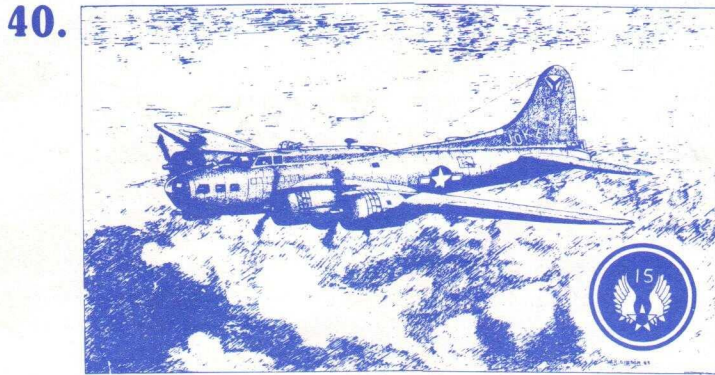


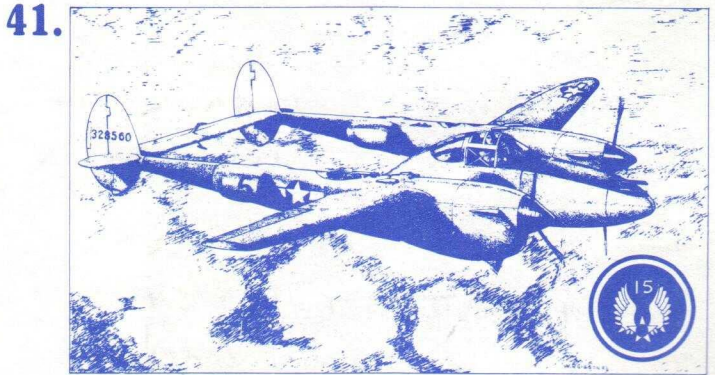
**MEMORIAL DAY
WE SALUTE OUR VETERANS**

The 15th Air Force Association Post Exchange

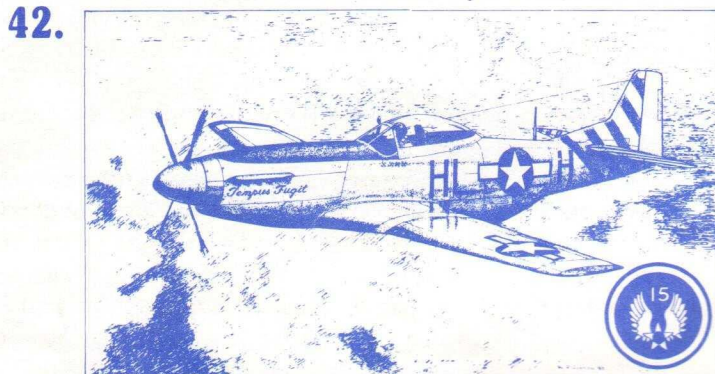
Our new PX is a mail order operation which offers a reasonably priced line of quality concession items useful to promote our history, raise needed funds, and provide another member service, since most of the items are unique and not generally available. Our current offering includes over 50 items. The 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.



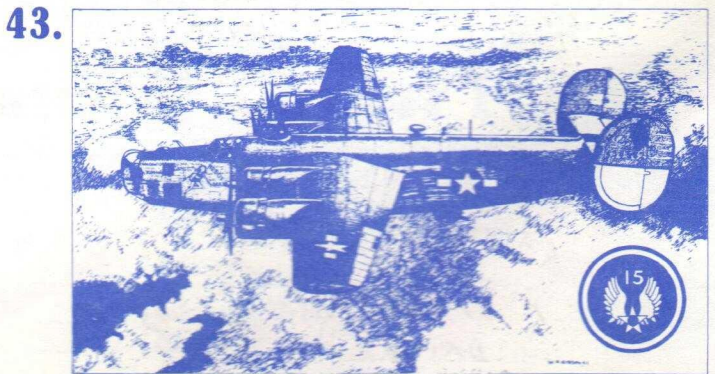
A B17 Flying Fortress Bomber of the 15th Air Force



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.

Size: 17" X 8" X 2"

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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.

Over 400 Designs Available. We have contracted with a company which has specialized in military pictures for many years and we have access to possibly the largest collection in the world. Full details of designs, pictures, and prices are available on request to Vogel & Sons.

44. 1st Flying Rules in Copper Etching \$49.95

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 Polesi, 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

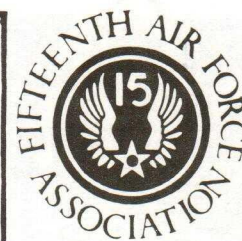
Development of the B-24 Liberator, cockpit controls, flight characteristics, power plant, crew positions, etc. 164 pages, 115 photos, drawings, and graphs. 8½" X 11" softbound.

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, Polesi, Midway, and more. 256 pages, 26 illustrations. 5¼" X 8¼" softbound.

SORTIE

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE



VOL VII, NO.3

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

IN TRIBUTE



Maj. Gen. Fay R. Upthegrove

Major General Fay R. Upthegrove, U.S. Air Force Retired, died January 8, 1992, in the Bradford Hospital, Bradford, Pennsylvania.

He was born January 28, 1905, in Port Allegany, the son of Frank Ellis and Cora Jane Goff Upthegrove. On September 6, 1930 he married Marcella Driscoll, who died June 27, 1970. On October 1, 1974, he married J. Elizabeth "Betty" Staley, who survives.

General Upthegrove attended Bradford schools and graduated from Bradford High School in 1923. In June, 1927, he graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point where he was appointed second lieutenant of infantry.

He won his wings in San Antonio, Texas, in 1928. His distinguished service career spanned three decades and much of the globe, with duty assignments from the Far East to the North African and European Theaters of Operation during World War II.

In April, 1942, he was assigned as commander of the 99th Bombardment Group and in February, 1943, he took the Group to North Africa. During this period, he flew more than 340 hours in the B-17 Flying Fortress, participating in 58 combat missions over North Africa, Italy, and Southern Europe.

He was chosen to command the lead plane in the first AAF hundred bomber attack on enemy territory, and he led his

Bomb Wing in the first bombing mission to Rome.

A year later, he became Commanding General of the 304th Bomb Wing of the 15th Air Force in Italy. Composed of the 454th Bomb Group, 455th Bomb Group, 456th Bomb Group, and 459th Bomb Group, the men of the 304th Wing affectionately referred to him as "General Uppe."

Assignments after World War II included command of Chanute Air Base, Commanding General of U.S. Air Force in Europe at Wiesbaden, Germany, Deputy Commander of 2nd Air Force at Barksdale AFB, Commander 4th Air Division, Commander of 20th Air Force at Okinawa, and Commander of the 313th Air Division.

On March 1, 1955, he assumed command of the Keesler Technical Training Center in Biloxi, Mississippi, a position from which he retired on July 27, 1957, after a distinguished 30 year career of service to his country.

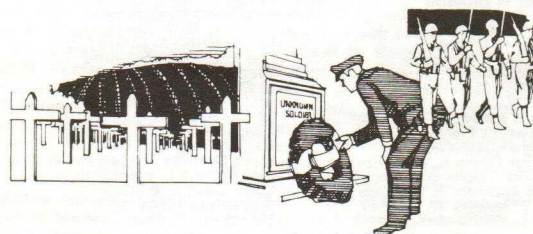
Among General Upthegrove's numerous awards and decorations are the Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak leaf cluster, and the Air Medal with 10 oak leaf clusters.

He was a command pilot, command observer, and senior aircraft observer.

Surviving in addition to his wife are two daughters, Mary Jane Scott of Xenia, Ohio, and Sue Kinch of Gales Ferry, Connecticut, eight grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by one sister and one brother.

Major General Fay R. Upthegrove was buried with full military honors on January 13, 1992, at St. Bonaventure Cemetery, Allegany, New York.

We extend our deepest sympathies to his family, his friends, his comrades in his beloved 99th Bomb Group, and to the thousands of military men and women who loved and respected him. We give him a final salute and well deserved tribute from a grateful nation.



OUR LIFE MEMBERS... WE SALUTE YOU!

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 General James P. Mullins
 General Leon W. Johnson
 General Paul K. Carlton
 General Charles C. McDonald
 General John A. Shaud
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NOTE: New life members are bold printed.

Patron members are in larger type.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We have been coordinating our plans for the celebration of the 50th anniversary of 15th Air Force with General Beckel and his staff, and also with General Jensen, the new commander at March Air Force Base. We are deeply grateful for their enthusiastic support and look forward to a gala event which will recognize your distinctive achievements and the proud heritage which you pioneered. We will provide a detailed schedule of events in our next *Sortie*, but for now, please reserve the Oct 31 to 4 Nov 1993 dates and make your plans to join us. We look forward to seeing you in '93.



MURRAY A. BYWATER
Brig Gen, USAF, Retired
President

SMALL TALK

GRATITUDE: First, let me thank all of you for your many expressions of concern for my health and especially for your prayers. I visited recently with Reed and Rita Sprinkel and was very moved to discover that Rita went to the ladies room at the reunion as soon as she heard about my cancer and began praying for my healing. I am delighted to report that prayers have great power and I am doing very well, my prognosis is good, and I fully expect to see all of you at the 1993 reunion (and that especially includes those of you who have had recent bouts with major illnesses). We, in the Fighting Fifteenth, are a special breed who have won many great battles and we will win these battles over disease! I remember each of you daily in my prayers.

However, I am sure that you have noticed that despite our fiercest efforts, sometimes age takes its toll. Our TAPS columns grow longer and we receive many sad notices about our comrades who have been called home. We miss each of them and will insure that they are remembered with respect and that the distinguished record of their achievements will be preserved as a legacy for those who follow in their footsteps. To this end, we want to commission a lasting tribute to forever memorialize those who have served and are serving in the 15th Air Force.

MEMORIAL: Since our founding over 10 years ago, we have wanted to place a memorial at an appropriate site and time. We believe that the 50th anniversary is the appropriate time and have begun a design process. We plan to place the memorial at our new museum site near the 15th Air Force Headquarters where it will be accessible to hundreds of thousands of annual visitors.



New patron members Reed and Rita Sprinkel—484 BG, 825 BS

For this purpose, we have established a special memorial account to receive your donations and know that you will be generous in support of this lasting tribute to those who served and sacrificed. Please send your contributions to our PO. Box 6325, March AFB, CA 92518 with checks payable to the 15th AFA Memorial Fund. All donations are tax deductible. We hope to provide a memorial design in our next *Sortie* and will keep you advised of our progress.

MEMORIAL BENCH: We also want to place a Memorial Bench in the Memorial Garden adjacent to the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio. Members Bill Large (454 BG) and Ross Strode (455 BG) have graciously agreed to assist with on-scene arrangements. Since most Air Force units are represented in this Memorial Garden, we feel strongly that those who served in our 15th Air Force should not be forgotten. Funds from our memorial account will also be used to support this effort.

REFLECTIONS: I have reflected more on life since my brush with death and I pass this small revelation. We often take for granted the ones who are most important in our lives—our spouses, our children, our friends and comrades. Please take the time to love them and be with them and share with them. In fact, give your spouse a kiss and your comrade a hug and tell them that's from Ben! Hope to see you soon. God bless all.

Ben



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

TAPS

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

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| James O. Baker (459 BG) | Mrs. Regina C. Kirk |
| Carl F. Bray (2 BG) | Dean C. Kuhn (99 BG) |
| Mario Caserta (450 BG) | Mrs. Bernice D. Lark (98 BG) |
| Charles W. Caudill (97 BG) | Benjamin J. Malone (463 BG) |
| Anthony F. Chelbana (22 BW) | Wilbur E. Martin (99 BG) |
| Harold F. Cline (485 BG) | Wanda M. Mathews |
| Vance Crossland (450 BG) | Bobby D. Mitchell (450 BG) |
| Mrs. Jack A. Crumbliss (484 BG) | Scotty N. Neader (99 BG) |
| Leland M. Curtis (460 BG) | John J. Norman (454 BG) |
| Arnold L. Daniels (455 BG) | William H. Parman (463 BG) |
| James H. Ferris (320 ARS) | William Petrick (31 DRS) |
| Howard J. Fry (15 HQ) | Ben F. Runyan (450 BG) |
| Milt Greimann (463 BG) | Mrs. Walt Schaffner (301 BG) |
| Theodore R. Harkins (31 DRS) | James L. Shrout (2 BG) |
| Thomas W. Henderson (459 BG) | Roy B. Strohmeier (455 BG) |
| George C. Hofer (455 BG) | Fay R. Upthegrove (304 BW) |
| Jack S. Holler (450 BG) | John T. Upton (301 BG) |
| Mrs. Jules Horowitz (99 BG) | Charles B. Weeks Jr (312 DRS) |
| Edward F. Huff (15 HQ) | Ernest E. Widergren (485 BG) |
| Harvey T. Jennings (99 BG) | Arthur W. Zegeer (455 BG) |

Our heartfelt sympathy to their families and friends.

Mail Call



Mail Call



Mail Call

Dear Gen Bywater: It is with a sense of gratitude that I submit my life membership dues to the Fifteenth Air Force Association. The extent of my service was limited to a desk job at the XV Air Forces Service Command Headquarters. Yet, to this day I feel a greater pride in having been even a small cog in that wheel than anything else I have done in all the years since. I am grateful to be permitted this continuing association.

Lensworth Cottrell Jr.
(XV Air Force Service Command)
Grand Rapids, MI

Dear Col Ben: I am proud to be a member of the Fifteenth Air Force Association. Enclosed you will find my check to cover another year's dues. Ben, I enjoy reading the *Sortie*—you are doing a good job of informing our members about the Fifteenth Air Force. I was with the 301 BG, 352 BS (B-17s) in North Africa and Italy. It's good to read about a mission or somebody from the fighting 301st Bomb Group. I'm looking forward to getting the next issue of *Sortie*. Thank you so much.

William Frank James (301 BG)
Union, SC

Dear Ben: I hope this finds you in improved health. Enclosed is my check to cover life membership in the 15th Air Force Association. It is my sad duty to inform you that 15th Air Force Association life member Leland M. Curtis (460 BG) passed away on Nov 22, 1991.

Regard "Lost Souls" column, Walter Lucha has been able to locate former 460 BG crew members Robert Boniface, Austin Clements, and John Bidigare through assistance of 15th Air Force Association members. Also from "Bulletin Board," the 460 BG has been in contact with Dennis Ruby concerning his father who served in the 460th. We have been able to help him, and Dennis has also signed up as a member of the 460th Bomb Group Association.

We will dedicate a 460 BG Memorial Plaque at Memorial Park, USAF Academy Cemetery during our reunion 24-28 Sept 1992. We will be staying at the Red Lion Hotel, Colorado Springs, CO. Ben, we expect you to be at the 15th Air Force 50th Anniversary Celebration in 1993.

Bob Cutler (460 BG)
Clearwater, FL

Ed's Note: We extend our heartfelt sympathy to Audrey Curtis—all of us will miss Leland. Audrey, God bless you and your family—you are in our prayers. And Bob, thanks for your kind wishes—I will definitely see you and George Geraci (see last *Sortie* Mail Call) at the 50th anniversary reunion!

Dear Sir: I have enclosed my dues for another year. I enjoy reading the *Sortie* and the Italy stories. I may write a story about the missions to Munich, Germany in November and December 1944 when the 8th and the 15th reported 400 bombers lost out of 1,600. We lost two engines over the target, the third over Southern Alps, and crashed landed out of gas near the German lines in Northern Italy. We had 450 holes in our "V For Victory" plane.

Bob Parsons (2 BG)
Cleveland, OH

Dear Ben: Enclosed please find my check to cover my life membership in the Fifteenth Air Force Association. We enjoyed the last two reunions in Las Vegas very much and hope that you have made a full recovery so we can be with you in 1993.

Donald C. Froehlich (464 BG)
Houston, TX

Gentlemen: Hi, fellows! I hope everyone is well and I pray that Col Ben is continuing to progress and will recover fully from his operation. I am enclosing my dues for 1992. Although it may be a bit early, I am going to keep it on a calendar basis so I don't forget (easy to do nowadays). God bless you all.

Arthur W. Johnson (98 BG)
Ocala, FL

Dear Ben: Your last letter came just before Christmas and

hearing that you were progressing on schedule somehow made the holiday season a little nicer.

Last month, my wife passed away. She had cancer for seven or eight years and it never was in remission. One of the side effects of the chemo treatment was a congestive heart problem. While she wasn't well at the time prior to the Las Vegas Reunion, she said that she had been looking forward to it for over a year and that she was going even if she had to crawl. She did enjoy reunions.

Walter K. Schaffner (301 BG)
Royal Oak, MI

Ed's Note: Walt, you are in our prayers—you have our deepest sympathies in the loss of Alma. God bless you and your family.

Dear Ben: I want you to know how very much I appreciated your letter. Jim Gordon is really "gung ho" on keeping the lines of communication open. I am pleased to say that I think I am making good progress in overcoming the grief of the loss of Bernice. We were three weeks away from the 47th anniversary of our wedding—I had always looked forward to our golden anniversary. I am enclosing a copy of "Black Ploesti" which was published in the March 91 issue of "Air Classics." Hope you enjoy reading it.

H.J. Lark (98 BG)
Pickens, SC

Ed's Note: You are also in our prayers—you have our deepest sympathies in the loss of Bernice. God bless you and your family.

Gentlemen: Please send me a membership application and info on the 15th Air Force Association. I was a former member of SAC, 15th AF stationed at Mountain Home AFB in the late 50's. I belong to many service clubs and am an associate member of the 8th AF Association. I did not know until recently that the 15th had their own group.

Clark M. Barry (9 BG)
Schofield, WI

Dear Col Franklin: Thanks for returning my call. Sorry that I wasn't in. I am presently collaborating on a book called *Torn and Bloody Skies* with a WW II Luftwaffe ace from J.G. 26 (Galland's Yellow Nose Abbeville Kids). My half is principally about the 2 BG and the 15 AF in 1944. The book will be published about July 1992. I'm having some difficulty obtaining book quality photos. At the present, we have a photography expert trying to enhance some photos of "Sweetpea" a 2BG 429 BS B-17G, which was hit over Debreczen, Hungary on Sept 21, 1944 and then flew 525 miles home before coming apart on landing. I want to use "Sweetpea" picture on the cover. Also, I can't find any useable pictures of B-17s or B-24s in heavy flak. I would greatly appreciate it if you have anything that would reproduce. Much of the year has been spent in research and interviews. The publishers think it's very good, but I'm not sure that I was cut out for this kind of thing. It has had one benefit—I have found that 3 others of my crew survived. I had been told when I was waiting in a P.O.E. that all had gone down.

Melvin W. McGuire (2 BG)
Las Cruces, NM

My dear friend, Col Ben: Forty-eight years ago today, I graduated from Ellington Field in Houston as a pilot. And was I proud! Today I received my 15th AF *Sortie* and learned of your illness. I was deeply saddened by the news, but I was proud again. Proud to have you as a friend.

In September I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. My doctor was wise enough to know that Eleanor and I planned on attending my 9th 459th BG reunion in Springfield, MA, so he ordered us to attend with radiation treatments scheduled for the day after we returned. I completed 7 weeks of daily treatments (37) and am now awaiting proof of the results. I have had a very positive attitude and they tell me this is a big part of the end result. I have a kid sister at Elgin AFB who has had bone cancer for six years. She has an unbelievable attitude and lives just one day at a time. Our correspondence in the past has caused me to almost think of you as a brother. I believe

we are both honored by our hundreds of friends, all of whom I know are offering a bit of a prayer for you, and maybe even me, if they knew I was ill.

You and I know we have the greatest bunch of guys in this world. Our 15th is set apart in friendships and camaraderie and aren't we lucky to be part of such a group? My friend, I'm not too swift with the words but I can promise you will be in my prayers. Our odds might even be better than flying over Ploesti, Vienna, or Budapest some 47 years ago. Keep the faith, Ben, and I'll expect to see you at our 1993 reunion and shake your hand for the fine job you've done in keeping our Fifteenth Air Force group on a level course.

Claude L. Porter (459 BG)
Traverse City, MI

Ed's Note: Claude, all of us are praying for you and we WILL have that hand shake in '93!

Dear Ben: Just received your letter with the update of the group contacts list—thanks. Socrates Delianedis called me after your reunion to brief me on the success of your work. I was disturbed to hear that you had a large physical problem! I am glad to hear that the operation was successful. Am certain that the recovery time will be short. That damn cancer is certainly around. Had a large melanoma taken off my chest eleven years ago and a cancer removed from my bladder six years ago. Thank goodness the doctors got all each time. All I have to do now is stay on the good side of Millie to live a long life—I hope! Tell Bob Smith I said to hang in there as he is now good for many more years.

Spent three days in Fresno, CA looking it over for our 50th anniversary site. We formed there in 1943—the only B-24 outfit to take phase training on the west coast. Looks good. Also attended a memorial service at Huntington Lake for one of our crews that was lost on a search mission in Dec 1943. Nine members of the 461 BG attended. The group is still going strong. So far this year we have found 388 men that are alive and recorded another 170 who have passed on. At this time we have accounted for 54% of the 5,340 men that were in the Group during the war. Our mailing list is now over 1,700.

Frank C. O'Bannon (461 BG)
Tucson, AZ

Dear Ben: I am writing for George. I am trying to order a tape from the 15th Air Force reunion in Las Vegas in 1989 at the Riviera Hotel. Hope you can help. I hear you have been ill. If you have a minute, let us know how you are doing. We have been very concerned. We really hated to miss the reunion at the Mirage but just couldn't make it.

Mary (Mrs George) Skiadas (BIGFENCE)
Crystal City, MO

Sir: Our crew was in the 15th 4-24-44. We were at Amendola Arena just north of Foggia in the 2 BG, 96 BS. I've misplaced the date of our first mission, but it was to Reggio Emilia in northern Italy. Our second was to Ploesti on 5-5-44. Our last one was to Savona, N. Italy and was the day southern France was invaded. We had been transferred from the 8th AF. We flew eight missions in the Eighth and 26 in the 15th. We had enough doubles that we had credit for fifty missions. I just recently found out that 15th had an Association. Our plane was called "Booby Trap" and had a picture of a brasserie with two big bombs in it. I just thought I'd write. Sometimes nostalgia sneaks up on you.

Wilbert C. Knecht (2 BG)
Clairton, PA

Dear Ben: After reading about your illness in *Sortie*, I want to wish you a speedy and healthy recovery. I'm writing this after reading the letter sent in by George D. Geraci (464 BG). I also wish him a full recovery.

I was not as fortunate as George, this past February I lost my wife of 44 years. We had just returned home in December after a great vacation trip. Shortly thereafter she went for her annual checkup to her dermatologist and he advised her to see her internist after noticing something in her fingernails. Six months earlier she had a full physical that she passed with flying colors. She saw her internist

Mail Call



and he immediately referred her to an oncologist who started her on chemotherapy. Unfortunately, she never had a chance; the lung cancer metastasized and she was gone in three weeks. I would like to refer anyone who is diagnosed as having lung cancer to get a copy of *Love, Miracles, and Medicine* by Dr. Bernie Siegal. If the person is early enough, this book might increase their chances of beating this dread disease.

Jules Horowitz (99 BG)
Pompano Beach, FL

Ed's Note: Jules, you are in our prayers—you have our deepest sympathies in the loss of your dear wife. God bless you and your family.

Dear Ben: Your call! Your voice! You are back! Hallelujah! God is good! God is great! Praise the Lord! Amen. Got your message on my machine. So happy you are back and thankful for your dear wife and family. You said your backlog is heavy. Please! Please! take it easy. Listen to your doctors. Don't fatigue yourself. But enough of that.

Went on 24 hour oxygen just hours after wife passed on 6 Nov 90. They think it was heart failure or a small stroke, but it's been a royal battle. The 1991 reunion was out of the question or so they thought, but at the last minute possible, I loaded up all that oxygen equipment in a super charged Audi (160 Mph) and in spite of hell and high water, it was the 15th Air Force reunion or bust.

Anita Kimmel broke the news to me about you and I truly felt sick at heart. Had counted on visiting with you, your son, and Pat. Anita made up for it though. She gave me the best seat at the best table anyone could hope for. Several entertainers came back and sat around us after their acts.

When General Bywater made the formal announcement about you, you could hear a pin drop. He put a good face on it, thus preparing us for the other shoe. Then he bravely dropped it that Wayne Newton wouldn't be coming, the hospital in LA, etc. Got to tell you, I was never more proud of him than right at that moment. Frankie was right there backing him to the hilt. These type people like Bob Hope are larger than life and I just know they will always carry on regardless of the obstacles. "The difficult today—the impossible tomorrow." Right? Someone had the good sense to have Bob Ralston and his big Yamaha perform right away and his wonderful music calmed the crowd. The people at our table started to hum and then sign along with those beautiful songs of the 30's and 40's. You could see the whole picture change as people relaxed and began smiling. It was truly a lovely evening. I think we all had those deep pangs over you, but it was still a special time. My table companions, all strangers, turned out to be so nice. I have received pictures, letters, telephone call, etc. since we parted. I feel so indebted to Anita. My oxygen equipment apparently didn't bother anyone. Col Kimmel and company are a terrific plus for us. I am so proud and thankful for all of you. Take care, my dears, and love to all. You sure know how to give it.

Franklin Keller (2 BG)
Denver, CO

Hi Ben: Sorry that we couldn't make the Las Vegas Reunion. Hear that it went real well. Couldn't help thinking when I saw the "smart" bombs go down the vent in Iraq, that in our day we had dumb bombs and smart bombardiers!

Ted Newby (460 BG)
Venice, FL

Dear Ben: It is distressing to learn of your serious bout with surgery, as well as that of Bob Smith. Compared to yours, I had a far less experience last December with prostate gland surgery; the idea being far worse than the operation. We are at that stage where the old bod begins to tell us that the road ahead is too long and the mountains are too high for us to do more than appreciate. In fact, I have finally developed an interest in the Land and America The Beautiful. I like to think that when we all joined the 15th Air Force, in our tender years, we assumed a responsibility

Mail Call



ty of protecting the Land, and you folks at the Association have dedicated yourselves to the perpetuity of a vehicle by which we can return to the original purpose of the 15th Air Force; protecting the Land and the Flag; a most noble gesture by all of you of the headquarters staff.

Edwin C. Range (454 BG)
Merced CA

Dear Ben: I received your letter a couple days ago and was very glad to hear from you. I am glad you and Col Smith are doing much better. I had a double by-pass surgery in April, but am doing super well. Fortunately, this type surgery has a more positive result than most malignancies have. But the best of luck to you and Col Smith and my prayer is for a complete recovery for both of you. I shall continue to support the 15th Air Force Association and keep up with member activities.

Wayne S. Pagan (31 DRS)
Eldorado, AR

Dear Col Ben: Sure was sorry to read of your illness and hope that your health is continuing to improve. I had a melanoma in my left eye in 1975. At that time I had never heard of cancer in the eye. I still have the eye and most importantly, still have vision in it. So hang in there and I hope to see you at the big 50th!

Ed Riggs (455 BG)
Tulsa, OK

Fellas: Please accept my check to continue my membership in the 15th Air Force Association. Thank too for that terrific reunion in Las Vegas last year. We had a good time and enjoyed seeing you and all our old buddies there. I hope we can make the next one. We appreciate you and what you are doing. Keep up the good work.

J. Jay Wilson (460 BG)
Kaysville, UT

Gentlemen: I flew with the 15th Air Force in 1944 - 45 as a bombardier on a B-17. We were stationed in a small town just north of Foggia, Italy. I was with the 483 BG. Recently, I learned of your existence. I would love to be a member of your Association and also to be informed of any functions that would be in future planning.

Albert Breslow (483 BG)
Daytona Beach, FL

Dear Ben: Can you include this in next *Sortie*: Looking for relatives and friends of B-17 "Miss Charlotte" lost 10 Sept 1944 and B-24 "Dallas Lady" lost 12 Sept 1944. Both were from the 885 BS Special.

John K. Mattison (885 BS)
1421 23rd Street, Peru, IL 61354

Dear Sir: Thank you very much for your quick response to my inquiry about the 15th Air Force Association. I am sorry about my belated application to join this wonderful organization preserving the proud heritage of the command and its people. I am proud of having been able to serve during two periods of my career: (1) 449 BG, 719 BS in WW II from Feb, 1944 - Apr 1944 completing 50 combat missions and (2) Cold War - May, 1955 to Oct, 1960 with the 96 BW, 338 BS and 413 BS as a lead crew navigator, navigator instructor, and squadron navigator. I shall be proud to be part of this fellowship and camaraderie and hopefully, I can attend future reunions.

Albert A. Martin (449 BG/96 BW)
Santa Rosa, CA

Dear Sir: Joining the 15th Air Force Association was a great step in my life. Due to the efforts of my friend, Alex Boggio, I was contacted by RAI Television of Rome, Italy to appear on a live telecast.

Edward G. Szymanski (31 DRS)
Comstock Park, MI

Ed's Note: See "Fame Finds Ed" on page 14.

Dear Ben: Just read in the *Sortie* of your bout with the Big C, but glad to hear you are licking it. I can join in the club. Just after we moved into our retirement home in October, I found I had a tumor on my hard skull. Just finished cobalt treatments and hope to regain strength soon. As we use

Mail Call

to say in the Pentagon, "Non Carborundum Illigitimi" (don't let the bastards grind you down!)

W. Calvin Phillips (456 BG)
Charlottesville, VA

Dear Mr. Franklin: My adrenaline has been moving at a rapid pace since our telephone conversation this afternoon. You were most kind in striving to reach me after I was delayed returning home by the happy birth of our latest grandson. As I mentioned, my son is keenly interested in my 15th Air Force service, but I cannot remember any group or squadron numbers. An old crew photo has these names: Lt John Ward, bombardier; Capt Lloyd Griffin, pilot; Lt Donald Kruger, navigator; Lt Bobby Colette, co-pilot; Sgt Frank Klepper, waist gunner; Sgt Merle Pebley, top turret; Sgt Francis, Ball gunner; Sgt Walt Bosau, radio; Sgt Homer Blackwell, tail gunner. A cryptic diary shows 51 missions from June 5, 1944 to Oct 11, 1944 with some entries showing June 10: Ferrara; June 13: Munich; June 16: Vienna; June 24: Craioua; June 30: Breslav. Can you or a member help me find my group and/or crew?

James P. Daly
367 Lloyd Road, Matawan, NJ 07747

Dear Ben: I just received the *Sortie* today. Sorry to hear that you have been ailing, but glad to hear that you are doing better. I also noticed my lost crew announcement was included in this *Sortie*. Thanks! I have just lately found that Fred Kowal died about 15 years ago from his brother in Utica, NY. Am still looking for 465 BG, 783 BS crew members Harold S. Bailey and Ralph R. Hollibaugh.

Golden N. Jones (465 BG)
2242 Locust St, Amarillo, TX 79109

Ed's Note: In the last issue Bailey was misspelled as Barley.

Dear Col Franklin: My crew joined the 450 BG in early July 1944 and had the fun (?) of going to all the major target (Ploesti, Munich, Vienna, etc). We earned the usual Air Medals, three Distinguished Flying Crosses (Chittero, Cobleigh, Lewis), one Silver Star (Wilkerson), and one Purple Heart (Wilkerson). After the war there was minimal contact between a few of us and we gradually lost touch. In 1984 we decided to attempt a reunion. We were able to locate eight and we got together in Atlanta. Two years later we had the second reunion in Colorado Springs. By then we had found the other two; all ten men were together again. We continue to have reunions and it is difficult to describe the camaraderie and emotions which permeate these reunions. We will certainly continue to support the Association. It is a very wonderful thing you do! Perhaps all ten of us can attend the reunion you are planning for 1993.

C.H. Cobleigh (450 BG)
Lawrenceville, GA

Ed's Note: All ten crewmen together again! (See photo on page 9). Are there other crews that are in contact and still have all members? Drop us a note and we will report in the *Sortie*—also a photo!

Ben: Since you published my letter in Bulletin Board, I have been contacted by people who went out of their way to help me in my search for my uncle's (Lester W. Knab) remaining crew, even one who became close friends during training. I just want to say thanks for everything you and your staff have given me and I will definitely be a subscriber to the 15th AF Association. Since the announcement I have received the MACR and found Lester was with the 485 BG, 829 BS and through a reunion notice I was able to contact the right person who got me in touch with 4 men who were able to survive the crash! This has finally put together a part of my life which was missing and I have been invited to the next 485 BG reunion where I will be able to meet these brave men. Thanks again.

Mike Knab
Erie, MI



OUR HONOR ROLL

463rd BOMB GROUP

WE SALUTE YOU

FOR OUTSTANDING PERFORMANCE OF DUTY

in armed conflict with the enemy. Assigned the mission to attack and destroy the Romano Americano Oil Refinery, Ploesti, Rumania, in an effort to reduce the total Axis oil production to a critical point in her military requirements, the ground crews worked enthusiastically and with grim determination to have their aircraft at the peak of mechanical perfection to insure the success of this mission, despite the damages and losses suffered by their group through a sustained period of operations. On 18 May 1944, thirty-five B-17 type aircraft, heavily loaded with maximum tonnage, were airborne, and despite adverse weather conditions rallied with the wing formation and set course for their destination.

Under continued adverse weather conditions encountered enroute, the visibility became so limited, with dense cloud layers reaching to 30,000 feet elevation, that all other units returned to base. Undaunted by the seemingly overwhelming odds, the 463rd Bombardment Group continued on alone through the dense cloud coverage which rendered compact formation flying extremely hazardous.

Despite intense, heavy, and accurate enemy anti-aircraft fire encountered over the target, the gallant crews,

displaying outstanding courage, professional skill, and determination, though many of their airplanes were damaged severely, maintained their tight formation and brought their ships through the enemy defenses for a highly successful bombing run, inflicting grave damage to vital enemy installations and supplies. Rallying off the target after the bombing run and while unprotected by friendly fighters, the group was savagely attacked by approximately 100 highly aggression enemy fighters. In the ensuing fierce engagement, while battling their way through the heavy enemy opposition, the group lost 7 bombers, however, in the gallant defense of the formation, the gunners accounted for 28 enemy aircraft destroyed, 30 probably destroyed, and 2 damaged. With the arrival of friendly fighters, the remaining bombers proceeded to base for a safe landing without further damage.

By the extraordinary heroism, airmanship, and grim determination of the combat crews, together with the highly technical skill and intense devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 463rd Bombardment Group has upheld the highest traditions of the military service, thereby reflecting great credit on themselves and the armed forces of the United States.

By Command of Major General Twining



OUR CREWS

455 BG, 742 BS Crew. ▼

(Standing from the left): A.W. DePeano, Navigator; George Muise, Bombardier; Jim Connelly, Co-pilot; and Bill Barker, Pilot (replaced by Ray Grooms prior to overseas shipment). (Kneeling from the left): David Stine, Ball gunner; Marshall West, Nose gunner; Robert Hammer, Left waist gunner; Joe Siles, Tail gunner; Felice Alfino, Engineer/Top gunner; and Robert Sink, Right waist gunner. Courtesy: Robert Hammer. Ed's Note: See "Fertility of Fantasy" on page 14.



450 BG, 723 BS Crew. ▲

(Back row from the left): Lt Zink, Co-pilot; Chris Dalgish, Bombardier; Patrick A. Barbati, Pilot; and Dale Robertson, Navigator. (Front row from the left): Unknown ground crewman; Leroy Adams, Top gunner; James Keleshian, Waist gunner; Red Macafee, Nose gunner; Vernon D. Hasley, Tail gunner; and Tierney, Radio. Courtesy: Vernon D. Hasley.



465 BG, 781 BS Crew. ◀

(Standing from the left): Ray Prezler, Bombardier; Allan Arverson, Navigator; Harry Yaroshuk, Co-pilot; and Ralph Hendrickson, Pilot. (Kneeling from the left): Eugene Young, Tail gunner; John Zahuran-cik, Ball gunner; John Wroblewski, Nose gunner; Kenneth Pulham, Radio; Dominick Zinobile, Engineer; and Arron Wolfson, Top gunner. Courtesy: John Wroblewski.

450 BG, 720 BS Crew. (Standing from the left): Tim Wilkerson, Bob Welsh, Kay Krogstrand, Marvin Quinlan, Glen Price, and Rosario Iacono. (Sitting from the left): Frank Chittero, Hank Cobleigh, Ken Lewis, and Lynn Cobena. Courtesy: Hank Cobleigh. ►



SOBRIETY

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

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1st Fighters Cover Yalta Conference

By Staff Sergeant Louis A. Blackburn

Every move made by the principals to and from the recent Big Three conference in Yalta, and subsequent subsidiary meetings, was constantly guarded during daylight hours by Lightning pilots of the First Fighter group of the Fifteenth Air Force who have returned from one of the most extensive and closely coordinated escort missions of the war.

Providing daylight escort for 16,000 miles over 3 continents, the highly complicated operation was accomplished without the loss of a pilot, and despite adverse weather in some instances, every rendezvous was made on schedule.

Planning and directing of the operation was done by Colonel Arthur C. Agan, Operating on short notice and with the utmost secrecy, Colonel Agan, accompanied by his three squadron commanders, flew over the long routes that led to the Big Three's meeting place in the Crimea and made arrangements for the involved operations that required split-second timing for

15th Ties Record

Railways In Austria Under Attack



Liberators of the 15th U. S. Army Air Force turn back toward their Italian base dropping a load of bombs on the German-held railway yards at Salsberg Austria. Smoke from the exploding bombs mingles with smoke from snuffbox pot lighted by the enemy.

Planes Fly 19 Missions Against Raids

At the week's end, the 15th AAF was still going on its record-breaking run of consecutive days of operations. With Saturday's missions, the string hit 19 days, tying the record set last August under vastly better weather conditions.

With the exception of Monday and Saturday, when the heavy bombers had to turn back and only the Lightnings bombed, every day has been a complete effort, with all available groups participating.

In congratulatory messages received from General Arnold on down, much credit has been given the ground crewmen who have kept the bombers in the air. Theirs has been hard work in the mud and cold nights, servicing the Liberators and preparing for each mission as it came up.

long flight.

Pilots Not Informed
Security was so closely guarded throughout the operations that the pilots knew neither destination nor for whom they were flying escort until they their missions were completed. At the end of one leg of the journey the fighter pilots were surprised to hear a voice over the radio say: "Mr. Eden wishes to thank the Lightning pilots for their splendid escort."

On another occasion the P-38 pilots were told by a voice on the passenger ship's radio: "The passenger wishes to thank the Lightning pilots for their excellent escort." The pilots did not learn until they had returned.

(Continued On Page Eight)

Liberator Crew Flies Crippled Plane Back

After the nose gunner was trapped in his turret without a parachute, eight men of a Liberator crew, by their human endurance and skillful aeronautical engineering, brought their plane back to its Fifteenth Air Force base recently.

They were 10 until flak hit the Liberator on its bomb run. Although wounded, the navigator kept toggling the bombs until a shell exploded inside the nose and his body fell through the gaping hole. The explosion knocked out both pilots and the nose gunner and ignited leaking hydraulic fluid in the bomb bay.

Plane Dives

"When I regained consciousness, our compartment was filled with smoke," Second Lieutenant Michael L. Goglia, the co-pilot, remembers. "Both windows had been blown out and the plane was in a dive."

First Lieutenant Kenneth Wydler, the pilot, had closed the throttles as the explosion knocked him out, thereby preventing a spin. He came to just after the co-pilot, and together they

(Continued On Page Eight)

459th Bomb Group Flies 200th Combat Mission

(See Picture On Page Four)

Striking at railroad yards and communication lines at Augsburg, Germany Tuesday, as part of the stepped-up Allied air offensive against the Reich, the 459th Bombardment group commanded by Colonel Henry K. Mooney, flew its two hundredth bombing mission against Axis targets in Europe.

Flying its first mission on March 1st of last year when it bombed the Nazi communica-

brought the bomber out of a dive.

"We could feel a fierce wind rushing from the nose," recalls Lieutenant Goglia, "but we didn't know then everything that had happened up front."

Trapped Without Chute

Sergeant Robert E. Espenshade, the nose gunner, recovered consciousness to find himself trapped without a parachute in the nose turret which was partially severed from the body of the bomber by a six-foot gap in the fuselage. The turret glass was shattered, and the interphone and oxygen supply were cut. Despite a numbing wind and the pain from a broken rib, Espenshade stood up and waved to the pilot, indicating he was all right.

First Lieutenant Niran E. Kellogg, the bombardier, escaped because he had left the compartment just before the anti-aircraft shell hit. Kellogg had been trying to loosen the frozen bomb bay doors; now he went back to kick out a bomb which had hung up.

(Continued On Page Eight)

Brazil's Airmen Announce Totals

12th AAF — Fighting under its country's flag as an independent unit of the 12th AAF, the First Brazilian Fighter Squadron has flown 897 sorties, dropped 339 bombs and destroyed 159 enemy cars, trucks and armored vehicles between October 31, 1944 and January 22, 1945. It is commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Nero Moura, former adviser to the Brazilian Air Ministry and an internationally-known pilot.

Late World News

(Released by PWB through United Nations News Service)

WEST FRONT

Shattered German formations are today in retreat across the Rhine, while American and Canadian 1st Army troops continue to advance and lengthen their front for the assault on the historic water barrier.

The Supreme Allied Commander, General Eisenhower, yesterday visited the front and described the progress of the offensive as "eminently satisfactory," and Allied casualties as "gratifyingly light."

According to a military spokesman, at Supreme Allied Headquarters, German disorganization in the Rhineland is so complete that the Siegfried zone as a defense line had ceased to exist.

Yesterday, in several sectors, Allied troops smashed their way into many German strongholds, including the industrial cities of NEUSS and KREFELD. KREFELD, the largest German town to fall into Allied hands so far, was captured after a six hours' fight. In the rear, VENLO, on the Dutch border, and ROERMOND, fell to the advancing Americans. Today, a front line correspondent reports a new penetration to the west bank of the Rhine at a point 5 kms north of NEUSS.

The Rhineland has been cut in two, along the Roermond-Dusseldorf line. As the Allied forces sweep forward, German pockets of resistance form rapidly, but almost as rapidly they are being wiped out.

To the north, British and Canadian troops have smashed forward from 10 to 17 kms in places where gains of 100 metres had been difficult before, and less than 10 kms now separate them from the American 9th Army driving northwards. This follows a 17 kms advance by infantry last night to reach the outskirts of GELDEREN. North of GELDEREN other Canadian army units are threatening XANTEN, which guards the Rhine crossing at WESEL.

The Americans are close to the Rhine in the suburbs of (Continued On Page Eight)

and preparations for the offensive which began February 13 early in the month. Over 200 men were dispatched in small mobile repair units to the emergency fields behind the Italian front and in Yugoslavia. They patched up of 150 bombers sufficiently to fly them to the main air bases for major repairs. At air depots technicians working day and night completed modifications and major repairs to an additional 75 bombers.

Air service squadrons of the Service Command during the first ten days of the assault repaired and turned back to combat units 75 percent more fighters (Continued On Page Eight)

OUR WAR STORIES

“LITTLE BUDDIES” IN ACTION

Bomber Escort

The huge bomber escort raids of 1944 had, in some ways, a terrible beauty about them from a fighter pilot's point of view. Arriving at our rendezvous point we would circle anxiously looking for the bomber formations and suddenly there they were, a few thousand feet below us in a column extending as far as the eye could see. Hundreds of four engine bombers, each squadron and group in its own box formation, boring ahead toward the target—sometimes underlined by contrails, sometimes not. And then suddenly, the flak started—ugly, black, explosive puffs with an occasional red flash as something is hit. At that point, you are glad you are in a fighter and not sitting there plowing through those deadly black explosions.

Protect The Straggler

On May 10th flying as Springcap and Highlife (there is no record of responsibility for selecting these names), the 94th provided escort for B-24's of the 49th Wing withdrawing from Wiener Neustadt, Germany. Springcap picked up the last B-24 Group coming off the target and escorted them uneventfully. Highlife squadron shepherded a straggling B-24. At a point near Graz, Yugoslavia, 10 to 12 enemy aircraft attempted to attack the bomber. Our P-38's attacked the enemy and a running encounter ensued to a point 50 miles south of Graz. Lt. Lathrope was forced down. Lt. Van Sice destroyed one Me-109 and Everett Miller probably destroyed a FW-190. Lts. Barlow, Hallock, and Quesseth each damaged a 109. Lt. Lathrope, who returned to the squadron on May 26th, claimed two Me-109's destroyed. During the Wiener Neustadt bomb run, the flak was intense, accurate—both heavy barrage and tracking. One B-24 was seen to explode over the target and one was seen to spin in. No chutes were seen from either ship.

Enemy Yo-Yo's

Probably the major mission of July 1944 occurred on the 18th. On an escort mission to Friedrichshafen, Germany, B-24's of the 49th Wing bombed the Manzell Dornier Works. Approximately 90 enemy fighters attacked the bombers with our P-38's diving into the attackers. As a Group, we destroyed 14 enemy aircraft and damaged or probably destroyed 11 others. We lost none. This mission and others about this time demonstrated a German tactic not new, but now more consistent and predictable. The enemy fighters were extremely persistent in attacking the bombers, but avoided contact with the P-38's and P-51's as much as possible. The term yo-yo boys was never more meaningful. The Me-109's and FW-190's would split-S away from the American fighters but rebound immediately in their yo-yo fashion to again attack the heavies, particularly any straggler bombers or squadron formations. It seems we rarely saw an enemy fighter that wasn't going straight up or straight down. And, of course, going straight down in a P-38 was something done only with considerable risk—which the Germans knew just as well as we did. Unfortunately, this situation was not remedied until the appearance of dive brakes in the late model P-38 J's.

My Buddy, Dusty

Jim Fairhurst recalls his experiences on the Labau mission: Our squadron was flying high altitude escort for the heavies, B-17's and B-24's. Many a heavy bomber boy can tell you about the droves of “Jerry” fighters that we met over Lake Balaton that day.

On the morning of June 16th, Capt LaClare, operations officer, came into our tent and said, “Barnes, Fairhurst, let's go—briefing at 0615.” Barnes and I were real good buddies; we had gone home together before coming overseas. “Dusty” was his nickname. Dusty and I left our racks and started to dress. As we were pulling our flying suits on and checking our .45's, he turned to me and said, “Say, Jim, if I ever go down, take care of my things and whatever fits is yours.” I said, “OK, Dusty. And the same goes for me too.” There was nothing unusual about the conversation. Most every “Joe” in combat makes that pact with a buddy.

We took off at 0745 that morning with Dusty flying Green #2 and myself in White #2. Our squadron was made up of four flights—Red, White, Blue, and Green with four ships in each flight. The flight leader was #1, his wingman #2, the element leader #3, and his wingman #4. Our Group hit Lake Balaton at 28,000 feet about four minutes ahead of schedule. As we swung into a 360 degree turn to the left, calls started coming in on radio. “Bogies 9 o'clock high, Bogies 2 o'clock high.” Then, “Springcap squadron drop belly tanks—break right!” The fight had started. My first impression was a flurry of slender black arrows slanting through our formation. We were in a scrap with the yellow-nosed Me-109's, the Yo-Yo boys. These boys had a reputation for going straight up or straight down. Just after our first break, I looked off my left wing in time to see three P-38's get it. One burst into flames all over and around the cockpit (Loughmiller), the second went into a slow spin to the right trailing coolant (Barnes); and the third had stopped flying and appeared to go by me as if some giant hand had hurled it across the sky. I saw the pilot of the third ship hit the silk OK. For a minute or so, it seemed as if I had been watching all this from a seat in a movie house back in the States. Finally, I got with it and raised a little hell of my own. On the way home, “Ques” our squadron leader (Cecil Quesseth) called for a check-in: Green #2 (Barnes) failed to check in along with Red #4 and Blue #2 (George Loughmiller and Thomas Vitale). When I heard this, I was sure praying that Dusty was one of them that hit the silk OK. He was not.

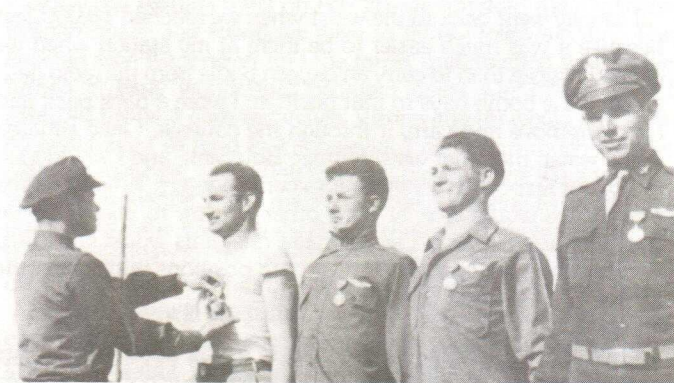
Strafing Attack

On Nov 7th, Maj Bucky Harris led the 94th and Group on a strafing raid attacking enemy convoys in northern Yugoslavia. This was followed by Capt Ed LaClare leading the 94th and Group on a bomber escort mission to Vienna followed by strafing attacks on targets of opportunity south of Vienna. Principal targets



Francis (Bucky) Harris, 94 FS CO on the left, and Everett Lindley in front of Bucky's P-38 at Salsola in 1944. Courtesy: Everett Lindley photo in “Hello Spacebar, This Is Springcap” by John D. Mullins.

OUR WAR STORIES



A Little tongue-in-cheek crew ceremony for award of the Air Medal. Max Pachar "pins" 461 BG, 767 BS crew (from the Left): Denny Perkins, Joe Kuesterstepfen, Stan Stone, and Ralph Tenney. Courtesy: Denny Perkins.

were convoys and rail traffic. On Nov 16th Lt Chester Heien led the 94th on a strafing attack against German truck convoys in the area around Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. Dozens of trucks were destroyed or damaged together with flak positions and troop casualties. The Germans were prepared for this attack. Anti-aircraft weapons were positioned along the highways and in armored vehicles in the convoys. We lost two on this raid with a third landing a totally disabled P-38 at Salsola.

German Jet

The first verifiable encounter with a German jet fighter occurred on 26 Nov 1944. Lt Royal Nyby was leading a flight of three P-38's. Lt Everett Lindley was flying in the #3 position with Lt Guy Thomas in the #2 spot. The flight was returning from a photo escort mission to Munich and encountered the Me-262 near Innsbruck at an altitude of 26,000 feet. With Lt Thomas lagging, but attempting to get back into position, the 262 made a pass from the stern. Lt Lindley called a break left. As the P-38's were about 90 degrees around, the Me-262 chandelled over them climbing into the haze. Lt Thomas had disappeared. Neither Nyby nor Lindley were able to see what happened to him. In a post war exchange between Everett Lindley and the Me-262 pilot, Rudolph Zinner, it was learned that Lt Thomas was indeed shot down. He survived briefly in a German hospital but died of his wounds on 4 Dec 1944. He had flown only one or two missions.

"LITTLE BUDDIES" IN ACTION excerpted from *Hello Spacebar, This Is Springcap* courtesy of John D. Mullins.

DEAR MOM

It wasn't the way he wanted it to be, but Norman T. Smith figured he had heard the last of his older brother, Clarence. Clarence and Norman grew up in southwest Philadelphia. Clarence, whose nickname was Buddy, went off to WW II at the age of 26 and was shot down over Italy on 6 July 1944. He died on a street in Verona.

It was tough, but Norman carried on. On the day his brother died, he entered the Army and served as an infantryman in the Pacific Theater emerging without a scratch. Smith's mother died in 1981 and as for the death of her oldest son, "She never did get over it," Smith said.

Unusual News

On 23 Jan, Norman received the unusual news from the U.S. Postal Service by way of a telephone call. At the other end was Meg Harris, a Postal Service official, who asked Smith if he had ever had a brother named Clarence. "I said I sure did." Harris told Smith that she had a letter from Clarence to his mother written 45 years earlier. It was finally delivered in a ceremony yesterday.

Clarence Harris apparently had written the letter to his mother 19 May 1944 while aboard ship enroute to North Africa. The letter, along with 234 others written by other servicemen aboard ship, was taken in a duffle bag by a serviceman bound for home who, instead of mailing them, put them in his aunt's attic in Raleigh, NC. There they sat until Feb 1986 when an exterminator, spraying the aunt's house, discovered the duffle bag. He took the letters to the Postal Service.

Most of the letters were easily delivered. Using military records, most of the veterans or family members were located. But the letter from C.F. Smith to his mother, who had remarried and used the name Pine, was difficult because Clarence Smith's records were destroyed in a 1970s fire at the federal records center in St Louis. In addition, Smith is the most common name in the English language.

But the Postal Service pressed into service Pierre J.J. Kennedy of the 781 Bomb Squadron Association (Ed's Note: Kennedy is also a member of the 15th AF Association). Kennedy found Smith's full name and Philadelphia address through a search of National Archives records of aircraft crews reported missing in action. Neighbors in Philadelphia led Kennedy to Smith's brother in Henderson, MD. The Postal Service arranged a little ceremony where Smith was given the letter, which he first read to himself and then read aloud.

Dear Mom:

I sure hope you are all well. Today may be the last letter you will receive from here. So don't worry if you don't hear from me for awhile. I'll write as soon as I am able. Take good care of yourselves. Goodnight all.

*Your son,
Buddy.*

Just two months after that was written, the bomber in which Smith was a tail gunner was shot down over Italy. An Italian family buried the body. After the war, the Smith's returned his body and he was buried in Fernwood Cemetery in Philadelphia.

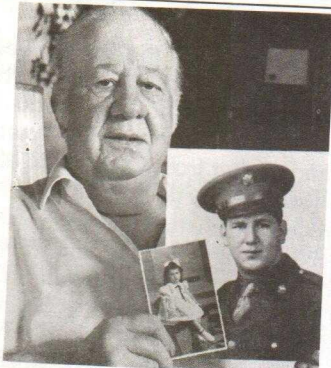
Life went on without Buddy. Then came this last letter. It was all very emotional for Norman. He's 70 years old now, but in a way he's still Buddy's kid brother.

Courtesy: A clipping from Mark Blitzstein.



Tent mates. Anyone recognize this 460 BG, 760 BS crew? Photo taken in 1945. Courtesy: Zephro Edgell.

OUR WAR STORIES



Ed Szymanski holds photographs of himself and Maddalena taken 45 years ago.

FAME FINDS ED

Ed Szymanski has been leading a quiet suburban lifestyle in Comstock Park, but his life has been turned upside down because of what he did in 1945. Though Szymanski has regaled family and friends with tales of World War II, none would have imagined he would become the star of a television documentary focusing on his deeds in Italy. Szymanski left the Air Force base in Bari, Italy 45 years ago believing he would never again see then 6-year-old Maddalena Strisgiuglio, whom he had befriended. Maddalena was one of many Italian civilians to whom Szymanski gave leftover food from the Officers' Mess in which he worked.

Rome based RAI Television Network produced a live, two hour television documentary this spring entitled *My War*. They invited Szymanski to Rome for a reunion with Maddalena—and an appearance as the only American portrayed in the documentary. "I felt especially sorry for the little kids," Szymanski said, "because they didn't have anything to do with the war. My heart really went out to them," he said. When Szymanski took the garbage to the dump and saw people take food out of the garbage, he decided to give them leftovers—mostly flour and tomato juice—despite the fact he could have been violating regulations. It was through kindnesses that Szymanski made many friends in Italy. When he was transferred to the infantry and left Bari, Szymanski said the Italian civilians told him nothing would happen to him and God would look after him because he was so good to the people.

Courtesy: An article by Vicki Otter

THE FERTILITY OF FANTASY

While flying as a radio operator on a B-24 with the 455 BG, 742 BS based near Cerignola, Italy, I learned three things. (1) Too much thinking doesn't pay, (2) you never can tell about dreams, and (3) what it is like to be scared. I recall three missions vividly—the first and the last two.

To recollect my first mission now after eleven years (written in 1955) is no more difficult than remembering what I had for lunch today. Assigned to fly with us on our first mission were an engineer and a bombardier who were completing their tours of duty (50 missions). My job at the radio was to keep in contact with the ground station until we reached enemy territory and then go back and operate the left waist gun.

On this particular morning, I tuned in London for the news and heard, "Berlin Radio reports Italian based bombers took off for the Munich area this morning." I was rather amazed at this. We hadn't been in the air more than an hour, so I decided they must

have an effective spy system in operation.

I usually went back to the waist when we reached 18,000 feet because it was much easier to be there at my station when we needed oxygen than to carry an oxygen bottle from the radio desk through the bomb bays to that position. I wore a back pack and had to remove and carry it through the catwalk. Once situated in the waist, the other waist gunner, Bob Sink, and I would look out of our respective windows for enemy fighters. When we tired of that, we would look at each other and try to imagine what the other was thinking. Occasionally, one of us would fall asleep and the other would stand vigil at both positions until he felt the shirker should wake up and fly right.

First Flak

On this first mission, we had been in the air about three hours with nothing of note happening. Our fighter escort had joined us and we were bouncing along in the blue. All of a sudden a thick black cloud appeared in the sky at our approximate altitude off to the right of us! "What is it?" one of the crew broke in on intercom to ask. "Take a good look at it fellows," from our guest bombardier, "because it's flak and you'll be seeing plenty of it from now on." I did just that. I took a good look at it—and while I was looking, a squadron of Liberators flew directly into the stuff. "Fools," I thought. "Why don't they fly above or around it?" The ominous looking cloud fully enveloped the formation of B-24's. I waited to see them emerge at the other end. They came out all right—those that remained. Two tremendous red flashes sent gushing upward hundreds of feet the crimson remains of two planes, whose pieces later drifted slowly earthward. I thought, "My God! I'm certainly glad that wasn't our target." No sooner had I thought this than we made a right turn followed shortly by another and we were headed for that same suicidal cloud. "Maybe they'll run out of ammunition," I hoped.

I had to quit hoping and start hopping. Someone suggested we put on flak suits. We did it quickly. The waist gunners were to throw out strips of tinfoil done up in packages about four inches wide and a foot long. It was called "chaff" or "window" and was supposed to foul up Jerry's radar. The only way we had of dispensing it was by opening a waist window and throwing it out. Our plane didn't have a chute for that purpose yet. The extra engineer was there to help with that job on this first mission. He held the window open just far enough for me to stick my gloved hand out and launch the chaff. It was rather cold at 26,000 feet in spite of electrically heated suits.

When we first entered the flak area, I made the mistake of thinking again. "Hell," I reasoned, "if we get hit, I'll just get out and walk. That stuff is thick enough to support me." As before, no sooner had I thought that than I wished I hadn't. The plane started bucking like a rodeo bronco. Between maintaining equilibrium, throwing out chaff, and surveying the flak flashes outside the window, and wondering which one would hit us, I had no time for thinking. When we were in the middle of it, a crack that must surely have torn the plane in half was heard. I questioned the engineer with a look and he pointed to a hole an inch long and a quarter inch wide. I was rather disappointed when he showed me that. Surely, I reasoned, a noise as loud as that merited a hole the size of man's head.

After an eternity (about seven minutes) of flak, we descended and returned to the base with one whole mission under our belts. We were combat veterans now with only forty-nine more to go.

We flew twenty-five more comparatively uneventful missions between Oct 5, 1944 and Feb 20, 1945.

OUR WAR STORIES

Vienna Dream

After the evening meal on Feb 20, we checked the squadron bulletin board and found we were to fly the following day. The enlisted men were never told the target until briefing time so we turned in early wondering, "Whither goest we?" That night I dreamed the next day's target was Vienna and we would be disabled and forced to land in Yugoslavia. I never put much faith in dreams, so when, at briefing the next morning, we were told the target was Vienna, I was mildly amused. Thinking to amuse the rest of the crew with my obvious powers of Psyche, I revealed the plot to them on the hardstand while we were awaiting take-off time. It amused them somewhat—in a sickly sort of way.

When we were in the plane, warming up the engines, the ground crew chief pointed to a formation stick which had been installed the previous day. We immediately christened it the "Pogo Stick."

We rendezvoused above dense cloud covering and made our way to the target as we had on previous missions with little of consequence occurring. Everything seemed to be going according to plan when we hit the target. But shortly after we left Vienna, number three engine quit. The pilot, Ray Grooms, and the copilot, Jim Connelly, tried their best to feather the prop but didn't succeed. The windmilling propeller caused us to lose altitude and speed. Soon we were unable to stay with the formation.

Orders were given to lighten the plane as much as possible without jeopardizing ourselves. We threw most of our ammunition out and everything else not deemed necessary. Even then, we continued losing altitude more rapidly than planned. The pilot decided not to try crossing the Adriatic Sea, but maintained enough altitude to clear the mountains and get to friendly forces in Yugoslavia. We cleared the mountains with little to spare and made our way to Zara, an emergency landing field under American control. Buffalo Bill was a piker compared to the display we put on for those below. The bombardier, George Muise, and engineer, Felice Alfino, were having a contest to see who could fire the prettiest flares from the Veery Pistol.

A final check revealed no brakes since our hydraulic system had been damaged. To provide brakes, the pilot decided we should remove the waist windows and tie a parachute to each waist gun. We would pull the rip cords on word from Grooms. Shortly after the wheels made contact with the ground, we pulled rip cords. The one on my side opened first and we veered crazily in that direction until the pintle holding the waist gun to its mounting was sheered cleanly in half. The other parachute finally opened and braked us to a stop.

We loaded almost immediately into a C-47 which flew us back to our base that night. I was told by everyone from the nose gunner, Marshall West, to the tail gunner, Joe Siles, that I could in the future keep my dreams to myself.

A Mickey Run To Augsburg

Someone decided we needed a rest after that mission so we weren't scheduled to fly for several days. This irked us somewhat because we were anxious to get our tour of duty over and head home. We made pests of ourselves until we were finally put on the flying roster for Feb 27. The target was Augsburg! Augsburg gunners had a good reputation, so this was to be a mickey (radar) run with cloud coverage to shield us from their deadly aim. I wandered over to the next hardstand to shoot the breeze with Lt Smith and his crew (not sure of the name). In the course of the conversation, we noted Augsburg was only twenty minutes from Switzerland. Jokingly, I told them we were going to make a left turn from the target and land in Switzerland. They assured me they would follow (it might be well to mention that this was

not done unless absolutely necessary. The military attache in Switzerland checked your plane and if you could have made it to Allied lines, you were in for trouble).

A thick layer of clouds lay beneath as we flew toward Augsburg. But, for reasons not accounted for to this day, there were no lounds above Augsburg. Before we could recover from this turn of events, we were on the bomb run. I was sitting on the floor throwing chaff out the chute. I couldn't see the flak from where I was, but I had an idea things weren't going too well. Our plane was tossing up and down and back and forth incessantly from the flak bursts. I looked back at Sink to see what he thought of it. He was holding the sides of his face in unbelieving bewilderment. A moment later, I felt his hands on my shoulders and he was crouched down behind me—not a second too soon! A chunk of flak as big as a fist sailed over our heads that would have hit him squarely in the back if he had been standing. It seemed like two eternities before bombs away. Someone had left the waist door to the bomb bays open and cold air was rushing in. Flak must have creased our bombs; a spray of fine material swept across the exposed portion of my face. Things were not right. The plane was listing. I wanted to get up and take a look, but controlled the impulse until the Grooms asked the navigator, A.W. Depeano, for a bearing to Switzerland. What I saw was not good! Number four engine was gone—sheered completely off the wing. Number one was throwing oil, and gas was pouring from number two. We were definitely heavy on the left side. For a few moments my stomach felt like I had swallowed a gallon of mercury.

We threw everything out this time—ammunition, waist guns, everything not fastened down. We were headed earthward—fast! Bomb bays and hatches were open and the possibility of hitting the silk was great. Grooms and Connelly were doing an excellent job of compensating to keep us from spinning in. I had to send an SOS so I made my way to the radio room along the bomb bay catwalk. I sent the message straight; no time for code—SOS SOS SOS V(my call letters escape me) QAL Switzerland. By the time we were over the Swiss border we were too low to bail out. We took ditching positions and got ready for a jolt.

Switzerland

We landed in a swamp at Altenrhein, a half mile inside the Swiss border. By the time all eleven of us cleared the plane, a detachment of Swiss soldiers were standing near us with a flag. One of them informed us in halting English, "You are in Switzerland." They relieved us of our automatics and the camera. We didn't object so much to surrendering our weapons, but the camera-lifting brought an objection that continues to this day.

We were given tea and cheese in a factory mess hall near where we landed. A charcoal-burning 1938 Chevrolet took us to St. Gallen where we boarded a train to Zurich. The next morning a bus took us to Adelboden, a beautiful little resort town in the Swiss Alps. When I first saw it, I thought the Lord was really being good to us. After riding with us only the day before, he was now lodging us in heaven. My thinking was still giving me trouble. There was no heat in the hotel and we lived on potato soup. That should end the story. It does—except for one thing. Who do you think were the first people we saw in the lobby of the hotel? Lt Smith and crew! (Note: The crew was returned to Allied control 3-14-45. Hammer was discharged in Oct 1945, went to school on the GI Bill, taught high school English in Sidney, MT and is now retired. Ray Grooms is a 15AFA member who retired as a Lt Col and now resides in Simi Valley, CA.)

Courtesy: An account by R.J. Hammer, radio/left waist gunner.

BULLETIN BOARD

COMMEMORATE WW II: Our attempts to put together a special trip to Europe to commemorate the 50th anniversary of U.S. participation in WW II were not successful. Planning for both the trip and our 50th anniversary reunion in 1993 began to exceed our resources and we opted to devote our full attention to our 1993 reunion. Additionally, we had indications that the 15th Air Force Band of the Golden West would accompany us and present a series of patriotic concerts in selected cities of Europe. Pentagon budget cuts eliminated that possibility and we, regretfully, terminated further planning.

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. 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. 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.

"B-24 AT WAR—PLOESTI" (V-2111): Features exciting footage of the Ploesti missions and coverage of the planes returning to base with battle damage; plus the 1986 reunion of aircrews from the Ploesti low level raids; and B-24—The Forgotten Bomber—its true contributions and value in WW II and its lack of recognition revealed in poignant detail. B/W & Color. 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 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.

99 BG LOST SOULS: You indicated that you would include details of my search for my pilots from the 99 BG in the next issue of Sortie. This will not now be necessary since I have found them, one too late, unfortunately. An information operator in the LA area gave me the number of Joseph Munroe, our co-pilot. His wife, Pat, answered my call only to inform me that Joe died just last November. It is so sad that my search could not have been earlier. She did give me a clue to the location of my pilot, Bob Rochelle, and with the help of another operator, I found him! Please include an item in the Sortie to help us find members of Rochelle's crew (Donald R. Hoffman, A.J. Shryock, Lynn F. Welch, & Donald C. Dillion—I understand Bill C. Campbell died several years ago). Francis W. Purdy, 2525 Deborah Dr, Brachwood, OH 44122.

88 DEPOT REPAIR SQ: I am trying to locate anyone from the 88 DRS located at Gioia, Italy. John B. Rasch, P.O. Box 245, Neotsu, OR 97364-0245.

461 BG AUTHOR: Two of the 17 bomb groups on the mission missed the target completely (in good visibility) on the first 15th AF attack on the Hermann Goering Tank Works at Linz, Austria on 25 July 1944. The 484 BG dropped a half mile to the left and the 2 BG dropped 13 miles short. I am writing a book about this mission and would like to find out what happened. If you can shed any light on these events, please contact Milton Radovsky (461 BG), 10710 Lockridge Dr, Silver Spring, MD 20901. (301) 593-4428.

CORRECTION: I have procured Bill Fili's book, Passage To Valhalla. I enjoyed it very much, however I would like it known that I did not bail out. I was not on the mission. I was scheduled but as

I was having problems sleeping in the combat area, I reported to Dr. Thorpe before every mission for a "Bennie". This really woke me up. On this day when I went to Doc, he grounded me because of a head cold. I along with 9 other souls was put together to form a crew. All of us had started in New Mexico. I was among the first to complete 50 missions. I have severe C.O.P.D., am on oxygen most of the time, and in a wheel chair sometimes. Since I can no longer travel, I would like to hear from any of those whom I flew with, especially Lewis D. Hanna, 450 BG, 720 BS. Jack C. Schoonover, 5433 Burr Oak Way, Fair Oaks, CA 95628.

464 BG LOST SOULS: I am interested in locating four former 464 BG, 778 BS crew members. Our crew was assembled at Westover Field, MA in July 1944. Pilot was E. Burroughs and co-pilot was Herschel L. Higdon. Six of us have maintained contact for many years, but we would like to locate the other four: George K. McMillan (navigator from Linden, NJ), Howard J. Farling (gunner from Philadelphia), Elmer "Butch" Griffiths (gunner from Lima, OH) and Harry Wetzel (bombardier from Woodbury, NJ—later assigned to another bomb group near Foggia). Robert N. Hoskinson, 6910 Norlynn Dr, Louisville, KY 40228-1471. (502) 231-0380.

94 FS HISTORY: A history of the 94 FS in WW II entitled *Hello Spacebar This is Springcap* is available from life member, John Mullins, for \$15 which includes postage. This is an excellent, detailed, and well documented account of the air war through the eyes of one of our "little friends." It is archived at the Air Force Museum, Air Force Academy, and Air University. We recommend it highly to our members (see excerpts on page 12). Order: John Mullins, P.O. Box 1932, Kerrville, TX 78029.

450 BG LOST SOULS: I have found or accounted for all of my 450 BG, 723 BS crew except for three. Please contact me if you know the whereabouts of TSgt Leroy Adams (maybe WA state), SSgt Red Macafee, and SSgt Tierney. Vernon D. Hasley, 609 SW 5th, Dimmitt, TX 79027. Ed's Note: See crew photo on page 9.

SLOVAKIA ESCAPE: M. F. Van Eyck writes that in Oct 1944 there were many downed American airmen in Slovakia attempting to evade the enemy. With the help of a partisan leader, Stefan Mikulcik, they were led to the town of Banska Bystrica where at nearby airport, Tri Duby, were evacuated back to Italy in B-17's provided by the 15th AF. The following men were provided safe passage: Sgt Clarence Le Roy Madsen, Lt David Fuchs, TSgt Nick Yezdick, Lt Neal T. Cobb, SSgt Frank J. Fuquay, Sgt James F. Pittman, Lt George O. Vinberg, Lt Robert E. Vinberg, Sgt Edward E. Donatelli, TSgt Claude H. Davis, Sgt Jacob A. Shaheen, SSgt Jesse Houston, Lt Frank C. Soltesz, Lt Maurice V. Terry, Lt John P. Campbell. TSgt Karl G. Rienherth, and TSgt Norton D. Skinner. If you were an evader and would like to contact Stefan Mikulcik, his address is Druzstevna 584/7, 906 13 Brezova pod Bradlom, Czechoslovakia. (Ed's Note: I have no way to verify this information but believe it to be accurate.)

376 BG AUTHOR: Jerry Yulsman's novel, *The Last Liberator*, was published this past Dec by E.P. Dutton. While a work of fiction, its treatment of the Aug, 1943 low level mission to Ploesti is interesting and will hold your attention. At press time we had not received sales info from Dutton, so if interested, you may contact Jerry at 137 Smith Street, Brooklyn, NY 11201. (718) 875-0147.

331 SIGNAL COMPANY LOST SOULS: I am very proud to have served in the 449 BG & 450 BG in Manduria and the 98 BG & 376 BG in Foggia. I would sure like to find Col Kyle. Every morning he took me with him to chase the formation. I am very proud of him and Lt Simmons. Would like to contact either. Gilberto Vera, P.O. Box 863, Alice, TX 78333.

B-17 GENERATOR: I am a life member who served in WW II

BULLETIN BOARD

as a radio operator on a B-17. I came back to the farm my grandfather purchased in 1870. I am still tending 160 acres at age 72. On my return, I purchased a B-17 generator which I hoped to use to make a welder, but never got it completed. Could you help me with an approximate value and inform me of those who might be interested in purchasing it? Clyde W. Jontz, RR01 Box 40, Baxter, IA 50028.

P-38 LOST SOUL: I would like to locate Doug McDaniel who flew P-38's in the 15th AF. In about 1938 his father and mine were building bridges for the Santa Fe railroad in Yucca, AZ. Bob Stane, 1963 N. Grand Oaks, Altadena, CA 91001. (818) 794-2902.

455 BG STORY & HISTORY: The 455 BG Story is now available for order for \$32.50 which includes postage. Louie O. Hansen, Box 6125, Spencer, IA 51301.

564 SERVICE SQUADRON LOST SOULS: I would appreciate any help in locating buddies who served in the 564 SS at Foggia from 1943 to 1945. Carl Hubbs, 17905 Haines St, Perris, CA 92370.

AIRCRAFT NAMES: I am an associate member and collect names of B-17's and B-24's by group. Most of my present lists are from 8th AF groups. I would appreciate it if members would send me a postcard with the name of their aircraft and the Group they flew with. John P. Chopelas, 508 S. Gray Street, Killeen, TX 76541.

470 BG LOST SOULS: John Agren and your editor are looking for information on the 470 BG and anyone who was assigned to it. John is searching for those who may have known his brother who was a radio operator in the Group. Your editor can find no record of the 470 BG but believes it may have been a training group ?? John's brother Edgar flew with his group from Tonopah in early March of 1944 with 14 other B-24's to either Bari or Foggia. On 4 May, the B-24 had a fire and the pilot had to ditch off the coast of Italy. Four or five men drowned and four or five were rescued. The pilot was Cliff Wages. Members of the crew were Jim Sherman, George McFaden, John Lazz, Bob Carlson, Thomas Flaherty, Edgar Russel Agren, Butch Bruno, Bob Strickler, and Bob Moriarty. John W. Agren, 40 Newman Avenue, Seekonk, MA 02771.

463 BG LOST SOULS: I completed 35 missions as an engineer/gunner on a B-17 while in the 463 BG, 773 BS. I am trying to locate five members of my crew: James O. Schaefer, Donald W. Armstrong, Albert Hepting, Glenn Waggoner, and John Romano. Robert F. King, 10832 Kane Avenue, Whittier, CA 90604. (310) 941-2036.

ODERTAL MISSION: I am trying to compile a complete record of the 461 BG mission to bomb the synthetic oil refinery at Odertal, Germany (Mission #151) on 17 Dec 1944. I hope to determine those who were KIA, those who were MIA, those who died in captivity as POWs, survivors, and survivors who have since died. Our Group history reports 31 B-24's took off on the mission with five early returns, leaving 26 continuing to target. Nine were shot down and one lost due to ditching near Vis. I would also like the route of the mission. Please write if you can supply any information. Lawrence M. Eidsmore, 2139 N. Fairway Lane, Oak Harbor, WA 98277.

11 DRS REUNION: I am trying to locate a reunion contact for the 11 DRS. Sheryol Pearcy Miller, 204 Silverstone Drive, Englewood, OH 45322.

BRITISH TV: I am a British TV producer researching the 15th AF raid on the I.G. Farben synthetic oil facility on 20 Aug 1944. The raid was carried out by 127 B-17's of the 5 BW escorted by 102 P-51s from the 306 FW. The raid included the 2 BG, 97 BG, 99 BG, 301 BG, and 483 BG. If you are willing to share your recollections with me, please contact: Luke Holland, 3 Nevill Road, London N16 8SH, England. Tele (collect): 011 44 71 254-8395 or FAX: 011 44 71 923-0248.

FRAUD: We screen our announcements as carefully as possible, but can not determine the validity of each request. Most of our announcements come from members or sons & daughters who are trying to locate friends or crew members. But there have been reports recently of so-called "collectors, museums, memorial foundations, authors, historians," etc. who collect memorabilia of WW II under false representations and resell for profit. Please exercise great caution in contacts with anyone who wants you to supply anything of value including money. No one is authorized by the 15th Air Force Association to collect any memorabilia, money, or anything else of value from any member. We are careful to never supply mailing lists or member lists to anyone to insure that we do not inadvertently help a person with dishonest intentions. Please report any suspicious contacts to us and we will publish additional and specific warnings. Additionally, there have been attempts for years by a small, but highly motivated, group to somehow blame the 15th Air Force for not bombing Auschwitz when we were in the area on other assigned missions. (Note: None of these groups are Jewish or in any way connected with legitimate studies and investigations of the Holocaust). We have vigorously resisted these spurious efforts to place blame for the horrible crimes at Auschwitz on anyone but the Nazis—and certainly not an Air Force which bombed targets as assigned by higher headquarters and sacrificed lives to defeat the Nazi killers. Please exercise caution in dealing with anyone who questions our target selection or targeting priorities.

450 BG AUTHOR: Bill Fili (450 BG) has written a book depicting his crew's (Pilot Dana Varvil) experiences both in battle and as a POW in Romania. A companion of this book is a 1 1/2 hour video of actual combat film. The book, *Passage to Valhalla*, may be ordered for \$18.95 plus \$2.50 postage and the video may be ordered for \$16.95 plus \$2.00 postage from Filcon Publishers, 33 Northgate Village, Media, PA 19063. If you order both for delivery in one package, postage for the order will be \$3.00.

HUNGARIAN INTERNATIONAL MILITARY AIR MEETING: The US Air Attache at our embassy in Budapest has forwarded us the following invitation and urged us to support the meeting if possible: The Society of Hungarian Veteran Airmen is organizing an international meeting of airmen during the first half of September 1992 in Budapest—particularly those who flew missions during WW II against targets in their country. "Let's offer peace one another after 48 bygone years." They want to invite 15 fellow airmen from the 15th Air Force to attend as their guests (room and board for three nights) 8-11 Sept 1992. They outline a program of visiting Hungarian military bases, local tours, and discussions and exchanges of WW II experiences. If you are interested and have the funds to cover the trip, you may make direct contact with our Air Attache in Budapest: Col Carl F. Knabe II, USDAO AmEmbassy Budapest, Unit 25402, APO AE 09213-5270. Tele (Int'l): 36-1-112-6450, ext 429.

301 BG LOST SOULS: I was a TSgt radio operator on B-17's in the 301 BG, 419 BS. On Feb 13 or 16, 1945, our bombardier (Robert McCartney) and I were assigned to fly with a new crew (as a checkout). Our eight other crew members were flying #2 in our formation—we were #3 on their right wing. The last I saw of my crew, they were going down in flames over Vienna, Austria. I know that three were killed including the radio operator and the rest were taken prisoner. Our pilot (POW) was 1Lt. Zenus H. Pilcher from Florida. I would greatly appreciate if any one could help me locate him and Lt McCartney. Lindsey V. Jorris, 1228 Black Sage Circle, Nipomo, CA 93444.

PART XXV THE HERITAGE OF FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

OPERATION ANVIL



"Extra Joker" crew from 451 BG, 725 BS (standing from the left): Ray Fisher, radio and waist; Gus Meissner, co-pilot; George Tudor, pilot; and Ted Gosinski, top turret. (Kneeling from the left): Harold Graham, ball gunner; and Orville Richey, tail gunner. Courtesy: George Tudor.

DIADEM CRITIQUE

Operation DIADEM (the ground and air offensive to break the Gustav and Hitler lines) did not officially end until 22 June, but as early as the 4th of the month when Rome fell, the success of the air phase was confirmed. The effect of the repeated bombing campaign against enemy supply depots and the attendant transportation network was apparent when Allied armies forced a real battle. When the enemy was forced to expend ammunition, fuel, and other essential supplies at a high rate, the success of our interdiction campaign became obvious—the Germans were so crippled by shortages that they had no choice but to retreat. The success of DIADEM turned an orderly withdrawal into a rout.

15TH ENDS DIADEM WITH A BANG

After the fall of Rome, 15th Air Force turned its attention so fully to the Combined Bomber Offensive that its activities over Italian targets consisted only of an occasional mission when weather precluded operations elsewhere. One of these occasions proved to be significant. Ten days of bad weather at the end of June grounded most tactical air operations and the Germans rushed to repair battered lines and start a major resupply effort. Fifteenth was called on to again attack the German lines of communication. On 22 June, Fifteenth launched 580 heavies, protected by 513 fighters and dropped close to 1,400 tons of bombs on yards at Parma, Modena, Bologna, Ferrara, Castel Maggiore, and Fornova di Taro; rail and road bridges at Neversa della Battaglia and Rimini; the Turin motor transport works; and the Chivasso motor transport depot. The bombing results ranged from good to excellent and the German prospects of holding on in Italy were dashed—after the massive attack by the Fifteenth, the Germans devoted their attentions to avoiding a complete rout of their ground forces.

OPERATION ANVIL

After this operation, and with the return of good flying weather, Fifteenth was tasked to accelerate its role in the Combined Bomber Offensive and to begin support of ANVIL. ANVIL was the long awaited invasion of southern France. To most of the American planners the invasion was a logical part of the grand strategy whose ultimate purpose was the complete defeat of the Nazis. But to most British planners, it was an operation which forbade another which they much preferred: an advance into the Balkans—either through Greece or Albania or out of northeastern Italy—and thence into Austria and southern Germany and even Poland. There was much to be said for both sides. The American view discounted certain political considerations; the British gave to them much more weight. The Americans were thinking primarily of the quickest way to end the war; the British, of post war eventualities. Because of these differences in opinion, lack of landing craft, and shortages of other essential materials, ANVIL was launched only after some six months of indecision—a period in which the operation was off again, on again, not once but several times.

15TH PREPARES THE WAY

With the decision finally made, Fifteenth was quick to respond to tasking. On 5 July, 228 B-17's and 319 B-24's heavily and successfully bombed Montpellier and Bezier yards along with sub pens and installations at Toulon. Again on the 11th, B-24's gave Toulon Harbor a good concentration of 200 tons of bombs. Next day, 315 Liberators dropped 760 tons on yards at Miramas and Nimes, and 106 others hit bridges at Theoule sur Mer and across the Var River. On the 17th, 162 B-24's scored many hits on rail bridges at Arles and Tarascon and on bridges and yards at Avignon. One week later, 145 B-24's dropped 30,700 20lb frags on airfields at Chanoines and Valence. The final mission flown by our heavies during this short period was on 2 Aug when they created ten rail cuts between Lyon and the mouth of the Rhone. All of the Fifteenth's fighter groups participated in these missions, but the 52nd and 332nd carried the brunt of the work.

885TH SUPPORTS THE MAQUIS

Augmenting these operations by Fifteenth's heavy bomber fleet, the French Maquis wrecked trains, blew up bridges, sabotaged installations, sniped at German troops and in various ways made themselves a nuisance to the enemy. The Maquis depended for their arms and other equipment largely on air drops by planes of the Eighth, MAAF, and the 885th Bomb Squadron of the Fifteenth. Most of the 885th's super secret supply missions to the French resistance originated at Blida, near Algiers—so secret that most of their Fifteenth Air Force comrades never knew of their operations. These drops of essential equipment prepared the way for the allied ground troops that were to follow and undoubtedly saved thousands of lives.

15TH STEPS UP THE ATTACK

On 6 Aug, Fifteenth dispatched 1,069 B-17's and B-24's against rail lines and oil storage facilities. Their attack on the oil storage was moderately successful, but they inflicted severe damage on bridges at Arles, Tarascon, Lavoulte-sur-Rhone, Givors, and Avignon. The strikes also heavily damages the yards at Portes-les-Valence and Miramas.

—To Be Continued—

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