes on since we couldn't get through the brace on the catwalk with them on. I slipped and almost went out the bomb doors. We were at 18,000 feet, but I could see the rail tracks and snow covered trees below. The plane was bouncing as the flak exploded nearby. I still have dreams that I fell out!"

Courtesy: Clipping from Joe Bastin.

"45 years later. Standing from the left: George Josten, Bill Bolen, and James Lawton. Kneeling from the left: Edmund Pereira, Doyle Mayo, Joe Bastin, and J.T. Harp." Courtesy: Joe Bastin.



BULLETIN BOARD

AVIATION VIDEOS: Frank Day (459 BG) and his American Sound & Video Corp have offered our members an outstanding collection of aviation videos which feature genuine AAF archive films. Those of you who attended our Las Vegas reunion saw a sampling of the videos projected in our combat theater. They are of high quality and are reasonably priced. Additionally Frank will pay our Association a percentage of the profits from all sales to our members—please mention that you are a member when you place your order. When you place your first order, ask Frank or Judy to send you a current listing of some of the videos that are available.

All videos are \$29.95 each plus \$3.00 shipping and handling for the first video in the shipment and \$1.75 for each additional video ordered in the same shipment.

Place your order by writing American Sound & Video, 3100 E. Ten Mile Road, Warren, MI 48091-2191 or by calling 1-800-869-6379 (Visa & Mastercard are accepted). Be sure to mention the 15th Air Force Association. Space does not permit a full listing of the videos that are available, but we have highlighted a few selections below.

"B-24 AT WAR" Series 1 (V-2111): Features exciting footage of the Ploesti Missions and coverage of the planes returning to base with battle damage. Includes 1986 reunion of the Ploesti low level raids aircrews and General Leon Johnson reminiscing with crews. B/W. 75 Minutes.

"THE B-24 STORY" (V-5884): This exciting saga takes you from Willow Run's assembly lines to the B-24's Global Operations and on to Ploesti! B/W. 74 Minutes.

"FLYING THE FIGHTERS—P-47 & P-51" (V-2117): Official AAF training films cover everything you want to know about these remarkable aircraft. Includes segment on Operation Strangle. B/W & Color. 97 Minutes.

"FLYING THE BOMBERS—B-24 LIBERATOR" (V-5057): Includes the history of the B-24, takes you through a pre-flight inspection, and teaches you the "art" of flying the B-24. Color. 1 Hour 26 Minutes.

"FLYING THE BOMBERS—B-17" (V-2113): Learn to fly the B-17. Everything from the pre-flight inspection, flight & emergency operations to the induction system. B/W. 2 Hours.

"THE B-17 STORY" (V-2118): A look beyond the line of duty & the story of the "Memphis Belle". B/W. 64 Minutes.

"HOLLYWOOD STARS" (V-2121): Features Cadet Classification with Ronald Reagan; Rear Gunner with Ronald Reagan and Burgess Meredith; and Winning Your Wings with Jimmy Stewart. B/W & Color. 1 Hour 20 Minutes.

460 BG AUTHOR: The title of Ted Newby's book which was described in the last Sortie has been changed to "Into The Guns Of Ploesti" and the price has been reduced to \$12.95 plus \$1.50 for postage. The book is 6x9 with full indexing and over 50 action photos. Those of us at the Sortie who have read the book are quick to agree with the critics that this is another outstanding book by the very prolific 460 BG author. Order: Ted Newby, 346 Pineview Drive, Venice, FL 34293.

YUGOSLAVIAN REUNION: Seeking WW II airmen who escaped or evaded capture in Yugoslavia with the aid of Partisans, Chetniks, or others for a possible reunion with helpers in Yugoslavia, summer 1991. Contact: John Rucigay, 14 Ashley Drive, Ballston Lake, NY 12019. (518) 877-8131.

301 BG HISTORY: Orders are being taken for the History Book of the 301st Bomb Group/Wing, Reconnaissance Wing, and Air Refueling Wing. History will be available for delivery in Sept 1991. This is a comprehensive, professionally written history which covers the 1942-1979 period in detail. Contact: E. H. Eckert, P.O. Box 790483, San Antonio, TX 78279.

CORRECTION: Whitney Cushing (376 BG) was up before an inquiry board not a court martial as reported in the "15th Air Force Story" published by Taylor Publishing in 1986.

ANOTHER CORRECTION: In Sortie Vol VI, No. 1, Our War Stories, "Hell Over Munich", the flare gun was fired to signal enemy planes that the bomber was disabled, not as a deterrent.

B-29 FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY: The Boeing Company in association with the Museum of Flight is sponsoring a celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the B-29 in Seattle, WA on 14-16 Aug 1992. Many Group/Wing Associations are planning reunions in Seattle during this time and Boeing plans a special military event day on Aug 14. Contact: Paul S. Friedrich, Bomb Group Coordinating Committee, P.O. Box 3999 M/S 17-28, Seattle, WA 98124-2499.

460 BG AUTHOR: Bill Petty has written a highly acclaimed book titled "Missing in Action" about his experiences during 72 days behind enemy lines during WW II. A nose gunner in a 460 BG Liberator, he evaded for 72 days in Yugoslavia hiding in the daytime and walking through the cold, snowy Alps at night. Order for \$9.95 plus \$1.50 postage through: Bill Petty, 508 Jackson Avenue, Carthage, TN 37030.

98 BG LOST SOULS: Member seeks contact or information on the following 98 BG, 345 BS vets: R.E. Carlson, H. Sander, Vern Peck, R. Whitgrove, John Weekly, J.T. Oates, Joel Hodgins, Don Swanson, and J.T. Martkos—also from the 376 BG: K.J. Turner and Homer T. Hill. Contact: Terry L. Ross, 2212 Pierce Street, Flint, MI 48503.

301 BG LOST SOULS: Trying to locate any of the following who were on my crew in 301 BG, 419 BS at Foggia, Jan 1945-July 1945: Lt. Robert Hamilton, navigator from Tennessee; SSgt Samuel Zimmerman, ball gunner from Pennsylvania, and SSgt John L. Huffman, tail gunner from West Virginia. Contact: Joe Spears, Box 927, West Plains, MO 65775.

98 BG BOOK: Mike Hill, who was a key writer/editor for the "The Fight'n 451st Bomb Group" which was highlighted in "Our War Stories" in the last Sortie, has written an equally exciting account of the 98 BG entitled "Desert Rats". This book recounts the 98 BG's participation in the famous low level attack on Ploesti on Aug 1, 1943. It is 8½ x 11 with 128 pages and 176 photos and maps. It may be ordered for \$9.95 plus \$2.00 postage from Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 713 South Third West, Missoula, MT 59801. Urged to expand his account to include the other groups which participated in this historic raid, Mike requests any member who flew on this mission to contact him to help him tell the story of all the groups. Contact: Mike Hill, 1405 8th Street S.W., Minot, ND 58701.

HUSBAND'S FRIENDS: Rose Getting (one of our members) is trying to contact anyone who knew or was in her late husband's outfit. Capt Harry J. Getting Jr. was a B-17 pilot in the 15th Air Force from 4 Oct 1942 to 9 May 1944 and entered the service from New York. Contact: Mrs Rose E. Getting, 2750 E. Bay Drive, Largo, FL 34641.

460 BG LOST SOULS: Hopes to find the following friends and former crewmen: Richard Cape, pilot from Wisconsin or California;

BULLETIN BOARD

Donald J. Snider, co-pilot from California; Jordan Perry, eng/gunner from California; Lester Odle, gunner from Missouri; Kent Eby, gunner from Illinois; John B. Cook, gunner from Nebraska or Florida; and W.H. Hutchings, gunner from Oklahoma. Contact: George Leland, 29165 Rosslyn Street, Garden City, MI 48135.

460 BG LOST SOULS: I am trying to locate the following men who were with the 460 BG, 760 BS and who went down on 13 Feb 1945: Ernie Brady, co-pilot; Al Febles, radio; William Matzok, nose gunner; and Don Sauvigne, navigator. I originally flew with this crew but was separated when we went overseas. They were taken prisoner and liberated on 29 Apr 1945 and then returned stateside. The pilot was Roland Guerin who I have located along with Bob Schleret, our ball gunner. I was with the 485 BG. Contact: John P. Mulvihill, 569 River Road, Fair Haven, NJ 07704.

8 AF LOST SOULS: I flew 35 missions with the 465 BG, 781 BS. My original crew and I were first assigned to the 578 BG in England. I was a nose gunner and shortly after arriving in England, a notice went out reducing the crews to nine men and all nose gunners were shipped to Italy. I would like to make contact with my original crew: Hollis E. Beane, Sidney A. Davidson (from Texas), Nick L. Manelick (Philadelphia), and Wayne A. Scott. Contact: Milt Levinson, P.O. Box 76, Middletown, DE 19709.

MEMORIAL: Al Honey reports that the Mikailovich Memorial has been dedicated and that it rests beside the Chapel of the Serbian Cemetery in Colma, California. He says that he is very proud of the members of the 15th Air Force who helped in so many ways. Al wrote that "when problems arose there was always some 15th Air Force vet at the end of the telephone who was ready to help me over the rough spots. The Serbian people across the world are grateful to them all for the recognition given to their great national hero. I have had letters of congratulation from all across the world, but what pleased me most are the letters from men I never knew who responded to the notice in 'Bulletin Board'. They remembered the great rescue efforts of General Mikailovich and the Chetniks with admiration and their sad fate with deep regret." A well done from all of us to Al Honey!

MODELS: Robert Wingfield Jr. has provided us with photos and literature of some outstanding scale model aircraft that are available for order from his company. You may select from more than 200 standard models or have him create a custom model of your aircraft to include Group markings and tail number. The models are mounted on a display stand and would be very appropriate as a personal memento, a Group reunion display, a special gift, or as an award to recognize devoted service. Bob may be contacted at: 5415 Maple Avenue 112-A, Dallas, TX 75235. (214) 634-0500.

450 BG PRIEST: Father John Bruder recently discovered his old 450 BG Association. Father John was a navigator and finished his missions between Dec 1944 and Apr 1945. He wrote us seeking information about a 459 BG Association for a friend who served in the 459th. We passed the info as requested. In an average month (and especially when we advertise our reunion in national publications), we receive a large volume of inquiries similar to Father John's and are always pleased that we can direct a lost soul home.

CERAMIC COMMEMORATIVES: Member David W. Thomas (1 FG) recently provided us with a sampling of his ceramic works which commemorate individual bombers, fighters, Groups, etc. He has an outstanding assortment of mugs, commemorative tiles, ceramic plaques, and medallions. They are reasonably priced and can be customized for an individual or Group. David can be addressed at Thomas Tiles, 2572 Arboretum Circle, Sarasota, FL 34232.

LOST CREW: In the last Sortie there was an article and photo about MSgt Richardson and 1Lt. McCulluch. If my memory serves me right, the pilot was Capt Finn or Fenn, and also SSgts Fichner, Houser, and Shorter. I was the engineer on this crew. I would like to hear from anyone of these men. Also on 1 May 1945 I was flying engineer with 1Lt. McCulluch as pilot and a makeup crew. Only other names I remember was MSgt Richardson and navigator F/O Davis. Anyone else on that mission will remember it. We were shot up real bad—went through the Alps with the right inboard feathered and left inboard windmilling—left the plane in a pasture in the Udine Valley. I would like to hear from any of these men. Don Davis (2 BG), 1206 N. Whatley Road, White Oak, TX 75693

WIDOW SEEKS INFO: Harold Fisher (401 BG) seeks information on Lt Kenneth Magrath's crew (459 BG) on behalf of his widow. Lt Magrath was a B-24 pilot who was killed in action over Yugoslavia on 13 Apr 1944. His widow believes that some of the crew were taken prisoner and would like to contact any survivors. Contact: Harold Fisher, 10176 Reseda Blvd, Northridge, CA 91324.

NEPHEW SEEKS INFO: Ken Reading is trying to locate 2Lt. Horace Henry Lund who served as the bombardier and was the sole survivor of his B-24H that was shot down by flak over Vienna, Austria on 17 Oct 1944. Ken's uncle Richard Merrill was the navigator. They were in the 464 BG, 777 BS. He is also interested in hearing from anyone who went through crew training at the air base in Walla Walla, Washington. Contact: Ken Reading, P.O. Box 1689, Pendleton, OR 97801.

BROTHER SEEKS INFO: Elmer Peterson is seeking info about his brother, 2Lt Stanley A. Peterson, whose B-17 went down over the Adriatic while on a mission to Czechoslovakia in Aug 1944. Stanley was a pilot in the 301 BG, 419 BS. His aircraft was named "Smiling Elsie" for his wife, Elsie, and his serial no. was 0-753813. His crew number was 536 at Alexandria, LA prior to going overseas. Elmer has reports that his brother remained at the controls so his crew could safely bailout. Would like to contact any of the surviving crew members. Contact: Elmer Peterson, 10 North Adams St, Hinsdale, IL 60521. (708) 323-6791.

B-17G LOAD ADJUSTOR: Mike Merryman purchased a B-17G load adjustor that belonged to AAF No. 43-37774. He believes the aircraft was assigned to the 15th Air Force and would like to hear from anyone who could supply info on the aircraft. Contact: Mike Merryman, 2613 Foron Road, Centralia, WA 98531.

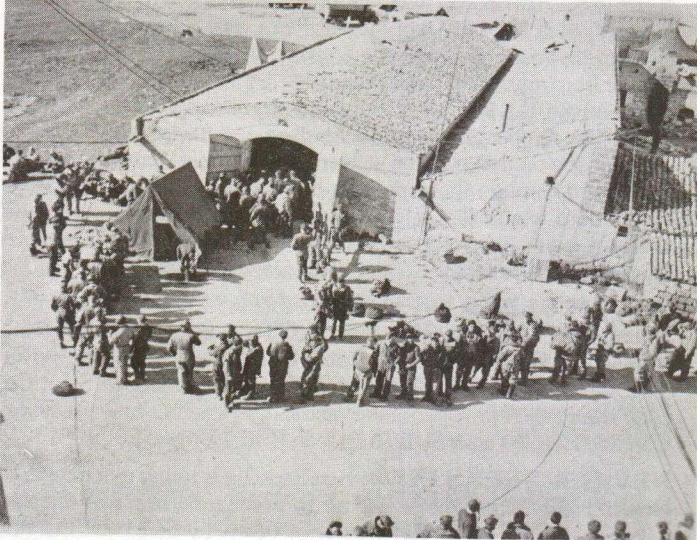
BROTHER SEEKS INFO: Jack Waldman is seeking info about his brother's death. His brother, Sgt Bob Waldman was a B-24 waist gunner with the 464 BG, 777 BS. Bob was killed in action on 12 Apr 1944 when his B-24 crashed into the Mediterranean Sea over Gealite Island. Contact: Jack Waldman, Box 3576, Seminole, FL 34642. (813) 397-8134.

NEPHEW SEEKS INFO: John Berghian seeks info on his uncle Virgil Lazar's B-17 crew which was shot down on 19 Mar 1944. He was a ball gunner on Lt H.H. Lairve's crew #11, 2 BG, 96 BS. Contact: John Berghian, 3427 West Vogel Ave, Phoenix, AZ 85051.



PART XXIII THE HERITAGE OF FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

OPERATION STRANGLE



"455 BG briefing & de-briefing hut showing flight surgeon dispensing the 'ration' to crews prior to de-briefing." Courtesy: N.M. Steinhauer.

ISOLATE AND WEAKEN

The purpose of Operation STRANGLE was to reduce the enemy's flow of supplies to a level which would make it impractical for him to maintain and operate his forces in Central Italy, which would clear the way for Fifth Army to break the ground stalemate and push north liberating Italy from Axis control. This campaign would also enable Fifth to support anticipated landings in Southern France. The specific target objectives were the rail network leading south from the Po Valley, port facilities on Italy's west coast, enemy supply dumps, and concentrations of reserve and replacement troops moving south.

With his lines cut and his transportation crippled, it would be impossible for Kesselring to meet the full demands of a protracted battle. As a direct result of Fifteenth's interdiction, he already lacked food and clothing. Motor fuel and some types of heavy ammunition were severely rationed. Military transport and heavy equipment were either in short supply or badly scattered, and the movement of supplies and reserves was exceedingly difficult. Units coming down from the north were forced to proceed on foot for long distances and were so often under air attack by Fifteenth's fighters and MAAF's medium bombers that they reached the battle area only after suffering heavy casualties, losing much of their equipment and vehicles, and being so dispersed that unit integrity was impossible.

FIFTEENTH'S INTERDICTION

During April, 1944, Fifteenth struck major blows against rail lines: on the 7th against marshalling yards on the Udine-Florence line; on the 20th against bridges at Fano, bridges

near Udine, and the marshalling yards at Ancona; and on the 30th against very congested yards at Milan and Alessandria. Results everywhere were good.

On 28 April, 168 Fifteenth Air Force heavies hit San Stefano with 418 tons, 108 bombers hit Orbetello with 267 tons, and 188 hammered Piombino with 563 tons. The attack on Piombino was supplemented by 98 P-47s which dropped 100 tons.

On the 29th, 573 Fifteenth bombers dropped 1,312 tons on Toulon harbor; the mission involved the largest number of bombers dispatched and the greatest weight of bombs dropped on a single target to that date.

A recapitulation of Fifteenth's operation during STRANGLE shows that its bombers dropped more than 5,000 tons of bombs on communications and transportation. They hit ten major targets, severely damaging trackage, rolling stock, and installations, and blocking most through lines to Kesselring's forces to the south. When STRANGLE came to an end, all rail lines as far north as Cecina-Fano were blocked and no through traffic approached closer than fifty miles above Rome.

Denied his rail lines, the enemy began to depend more and more on motor transport which he first used to "bridge" cuts in rail lines by carrying supplies from one train to another. When damage to his lines became so great that he had to abandon whole sections of track, he turned largely to roads to move troops and supplies over long distances. As soon as the Germans began the shift from rail to roads, Tactical's fighters and fighter-bombers bombed and strafed everything that moved. By May they had destroyed an estimated 800 vehicles and damaged close to 1,000.

Based on Fifteenth's interdiction campaign, it could be expected that Kesselring would be unable to counter Allied ground attacks by shifting men into, out of, or along the front quickly enough to meet constantly changing tactical situations.

After the allied armies launched their ground offensive in Operation DIADEM on 12 May and swept past Rome, the results of Fifteenth's interdiction became a matter of record.

OPERATION DIADEM

Beginning at 2300 hours on the night of May 11, Fifth Army and a part of the Eighth Army launched Operation DIADEM with a barrage from more than 1,000 guns. Early on the 12th ground troops finally made a move along the narrow front. Polish troops drove into the ruins of the Abbey of Monte Cassino; the British and Canadians swept across the Rapido and into the Liri Valley; the French made gains across the Garigliano, breaching the Gustav Line; and the Americans moved forward against stubborn resistance on the Tyrrhenian flank. By the 14th the enemy was in retreat; by the 19th all of Cassino was in Allied hands and the Gustav Line was thoroughly broken. On the 22nd, ground troops broke the Hitler Line, and Kesselring went into full retreat. The German retreat threatened to become a rout. With his established defense lines lost, his reserves fully but vainly committed, his transportation wrecked by the Fifteenth, and his forces under constant air attack, a coordinated withdrawal was impossible. Fifteenth Air Force had proved to be a formidable force.

To Be Continued

From: The Army Air Forces in World War II, Vol III, Office of Air Force History.

REUNIONS

2 BG/BW—Stouffer Hotel, Dayton, OH. 12-15 Sept 1991. Kemp Martin, 8433 Katy FWY, Ste 102, Houston, TX 77024.

20 Air Depot GP—Stouffer Dublin Hotel, Dublin, OH. 22-25 Aug 1991. Norman Lane, 12917 Jerome Rd, Plain City, OH 43064.

22 BW—Golden, CO. 19-21 Sept 1991. Bob Coursey, 2338 So. Hearth Dr, Evergreen, CO 80439.

31 DRS—Mirage Hotel, Las Vegas, NV. 16-19 Sept 1991 in conjunction with the 15th AFA reunion. Alex Boggio, P.O. Box 357, So. Pasadena, CA 91030.

87 DRS—Holiday Inn Bucks County, Trevese, PA. 20-22 Aug 1991. Ray B. Hoormann, 1209 Redman Blvd, St Louis, MO 63138.

97 BG—Red Lion Hotel, Omaha, NE. 25-28 Sept 1991. Ralph Burbridge, 1014 South 208th Street, Seattle, WA 98198.

99 BG—Marriott Hotel, Albuquerque, NM. 30 Apr—5 May 1991. Bernie Barr, 7408 Vista del Arroyo, Albuquerque, NM 87109.

111 Strat Recon Wing (Fairchild AFB and the 117th Bomb Sq, Langley AFB)—Planning 40th anniversary reunion in 1991. John Howe, 2618 Oriole Rd, Broomall, PA 19008.

319 BG—Clarion Hotel, New Orleans, LA. 12-15 Sept 1991. Joseph Madrano, 8308 Springtown, Converse, TX 78109.

325 FG—San Antonio, TX. 2-5 May 1991. Dan Penrod, 69 Keswick Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15202.

376 BG—Doubletree Hotel, Tucson, AZ. 19-24 Sept 1991. Joe Lynn, Rt -1, Box 89, Stonington, IL 62567.

449 BG—Sheraton Astrodome Hotel, Houston, TX. 9-13 Apr 1991. Richard Downey, 4859 Stanhope Dr, St Louis, MO 63128-2848.

450 BG—Marriott Pavilion Hotel, St Louis, MO. 17-20 Oct 1991. Doid K. Raab, 5695 Ireland Rd N.E., Lancaster, OH 43130.

454 BG—Omni Hotel, Charleston, SC. 29 Aug—2 Sept 1991. Ralph Branstetter, P.O. Box 678, Wheat Ridge, CO 80034.

456 BG—Tucson, AZ. 24-28 Apr 1991. Jim Watkins, 11415 Minor Dr, Kansas City, MO 64114.

459 BG—Marriott Hotel, Springfield, MA. 26-29 Sept 1991. John Devney, 90 Kimbark Rd, Rochester, NY 14610.

460 BG—Mirage Hotel, Las Vegas, NV. 16-19 Sept 1991 in conjunction with the 15th AFA reunion. Bob Cutler, 19135 US Highway 19 North, Apt A-16, Clearwater, FL 34624.

461 BW (B-52/KC-135 1960-1968)—Ft Worth, TX. 3-6 Oct 1991. C.L. Brown, 3018 Shady Knoll Lane, Bedford, TX 76021.

463 BG—Orlando, FL. Nov 1991. Eugene Parker, Rt #3, Box 188, New Matamoras, OH 45767.

484 & 461 BGs Assoc—Kansas City, MO. 26-29 Sept 1991. Bud Markel, 1122 Ysabel St, Redondo Beach, CA 90277.

485 BG—Little Rock, AR. 11-14 Sept 1991. E.L. Bundy, 5773 Middlefield Dr, Columbus, OH 43235.

781 BS & 465 BG HQ—Marriott Hotel, Omaha, NE. 10-13 Sept 1992. James Althoff, 2 Mt. Vernon Lane, Atherton, CA 94025.

906 ARS—Hyatt Regency West Hotel, Houston, TX. 9-13 Oct 1991. Kemp Martin, 8433 Katy Freeway, Ste 102, Houston, TX 77024-1997.

Aviation Cadet Class 41-F (Barksdale or Craig)—50th reunion 1991. Bill Ceely, 1103 N. Garfield Ave, Deland, FL 32724.

Aviation Cadet Class 42-B—50th Anniversary, Colorado Spgs, CO. 11-15 May 1991. Len Horner, 4410 Marigold Ln, Littleton, CO 80123.

Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society—Irvine, CA. 1-5 May 1991. Clayton C. David, 19 Oak Ridge Pond, Hannibal, MO 63401.

Assoc of Former POWs in Romania—Ft Worth, TX. 19-22 Sept 1991. Roy B. Meyer, 1077-B Blackshear Dr, Decatur, GA 30033.

A SALUTE TO THE MILITARY WIFE

The good Lord was creating a model for military wives and was into his sixth day of overtime when an angel appeared. She said, "Lord, you seem to be having a lot of trouble with this one. What's wrong with the standard model?" The Lord replied, "Have you seen the specs on this order? She has to be completely independent, possess the qualities of both father and mother, be a perfect hostess to four or forty with an hour's notice, run on black coffee, handle every emergency imaginable without a manual, be able to carry on cheerfully, even if she's pregnant and has the flu, and she must be willing to move to a new location 10 times in 17 years. And, oh yes, she must have six pairs of hands." The angel shook her head. "Six pairs of hands? No way." The Lord continued, "Don't worry, we will make other military wives to help her. And we will give her an unusually strong heart so it can swell with pride in her husband's achievements, sustain the pain of separations, beat soundly when it is over-worked and tired, and be large enough to say, 'I understand,' when she doesn't, and say, 'I love you,' regardless."

"Lord," said the angel, touching his arm gently, "Go to bed and get some rest, You can finish this tomorrow." "I can't stop now," said the Lord. "I am so close to creating something unique. Already this model heals herself when she is sick, can

put up six unexpected guests for the weekend, wave good-bye to her husband from a pier, a runway or depot, and understand why it's important that he leave." The angel circled the model of the military wife, looked at it closely and sighed, "It looks fine, but it's too soft." "She might look soft," replied the Lord, "but she has the strength of a lion. You would not believe what she can endure."

Finally, the angel bent over and ran her finger across the cheek of the Lord's creation. "There's a leak," she announced. "Something is wrong with the construction. I am not surprised that it has cracked. You are trying to put too much into this model." The Lord appeared offended at the angel's lack of confidence. "What you see is not a leak," he said. "It's a tear." "A tear? What is it there for?" asked the angel. The Lord replied, "It's for joy, sadness, pain, disappointment, loneliness, pride, and a dedication to all the values that she and her husband hold dear."

"You are a genius!" exclaimed the angel. The Lord looked puzzled and replied, "I didn't put it there."

Author Unknown.

Courtesy: Ann Lander's column, The Press-Enterprise, 24 Feb 1991.



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