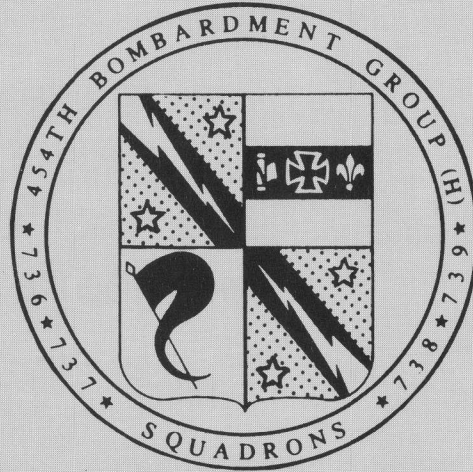
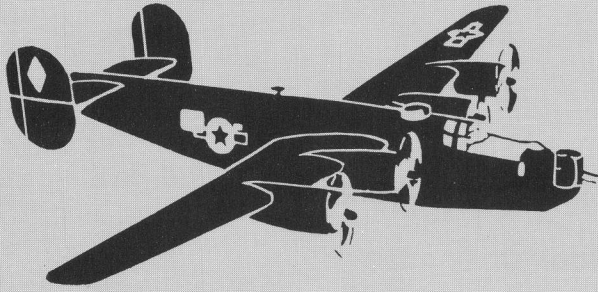




454th MEMORIES

www.454thbombgroup.it



454th MEMORIES

TAYLOR PUBLISHING COMPANY
Dallas, Texas

**454th Bombardment Group Association
History Book Committee**

Joseph F. Chalker, Chairman

Vaughn Marker

John F. Thomas

Copyright © 1991 by the 454th Bombardment Group Association

No part of this publication may be
produced in any form or by any means
without permission in writing from the publisher.

Design: Margaret F. Kemp

Produced by Ted Kemp

Printed in U.S.A. by TAYLOR PUBLISHING COMPANY — Dallas, Texas

454th Memories

PHOTO CREDITS 4
INTRODUCTION 5
UNIT CITATIONS 6
CREW PHOTOGRAPHS 8
454th STORIES 16
OUR BIRDS 20
DECEASED MEMBERS 31
POETRY AND SONGS 33
DO YOU REMEMBER 38
MISSION STORIES 50
ANECDOTES 79
INDIVIDUAL BIOGRAPHIES 99

PHOTO CREDITS

Leslie M. Amelang (736)
James A. Angelucci (736)
Gene R. Baker (738)
John R. Balmer (736)
Joseph T. Bigleben (739)
Wayne E. Bigrigg (739)
Morley P. Bingham (738)
Cyril M. Bosak (738)
Ralph P. Branstetter (739)
Leon O. Burke (738)
Theodore H. Campbell (739)
John W. Carpenter (739)
Joseph F. Chalker (738)
Robert E. Cooper (737)
Charles F. Crookshanks (739)
Howard A. Curtis (737)
Roy A. Dahl (Grp)
Evan M. DeFabio (736)
John W. Devine (739)
George L. Fernandes (736)
Robert L. Galletly (736)
Sylvio M. Gentili (736)
Robert H. Graybill (739)
Edward H. Green (739)
Vic Grimes (737)
Roy J. Hake (736)
Paul R. Hallman (738)
Robert G. Hede (736)
Herbert D. Henning (739)
William Henry (739)
James W. Hutchison (736)
Paul M. Hysa (739)
Marlin S. Kerby (736)
John C. Kolemba (738)
Edmond H. Leblanc (738)
Mrs. Anne Libbey (739)
Vaughn Marker (738)
Johnnie J. Massey (737)
Manuel Moga (738)
John N. Monsees (739)
Mrs. John E. Newell (738)
James W. Nixon (738)
Robert R. Ott (739)
Joseph Paparatto (Grp)
George H. Pappas (739)
Fred A. Pazzaglia (737)
Harry M. Rodd (738)
Edward W. Rodgers (737)
Dale Rowen (739)
Raymond T. Running (736)
Robert L. Sarver (739)
Jay T. Scheck (738)
Francis X. Schmid (738)
William H. Sherman (737)
Robert C. Slyder (736)
Aaron Sosnin (739)
Paul S. Spieler (737)
Norman P. Stoker (738)
William P. Taube (739)
Mrs. Beverly Thompson (738)
Mrs. Wayman R. Thompson (736)
Carter W. Wattman (737)
Parker D. Wiley (739)
Glenn R. Winters (736)
Clifford B. Wright (738)

Pen and ink sketches by
William M. Newton (739).

454th Memories

The pages between the covers of this publication represent, in part, that essence of life called memories. As the title states, 454TH MEMORIES is made up of the memories of the men, the times, and the events that have had some effect on their lives. But more than that, it is the stories and anecdotes that have been locked away in the vaults of their minds, for so many years, known to only a few.

It is only fair to share these stories and anecdotes with those who only have faint memories of those years just before, during, and after WWII. 454TH MEMORIES is a picture of strength, bravery, loyalty, and dedication to duty. Also in doing so, they present an insight into the power of laughter that keeps men going in the face of adversity, and some of the more humorous aspects of the madness called World War II.

As time moves on, and our numbers become fewer each year, the need to leave a legacy behind prompted a need for such a book as this. In the process of putting this book together, the thoughts of ensuring that the proper people were acknowledged came from (where else?) out of the blue. Therefore the Editorial Staff acknowledges every member of the ground support people who worked long, tedious hours to keep the birds in flying condition, and fly-boys that had to fly those same birds, "the behind the scenes" guys in the mess tents, the men in Headquarters — all who participated in WWII as members of the 454th Bombardment Group (H), and for all their contributions that have made this book what it is.

A special thanks to those members of the Board who have given the Editorial Staff the task of putting this book together by showing their confidence in the Editorial Staff for taking on such a herculean job.

Behind every great man, there is an equally great woman. Therefore we take great pleasure in acknowledging the ladies of the men of the 454th Bombardment Group (H). Their job was the toughest. Waiting always is. However, these same women showed the world they had the strength to hold things together here on the home front. The job was done with the same dedication and tenacity shown by their men.

Last, but not least, we acknowledge those who have gone before us. They will always be remembered in our hearts, and our minds. This book is dedicated to all of those who gave of themselves, and paid the ultimate price for their efforts in the protection of our country, flag, and our way of life.

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS
FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
APO 520

C-UPD-bmr

24 September 1944

GENERAL ORDERS)
)
NUMBER 3604)

Citation of Units

SECTION I -- CITATION OF UNIT

Under the provisions of Circular 333, War Department, 1943 and Circular 89, North African Theatre of Operations, 10 July 1944, the following units are cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy:

454TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP. For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Notified to prepare maximum number of aircraft for a mission against the Hermann Goering Steel Works in Linz, Austria, the ground crews worked enthusiastically and determinedly to have their aircraft in perfect mechanical condition to insure the success of the mission. On 25 July 1944, thirty-three (33) B-24 type aircraft, heavily loaded with maximum tonnage, took off, and assuming lead of the wing formation, set course for the objective. As was anticipated, their formation was intercepted by approximately fifty (50) aggressive and persistent enemy fighters, and, in the ensuing violent aerial battle, the enemy used rocket guns, 20 millimeter cannon, and machine guns in a desperate attempt to disrupt this vital operation. Despite very intense, accurate and heavy anti-aircraft fire and fierce enemy interceptions over the objective, the gallant crews battled their way through to score many direct hits in the immediate target area, causing destruction and severe damage to the enemy plant and installations. Throughout the heavy opposition by the enemy, two (2) crew members were killed, thirteen (13) injured by fighter and flak fire, and eleven (11) aircraft damaged. Through their ability to maintain a tight formation to procure the maximum fire power available, together with the accurate gunnery of the gallant crews, they accounted for nine (9) enemy aircraft destroyed, two (2) probably destroyed and three (3) damaged. The material damage inflicted in the Hermann Goering Steel Works seriously curtailing the production of tanks and armament. By the determination, airmanship and exceptional courage of the combat crews, together with the superior professional skill and intense devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 454th Bombardment Group has reflected great credit upon themselves and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

By command of Major General TWINING:

t/ R. K. TAYLOR
Colonel, GSC
Chief of Staff

OFFICIAL:

s/ J. M. Ivins
t/ J. M. IVINS
Colonel, AGD
Adjutant General

R E S T R I C T E D

R E S T R I C T E D

HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE
APO 520
US ARMY

C-UPD-rmb

GENERAL ORDERS)
:)
NUMBER 3398)

24 May 1945.

CITATION OF UNIT

Under the provisions of Circular No. 333, War department, 1943, and Circular No. 73, MTOUSA, 12 May 1945, the following unit is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy:

454TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H). For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. On 12 April 1944, the 454th Bombardment Group was notified to prepare for an attack with a maximum effort of 42 aircraft on the high priority Messerschmidt Aircraft Factory at Bad Voslau, Austria. Despite the handicaps of lack of tools and equipment, the ground crews worked enthusiastically and put in commission the required number of aircraft. At 0840 the group took off to attack this strategic target, a highly important part of the enemy's aircraft assembly complex. The group was leading the Wing on this vital mission. Ten minutes before the target was reached, seventy to eighty enemy fighters, both twin and single engine aircraft, began aggressive attacks upon the formation which lasted for forty minutes. They came in four to six abreast, raking the formation with rockets and twenty millimeter cannon. Nevertheless, by grim determination, the group fought its way through to the target. At the target intense, accurate and heavy anti-aircraft fire was encountered. Cloud cover and a bombsight malfunction in the lead aircraft further hampered the operation. Nevertheless, the group successfully dropped its bombs and inflicted grave damage on all the vital installations. The savage enemy opposition caused two of the group's aircraft to be destroyed. In addition, eleven aircraft were severely damaged and seventeen others received less severe damages. Three men were gravely wounded and one man slightly wounded. However, the group exacted retribution from the enemy. The accurate fire from the gunners accounted for eighteen enemy aircraft destroyed, five probably destroyed and eight damaged. An additional five aircraft were destroyed on the ground. The group was able to fight its way through the enemy fighters and return to base with the loss of only two aircraft. By the conspicuous courage, determination and professional skill of the combat crews, together with the exceptional technical skill and intense devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 454th Bombardment Group has upheld the highest traditions of the Military Service, thereby reflecting great credit upon itself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL TWINING:

R. K. TAYLOR,
Colonel, GSC,
Chief of Staff.

OFFICIAL:

s/ J. M. IVINS
t/ J. M. IVINS,
Colonel, AGD,
Adjutant General.

DISTRIBUTION: "D"

A TRUE COPY:

ROBERT S. FRASER,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Ass't. Adjutant, 454th Bomb Gr.

CREW PHOTOGRAPHS

454th Memories



The Leonard Switzer Crew (736)



The Roy Hake Crew (736)



The John Nichols Crew (736)



The Robert Galletly Crew (736)





The Glen Winters Crew (736)



The Wayman Thompson Crew (736)



The Leon Polinsky Crew (736)



The George Ellis Crew (736)



The John Balmer Crew (737)



The Edward Rodgers Crew (737)



The ? Haggerty Crew (737)



The LaDow Crew (737)



The Corbett Crew (737)



The Buck Whitworth Crew (737)



The Ken Kennedy Crew (737)



The William Sherman Crew (737)



The Robert Cooper Crew (737)



The Vic Grimes Crew (737) then . . .



. . . and now.



"The Vicious Vixen" with Lt. Morrisey (737)



The John Kolemba Crew (738)



The John Vignetti Crew (737)



"The Ghost" (738)



The Ken Fry Crew (738)



The Warren Jensen Crew (738)



The Richard Izzard Crew (738)



The James Kirtland Crew (738)



The Leon Burke Crew (738)



The James Howard Crew (738)



The James Tisdale Crew (738)



The Charles Reily Crew (738)



The Gould Ryder Crew (738)



The Jerry Bradbury Crew (738)



The Harry Rodd Crew (738)



The William Taube Crew (738)



The Norman Stoker Crew (738)



The James Nixon Crew (738) then . . .



The Felix Harrod Crew (738)



. . . and now.



The Henry Hughes Crew (739)



The John Devine Crew (739)



The ? Birch Crew (739)



The Bill Henry Crew (739)



The Joe McAllister Crew (739)



The Ed Green Crew (739)



The Lee Venable Crew (739)



The George Pappas Crew (739)



The Boren Green Crew (739)



The Shepard Hughes Crew (739)



The Charles Grant Crew (739)



The Chester Krysiak Crew (739)



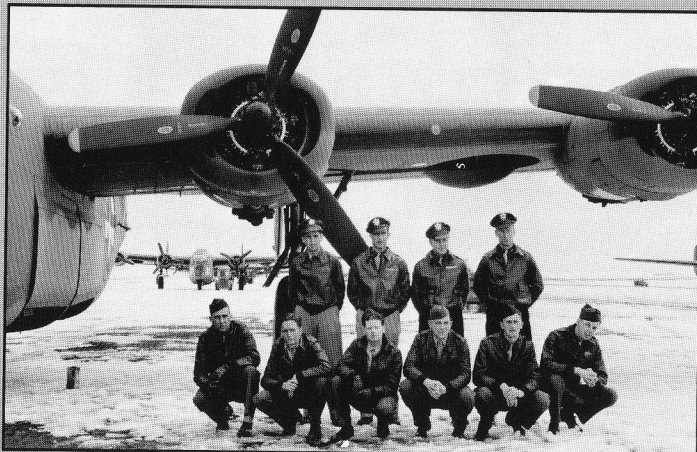
The R. Darcy Crew (739)



The William Hughes Crew (739) then ...



... and now.



Unidentified Crew

AMERICA GOES TO THE MAT AGAINST THE AXIS

Few who heard it can ever forget it — the thrumming, drumming sound that drowned out the roar of four laboring engines or the scream of brakes. Marston Mat had a sound of its own.

The sound was somewhere between the silence of radar and the apocalyptic boom of the nuclear bomb, yet Marston Mat was one of those war-winners.

It allowed airplanes to go wherever men and bulldozers could, provided landing strips for vital airbases and bomb strikes at the heartland of the enemy. Experienced, knowledgeable construction teams could lay an airfield in three days of intense labor.

The names of the developers of the Atomic Bomb and Radar are familiar, even if not household words. But only a trivia fanatic is likely to recognize, much less remember, either Gerald G. Greulich or his employer, the Carnegie Illinois Steel Company.

If they were loved by generals and logistics experts, Greulich and the steel company were cursed in spirit, though not in name, by many a straining Lib pilot as the end of the runway neared and the boom of rubber on steel filled the cockpit.

The fields were wonderful for "little friends" and the airbase they offered advanced positions. For B-24 crews the mat runways — as efficient as they were — were a constant danger.

With his tanks filled with high-octane aviation gas and totting a bomb load that would level a city block, a Liberator pilot found the standard Marston Mat runway was more than a challenge — it was the first place a crew could die on a mission.

The holes and ridges that produced the ear-paining sounds would retard the tires at each bump. Take-off speeds were ever-so-slightly lowered, a critical factor when dealing with runways under a mile long and wartime payloads. It took every bit of War Emergency Ratings to get airspeed in less than a mile of metal runway.

Lib pilots jammed on the brakes and revved up, then poured on the coal from the first foot of runway trying to get the 33-tons of airplane gliding along on its Davis airfoil.

Largely forgotten today, Marston Mat has ended up in such out of the way places, and out-of-the-ordinary uses as fencing along the international border near San Diego.

Named after a wide spot along a Southern road, the steel mesh mat was given a try-out during military maneuvers near Marston, N.C., only weeks before the "Day of Infamy" plunged American forces into formal fighting.

The matting, laid out on a strip about 150 feet wide and six-tenths of a mile long, caught the eye of the commander of the Army Air Forces, Gen. H.H. "Hap" Arnold and won his approbation. Though the temporary landing strip was taken up after the maneuvers, the material was referred to in official correspondence by the name of the "Marston Strip."

It was a name that stuck through war; only when peace came did bureaucracy find the time to think up new nomenclature and dub the portable airfield material PSP, the diminutive for Pierced Steel Planking. A generation later the sons of Seabees and other Americans knew the portable

airfield materials as PSP when they laid the 10-foot long, 66 pound, sections on Indochinese clearings.

The British and French, faced with an air war that required more than grass-covered aerodromes — and with no time, men or material to pour concrete landing strips — pioneered the concept but were unable to come up with a surface that was easy to lay, simple to repair or replace, and strong enough to handle the landing weights of hot fighters and the coming generation of bombers — such as the Liberators.

For the Americans working on the problem there was another factor the French and English didn't have to worry about. The war was at their doorstep, but the United States would have to haul the temporary strips across the two oceans and seven seas before it could be put to use. With shipping at a premium, the portable airfield had to be both lightweight and compact.

When eventually developed, the 15 inch wide panels could be nested so that five dozen took up a space about 56 inches high. The 60,000 panels needed to make a 5,000 foot runway 150 feet wide weighed less than 2,000 tons and would fit — with room to spare — in the hold of a Liberty Ship.

Generally, the panels were shipped in bundles of thirty — made up of half a dozen parcels of five each for ease in handling. There were generally two half-lengths — used for runway edging — and 29 full-length panels to each bundle.

A single worker could carry one mat; two could move it at a run. Muscles — and a heavy sledgehammer — to pound it together and anchor it into the cleared earth were the absolute essentials for making a Marston Mat airstrip.

The design provided not only a durable surface for take-offs and landings, it kept blinding, engine-gutting dust blasts to a minimum and speeded up take-offs. That allowed aircraft to carry heavier bomb loads or go further than if they had had to hold interminably on the ground waiting to takeoff.

Because of its design, Marston Mat simultaneously protected the earth from direct contact by rut-making tires and covered the bare earth from prop wash. What dust there was could be held down by wetting the Marston strip, creating a mud film over the dirt beneath the 87 holes punched in each mat.

Simple in design, effective in its use, innovative as the Marston Mat was, no one ever figured how to make it silent.

COL. WM. R. LARGE, JR. GROUP COMMANDER

— I, a Lt Col, arrived in Italy in March 1944 (after 30 days on the Atlantic in the Liberty Ship SS A.P. Hill) as part of Wg Hq (cadre) of approximately 22 officers, headed (then) Col Thomas S. Power. I was the Deputy Director Operations; (then) Lt. Col John D. Ryan was the Director (I was later to become the Chief of Staff of the United States

Air Force). When we arrived, it was learned that the proposed organizations had been cancelled, and the new Wing Hqs were no longer needed and were disbanded.

As a result, Col Power went to the 304th Wing Hq as the Deputy, and I went, also, as Ass't Director of Operations. (Col Kevin Brown was the Director).

In that position, I began flying missions with the 454th BGP (March — and flew only with the 454th while in Wg Hq), and it was on my 5th mission over Bucharest on 7 May 44, (#30) that my parachute (back pack) was shot up by flak. I was flying in the Co-Pilot position, and approaching the target, I dropped a pencil (to the best of my recollection) and reached down to pick it up, taking my foot off the right rudder at the same time. At that same instant, an '88 burst right in front of the #3 engine, knocking out the Co-Pilot's window with a piece of flak going just over my right shoulder and into the parachute. I felt it hit, and there was "fuzz" all over the cockpit. And when I straightened up, I found a hole near the right rudder where my foot normally would have been. (If I had not bent over, the flak would have "gotten" my right shoulder.)

It was at this point, after leaving the target, and after being told by the crew that things would be "tough" if we had to bail out, that we did see fighters — and the crew, very professionally, and with no more delay, told me to get into a spare parachute that was aboard. Needless to say, I felt much relieved. I still have the piece of flak, the "beat up" pilot chute, and part of the main chute with holes in them.

Now, back to the 17 Aug. 44 mission over Ploesti (#98) when Lt Col Gunn was shot down. That afternoon, when the information became known, Gen Upthegrove came into Col Brown's and my office and asked me "if I thought I could command a Bomb Gp?" to which I said "yes, sir!" He then told me to get out to the 454th and to take command.

At this time (then) Col Aynesworth was in the U.S. where he, and a number of other Colonels (Gp CO's), had been sent on leave, so that their overseas tours could then be extended, when they returned to the Theater of Operations. Lt Col Gunn, who was the Deputy C.O. of the 454th, was then the Commander in Col Aynesworth's absence. (And, at that time, it was not known whether or not the Col's on leave would return).

(A parenthetical note — It was also in August when Col Power was reassigned to the Zone of the Interior — I think the date is correct — close anyway — where he subsequently became a B-29 Wing Commander — 314th Bomb Wing — and deployed to Guam and was then promoted to Brig Gen).

So, on 17 Aug 44, I became the Commander (or, as some say, Acting Commander) of the 454th Bomb Gp and continued in this position until Col Aynesworth returned from the ZI.

(The microfilm history of the Gp does not show very much for Aug. Things seemed to pick up after that). The Sept. 44 history does state "On 29 September, Col Horace D. Aynesworth returned from his leave to the Zone of the Interior and resumed Command of the Group, relieving Lieutenant Colonel William R. Large, Jr., who became the Deputy Commander."

In summary, my initial assignment to the Group was as Commander (Acting Commander?) 17 Aug. 44, and continued until 26 Sept. 44, when I became Deputy Commander.

COL. WM. R. LARGE, JR., USAF, RET.

(AFTER RETURN OF COL. AYNESWORTH)

Following Col. Aynesworth's return, I wanted to finish my missions (complete my tour) so that I could be transferred to Guam, where Col. Power had made a request for me.

It was at this time that Gen Upthegrove restricted my flying to about one (1) mission per month as he said that he was holding me in reserve in case he "needed" one — then Group Commander.

So I stayed in this state until January when a number of full Colonels were assigned to the 15th AF. (Col. Way to the 304th Wg). I asked Gen. Upthegrove if he would release me to fly, as he could not assign me as a Gp CO., nor promote me, which he did. So, from January until my last mission to complete my tour, 25 April 45, (which was the last mission for the Group), I flew about sixteen (16) missions.

Following that, I did command the Group again for a few days, then was ordered to return to the ZI, first by boat, later changed to air.

It was following my arrival in New York, the early part of June '45, that I went to Washington, D.C. to see Gen Norstad who was the Army Air Force Director of Personnel. I knew that Gen. Power had requested my reassignment and it was then that he, Gen Norstad, referred me to Gen LeMay who had just flown in from Guam. He was interested in trying to lift a restriction on reassignment of personnel who had been overseas (in combat), back to overseas assignment (until all others who had *not* been overseas, had also served!) I think that they were looking to building up the 8th AF on Okinawa with experienced personnel for any subsequent action that might be required in the Pacific.

As a result of our conversation, he told me that he was going to go to Gen. Arnold, (Chief of the AAF) the next morning and use my case as an example to try to break the restriction. He advised me to go on to Miami, the 30 day Rest and Recuperation Center, and to expect to hear from the Pentagon in a couple of weeks.

When I told the people in Miami that I was expecting orders from Washington in a couple of weeks, they thought that I was "crazy" — they said that no one had ever "gotten" out of there in less than 30 days. So, it was interesting to note the look on a bewildered Lt. personnel officer's face when he found me at the Beach at 1:00 p.m. — 2 weeks later — with news that he had just had a telephone call from Army Air Force Hq in Washington to transfer me directly to Guam.

I left later that day for New York to see my mother, then to Dallas to see my dad, to San Francisco (Hamilton Field) and two (2) days later by air to Guam, where I was assigned to the 314th Bomb Wg Hq.

Then, a couple of days following that, Gen Spaatz arrived and took command of the newly formed U.S. Army Strategic Air Forces. Gen Power was transferred to the new command and became the Director of Operations, and I accompanied him to head up the Operational Plans Division. Suffice it to say, that with the end of the War in the Pacific, I became one of the busiest people in the Hq. — with eight urgent, up until now, Top Secret projects to implement. Such as getting scientific personnel into Japan, handling the Press, deactivation and movement of units, getting

POW's back, etc. I had 8 Lt Col's assigned to me — gave each a program to "live" with. (I kept the POW program) and from that group, we briefed our bosses each day on what was happening.

As that activity subsided, I was then "selected" to develop a briefing on the "History" of the B-29 in the Pacific," Gen. Power had obtained approval to then give this briefing to all Major Command Hq on a trip from Guam, back around the world. While I was working on the briefing, with the help of two Engineering Topographic Companies (I was told that I could have any resource that I needed to help develop the briefing), we were having a B-17 modified to passenger configuration for the trip.

We left Guam Dec. 16, '45, and then gave the briefing in Calcutta and Karachi, India, Cairo, Rome, twice in Wiesbaden, and Paris, before proceeding to London.

As a side light, most of the audiences were Military Transport personnel, and they got a laugh when I told them that it was safer to fly a B-29 combat mission to Japan, than it was to fly the "Hump" in an Air Transport Command airplane!

Another point of interest — We got our first flu shot before leaving Guam. They were "new" and I felt as if I had had a complete case of flu in 24 hrs. It was very cold in Europe — but we all came through with flying colors — no one became ill.

Also, the audience that we briefed in Wiesbaden was the Hq of the U.S. Air Force combat units. During their question and answer period, the first (obviously loaded) question was "How did the Japanese opposition compare with the (tough) German resistance that they had faced."

Gen. Power responded that he had been in Italy before going to Guam, but also, so had Col Large (I had been promoted) who had commanded a Group and completed a combat tour before coming to Guam. So he would let me answer the question. I just told them that the Japanese were very aggressive — reminded them of the Kamakazi attacks. After that, there were no more such questions, and the audience became much friendlier.

We were supposed to go from London to North Africa, then to South America, and home, but were cut short in London where we were ordered back to the U.S. for assignment to Admiral Blandy's Operation Crossroads, Bikini A-Bomb, Staff.

So now, you know why I wanted to finish my tour in Italy and get to Guam. I assure you that I had no idea of all that was going to happen when it did materialize.

Also, a couple of sidelights on the Linz Mission (#243) might be of interest. I was standing in back of the Hq Bldg with the Sqd Commanders and the Director of Ops. when the Ops Orders came in. (Everyone knew it was a rough target). Each knew that it was to be my last mission to complete my tour, *but each volunteered to take the mission*. However, we had set up a rotation, and it was my turn (not knowing that it would be the last mission that the Gp would fly, either), and I said it was mine — I'll take it!

Second, the 454th was leading the Air Force on this one — and we were delayed about 45 minutes before T.O. so that the 8th AF could get off their targets. Flying North, it was an exceptionally clear day and you could see the 8th coming off their targets in the distance and that's when we saw "rocket flak" for the first time. There were long trails of

white smoke going up and then the flak would burst with a large orange fire ball. We were fortunate not to get into any of it — reportedly it was in the Salzburg area — it was spectacular!

PATHFINDERS

(Editor's note: Having been Engineering Officer in the 739th Squadron, I have, on several occasions, been asked details about how the composition of our Squadron changed when we became the "Mickey" Squadron. We are indebted to Bob Milburn, a friend of the Association, for digging up the following article which probably was written circa 1945.)

Early in 1944, the Fifteenth Air Force decided to launch an experiment on the use of Pathfinder equipment in conjunction with blind bombing of industrial areas in its operational sphere. On 8 April 1944, a Pathfinder Detachment from the 484th Bomb Group was sent to the 304th Wing, there to establish operations in the 454th Bomb Group, at its present location. For this assignment, a Pathfinder Force consisting originally of nine aircraft and nine navigators, set out to lead each Group in the Wing in all-weather navigational and blind-bombing techniques.

The pioneer Mickey operators were Lieutenants Hojer, Crews, Baralt, Deveraux, Chudzynski, Burke, Bocock, Kacena and Williamson. From the 739th Squadron area, all ships were serviced for both engineering and radar equipment, and prior to each mission, dispatched to the various individual Groups in the Wing.

Before long, the number of ships and navigators increased, and the program soon expanded to include a detachment in the 49th Wing, and eventually split to include separate radar sections in each Group in the 304th Wing.

Remaining of the original outfit assigned to the 454th Group are M/Sgt. John H. Wilson, S/Sgt. William H. Call and S/Sgt. Glen B. Mayer. All of the original group of officers departed to head other groups — Capt. Van Horn, Capt. Antl, Capt. Henderson, Capt. Bailey and Lt. Prichett. In fact, almost any radar shop in the Fifteenth Air Force now boasts at least one graduate from the original 454th Detachment.

The first Mickey operators — well, most of them — have gone home. Lieutenant Deveraux came back after Ploesti had been captured by the Russians. Hojer and Williamson alternated as Wing Mickey officers upon completion of their missions.

The new men who entered the picture as the program expanded proved both eager and competent. Among the younger crop of navigators were Lieutenants Conway, Petr, J.R. Martin, D.R. Martin, Antosz, Cooley, Plesko, Shaughnessy, Clyde, Mandeszweig, Bomgardner, Burgeson, Scurlock, Stone, Lieberman, Lehr, Dougherty, Sorrell and Whitmore, with still more due to arrive after the completion of this brief history.

The new maintenance officers (radar) were Lieutenants Glick, Moldovan, Joseph and Holman. Men currently holding the line on H2X maintenance include, among others, Pye, Jones, Lyon and Risser, with Finch and Almy working in the shop, and Call and Sackett handling the stock room and "paper factory."

The advent of Carpet and Panther equipment brought an entirely new group of maintenance men on the scene, notably Frost, Suk, Weiss, Faber, Schor and many others.

On the operational side of the Ledger, we present the following abbreviated summary of achievement:

The first combat mission in which a Mickey ship led the Group was flown on 11 April 1944. That day, four mickeys, operating as navigational aids only, headed each of the four groups, respectively, and in this role proved instantaneously successful. The little blind bombing done during this period was accomplished without the aid of the bombsight. To remedy this deficiency, the Fifteenth Air Force developed the synchronous bombing technique, and trained teams to carry it into operation. These units consisted of Mickey Navigator, Nose Navigator, D.R. Navigator and Bombardier — each with a specifically assigned part to play in the act of bombing through an undercast.

Following weeks of intensive work, the new method received its baptism of fire over the heavily-defended Ploesti oil fields on 15 July 1944. From then until the historic fall of Ploesti late in August, PFF techniques were used in a constant hammering at this vital Nazis oil supply. Following it, came a succession of similar and equally critical raids on Regensburg, Vienna, Blechammer, Odertal, Linz, Graz, Oswieim, Munich and Moosbierbaum. The height of activity for the Mickeys was reached in the winter of 1944-45, when as much as 70% of all bombing was by PFF, with good results revealed by later reconnaissance. In every mission, whether visual or by PFF, Pathfinder equipment was suddenly used as navigational aid to the target and on the return to the home base.

But Radar equipment is not confined within the limits of navigation and bombing alone. Early in November "Bring 'Em Home" installations were made in every ship in the Group. That was Carpet, to be followed closely by the much-discussed Panther. New men came into the detachment, and were soon engaged in the process of tracking German frequencies and crowding them off the Air Waves.

The equipment was new and the principles involved in its operation were, at first, strange and difficult for the men to comprehend, but the combined enthusiasm and effort of both air and ground men soon began to have telling effect on enemy targets.

JOHN C. KOLEMBA

Shortly after Mission 250 in Nashville, TN, I was introduced to James A. Hamer of Nashville, TN by a mutual friend who knew both of us as Pilots from W.W.II. In a brief chat about our experiences, Theatre of Operations, planes we flew, etc., I was surprised to learn that James Hamer had been stationed at and had flown several combat missions from San Giovanni Air Base near Cerignola, Italy prior to its occupation by the 454th and 455th Bomb Groups.

When the 15th Air Force was created in Oct. 1943, under command of Gen. James A. Doolittle, the 12th Air Force was divided into two sections, one of which was reassigned to the 15th Air Force. This section included six Heavy Bombardment Groups and two fighter groups. James Hamer had been flying the A20 Havoc with the 12th Air Force during the African campaign. He was among those who were reassigned to the 97th Bomb Group flying B-17s as a co-pilot. To the best of his knowledge, the 97th Bomb Group moved to San Giovanni Air Base in early Dec. 1943. At this time the runways were only in fair shape and were compacted dirt.

There were only a couple of buildings existing on the field, one a Chapel that was used for religious services, and the other was not used. All Group and Squadron headquarters, mess halls, facilities and services were conducted from tents. There was only limited electric power from portable generators. There were no showers on the field, a mobile shower unit visited the field about every other week, and there were no enlisted or officers' clubs. For the most part, the tents for sleeping were unheated. James Hamer said that his Squadron, the 341st, was located in the olive grove near the Cerignola highway, in the area that the 738th Squadron was located.

In early Jan. 1944, it was decided to move the 97th Bomb Group to an Air Base near Foggia that had shorter runways to make room for the 454th and 455th Bomb Groups. This was to accommodate the B-24 Groups with the longer runways that were required for take-offs and landings. Since the B-24 could carry an 8000 lb. bomb load as compared to the B-17's 5000 lb. bomb load and also had a larger fuel capacity, slightly longer runways were required. With six new groups of heavy bombardment forces scheduled to arrive in Italy in Jan. and Feb., there was no time to build new air fields or to extend runways.

James Hamer said he completed his tour of duty with the 97th Bomb Group flying 25 missions and qualifying as Airplane Commander. He completed his combat experiences by transferring to a fighter group and flying a number of missions as a P-38 pilot.



OUR BIRDS

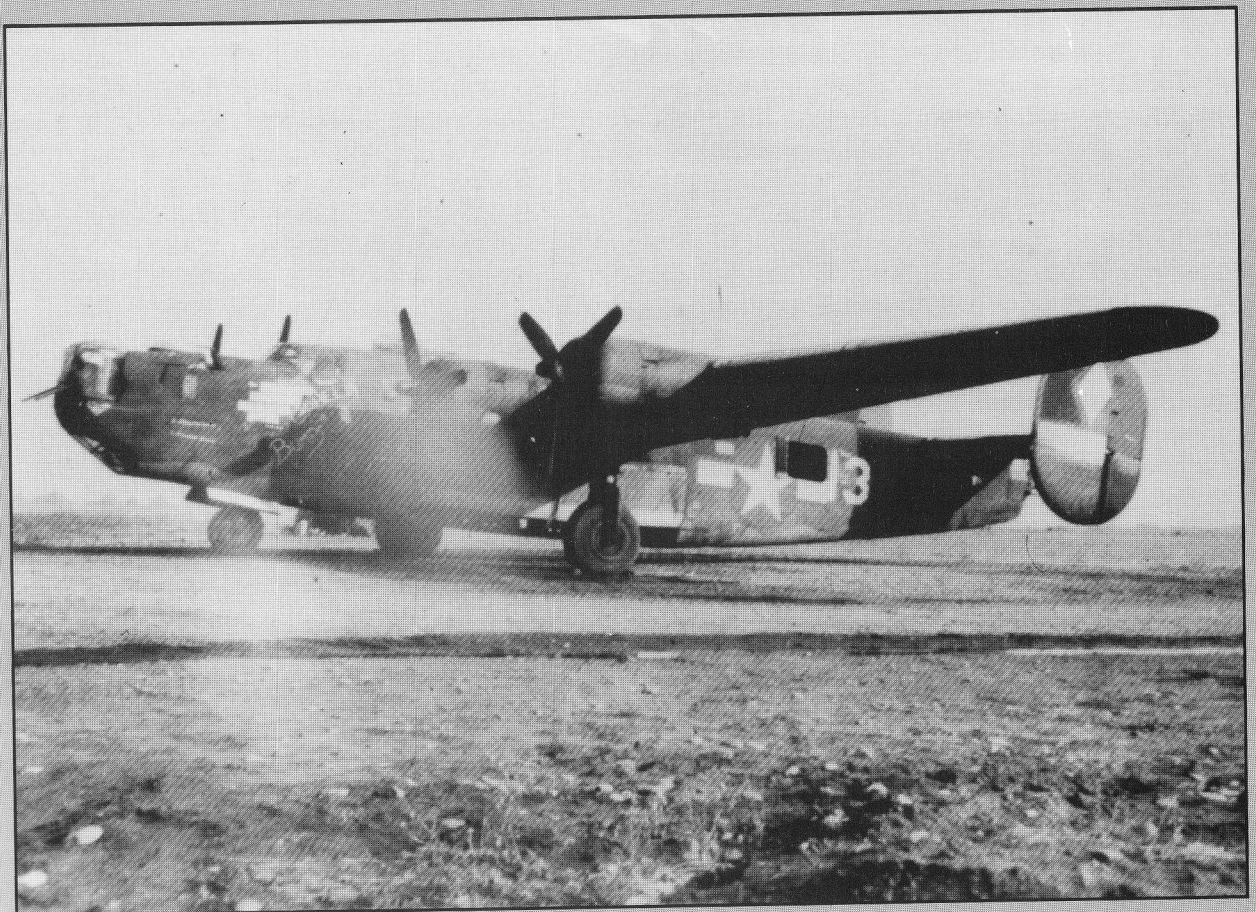
454th Memories



"Club 400" (736)



"Natchely" (736)



"Ophelia Bumbs" (736)



"Hare Power" (736) with ?



"My Ginnie" (736) with Frank Denardo and R.R. Thompson.



"Hell's Belle's" (736) with Fred Brugger



"Sad Sack" (736) with Frank Denardo, Bob Galletly, Bob Carlson and John Hall.



"Hot Shotsie" (736) with Fred Brugger.



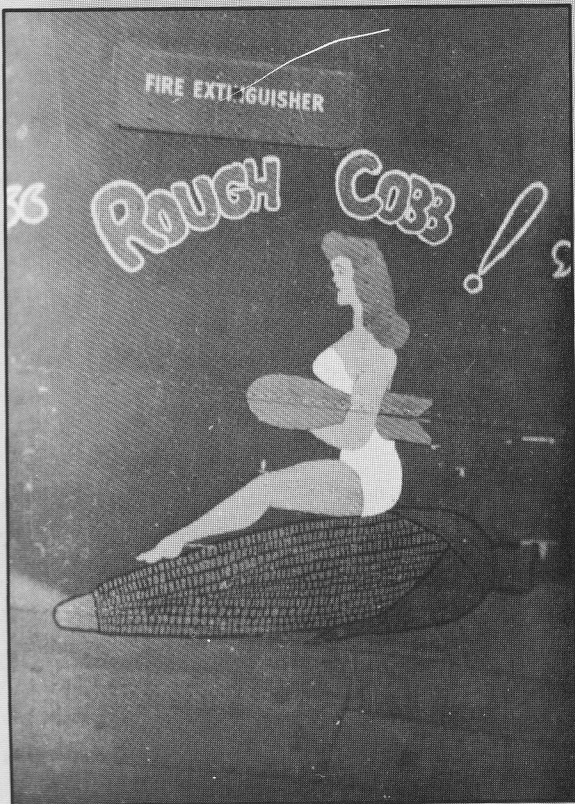
"Dragon Lady" (737) with Leo Giuffre and George Botsko.



"San Antonio Rose" (737) with John Tasker.



"Star Dust II" (737)



"Rough Cob!" (737)



"Pistol Packin' Parson" (737) with Robert Rudd.



"Dinah Mite" (737)



"Ragged But Right" (737)



"The Wench" (737)



"Sassy Lassy" (737)



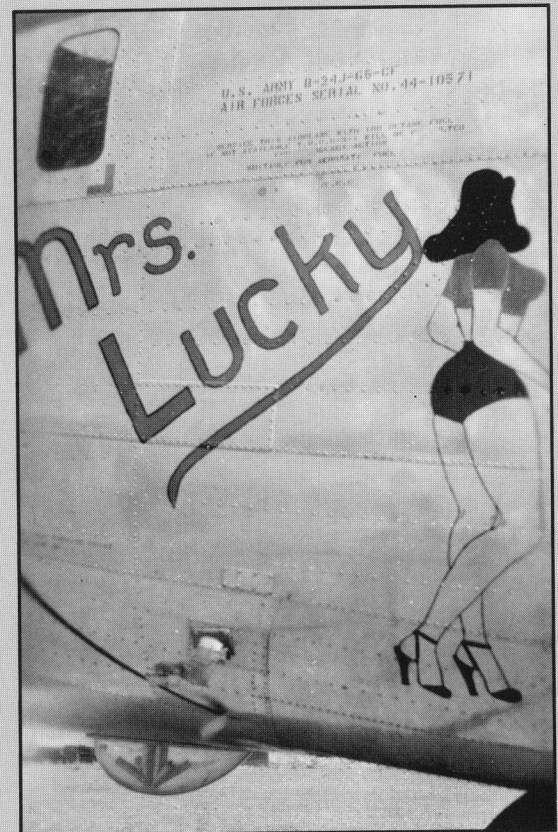
"Chicken Ship" (738) with ?



"Reddy Maid" (738)



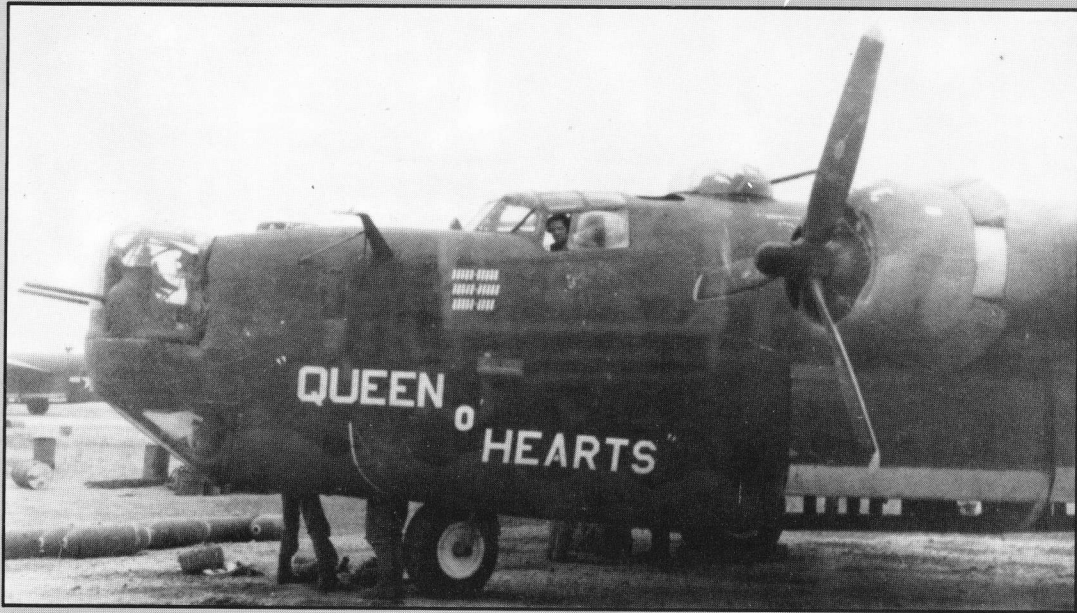
"Mrs. Lucky" (738) right side.



"Mrs. Lucky" (738) left side.



"Hairless Joe" (738)



"Queen O' Hearts" (738)



"Miss Maggie" (738) with Nellis Webber



"Tail Wind" (738)



"Warrior Maiden" (738)



"Easy Take-Off" (738)



"Pied Piper" (739)



"Miss America '44" (739)



"Maid in U.S.A."



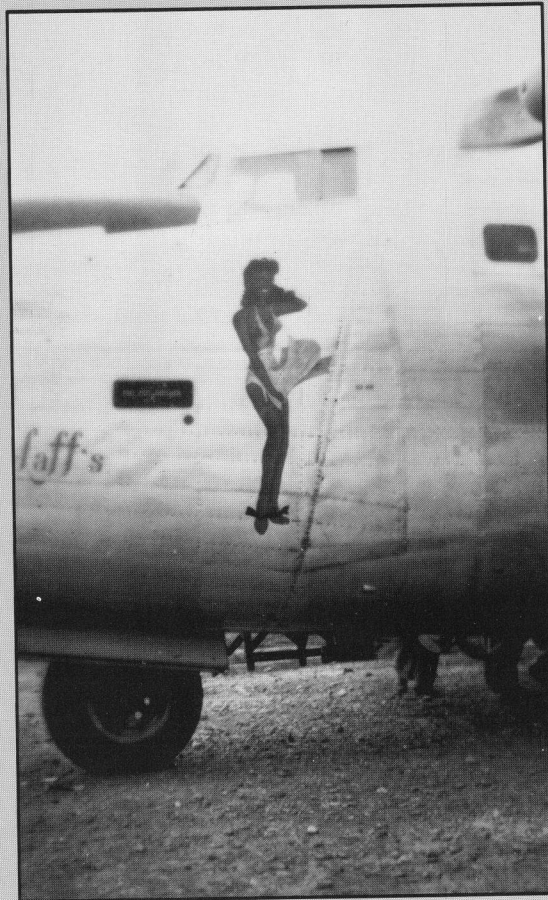
"Silver Shark" (739)



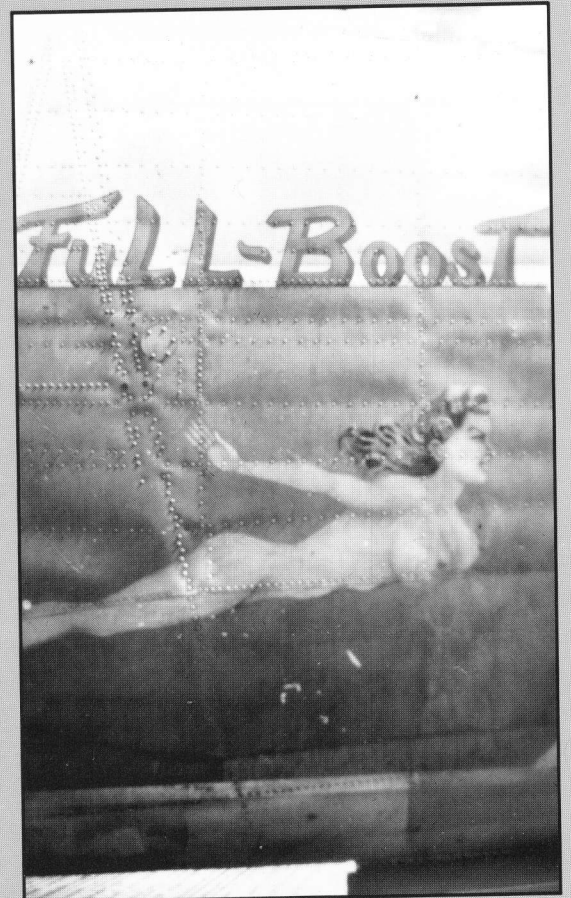
"Duffy's Tavern" (739)



"Girl Crazy"



"Lotta Laffs"



"Full Boost"



"Miss Dorothy"



"Balls O' Fire"



"Hard to Get"



"Chief's Delight" with George Booth and Fred Brugger



"B.T.O."



"Mickey Finn" with Johnnie Massey, Fred Brugger, ? Gappa, and George Booth.



"Willie The Wolf" with Fred Brugger, George Booth, ? Gruze, ? Perman, ? McClanahan



"Bama Baby"



"Tepee Time Gal"

DECEASED MEMBERS

454th Memories

Samuel G. Abramson — Grp
Irving Abravaya — 739
John W. Anderson — 738
William Anderson — 737
Walter Asbury — 736
Edward P. Bacsik — 736
Roy G. Baldwin — 738
Michael C. Barone — 736
Ned S. Barrett — 738
Harry T. Baseleon — 739
Thomas Bates — 738
Leroy H. Beck — 736
Robert Bender — 736
C. Walter Benner — 736
Louis C. Bennett — 736
William E. Bennett — 737
Earl E. Benson — 737
John Blaylock — 739
Emil H. Borzecki — 736
Terrance Breidenstein — 739
Alven S. Brody — 736
Robert R. Brown — 736
George H. Brownlee — 736
Donald J. Bucholtz — 736
M. Buffalino — 737
Joseph A. Burkley — 737
John P. Burn — 739
Sanford L. Caffey — 738
James A. Calhoun — 737
Clyde O. Campbell — 738
William E. Carigan — 737
Millard Carpenter — 739
William J. Carroll — 737
Leon P. Chagnon — 739
Donald R. Clarke — 739
Marvin J. Clay — 736
Paul T. Cline — 739
Nolan F. Cobb — 737
George W. Connors, Jr. — 739
Jack Coonan — 737
Richard Coyle — 739
William H. Crowe — 736
Dean T. Cummings — 739
John L. Datino — 736
Clifford Davis — 737
Floyd R. Desch — Grp
Louis DeStafney — 739
Aaron E. Dickerson —
Carmine J. DiDomizio — 738
Cecil J. Disterhoft — Grp
George Dobbs — 738
Francis X. Dooley — 738
William E. Drozan — 739
Robert C. Duckworth — 739
Robert E. Dunlap — 739
John J. Dunn — 737
William B. Durr — 737
Howard J. Dutsch — 736
Wymond Ehrenkrook — 736
Seymour Ehrlich — 738
George W. Ellis — 736
Richard F. Eseman — 737
John A. Faron — 738
Charles Faxon — 736
Robert Finley — 736
Robert J. Fleharty — 736
Douglas Flowers — 739
John W. Frambers — 737
Melvin L. Frances — 738
Richard Francisco — 738
M.E. Frantz — 736
Richard E. Fry — 736
Donald Furror — 736
Tunis Gallswyk — 736
Hymen Gassner — 739
Joseph H. Gatrell — 737
James Gaunt — 739
Harold J. Geiger — 739
J.R. Geise — 739
John J. Gibbons — 738
R.V. Glasby — 739
Nathan Gleicher — 737
Herschel E. Good — 739
S. Gracik — 738
William R. Grady — 736
James Graham — 737
Charles W. Grant — 739
Ian F. Grant — 739
Kenneth M. Grasse — Grp
Herbert W. Gray — 738
Joseph M. Greene — 738
Harry E. Greenfield — 738
Franklin R. Greenspan — 738
Irving Groskind — 737
John S. Gullman — Grp
Robert H. Gumm — 739
Walter E. Gunning — 739
Carl Hagelthorn — 736
Roy J. Hake — 736
Joseph Haley — 739
Leroy Hall — 737
Robert J. Hanlon — 736
Clyde L. Hart — 737
Wilbur K. Hawks — 738
Edgar Haynie — 737
William Hazel — 739
Warren E. Hearne — 738
Norman H. Heller — 736
Arden Herkimer — 738
Albert Hill — 736
Jay H. Hillis — 738
Joseph Hinerman — 739
Samuel E. Hines — 738
John D. Hinton — 736
Jerome Hoffman — 739
Ray C. Holt — 737
George M. Hood — 737
Hoover — 736
Ralph Howe — 736
Theodore L. Howland — 738
Vincent E. Hudson — 737
James Huff — 737
Henry Hughes — 739
John M. Hunter — 739
Arthur L. Husted — 736
Whalen Hutcherson, Jr. — 738
Fred Immer — 737
Ernest W. Johnson — 739
John Johnson — 739
Joseph M. Johnson — 739
Philip E. Jones — 736
George Juetten — 739
Herbert C. Karsten — 739
June M. Kennedy — 737
George Kesner — 738
Harry B. Kincaid — 736
Jesse R. King — 739
John Kirchner — 738
Archie J. Kodros — Grp

Walter G. Kozak — 738
B.J. Kreuger — 739
Joseph Krutka — 736
Earl E. Kulhanek — 736
Howard J. Kutsch — 736
Charles LaDow — 737
Archie LaFond — 736
Philip J. Latona — 737
Thomas R. Leitch — 738
Theodore W. Libbey — 739
Melvin Lieberman — 738
Arthur Lins — 739
Edward B. Loftus — 737
John A. Lofy — 739
Nick J. Lopez — 739
George E. Mahoney — 737
John A. Mahoney — 738
James S. Maloney — 737
Robert Maltby — 738
Raymond A. Manahan — 738
Robert J. Manlon — 736
Nick Manoreck — 737
Wendell J. Martin — 739
Leslie G. Matthews — 738
Glenn R. Mattox — 737
Walter C. Mauser — 737
John E. Maxey — 738
Joe E. McAllister — 739
Robert W. McAllister — 738
Coyle D. McBride — Grp
Charles J. McCarthy, Jr. — 738
Steve McComas — 737
James E. McConnel — Grp
Emett P. McCullough — 737
Henry P. McDaniel — 738
John A. McGrail — Grp
William H. McLean — 736
Charles W. Mercer — 737
Byron H. Michaelson — 737
Joseph Minotty — Grp
Charles H. Mitchell — 736
Edwin H. Moore — 737
John N. Mortenson — 739
William Moss — 738
Joseph Muessler — 737
Kenneth L. Myers — 737
Peter T. Nanos — 738
John O. Nance — Grp
Wesly Nelson — 737
James P. Nemecek — 738
Alfred Neugebauer — 739
John E. Newell — 738
Bernard J. Nichols — 739
Joseph J. Nix — 738
John J. Norman — 738
Thomas G. Norris — 739
Eugene R. Nusbaum — 738
John O'Connor — 738
Ogden A. Oldfield — 736
Arthur J. O'Leary — 737
James Ormsbee — 738
Frank E. Orr — Grp
Perry L. Owen — 738
John Paladino — 736
Harry W. Parlett — 738
Thomas Parsons — 736
Bobby R. Patrick — 737
Warren E. Pohlman — 737
Leon Polinsky — 736
Clarence Potter — 739
Howard T. Powell — 739
Kenneth V. Price — 737
Harry Prichard — 737
Hud Pritchard — 739
Robert O. Provensal — 738
Walter J. Puchalski — 739
Bruce B. Rabun —
Raymond B. Ramquist — 737
Norman P. Rao — 739
Gilbert W. Rehberg — 738
L.V. Resteghuni — 738
Joseph G. Richardson — 738

Karl G. Riennerth — 736
William P. Rude — 738
Thomas H. Ruger — 739
Robert Ruiz — 736
Lyle M. Rush — 736
Richard J. Ryan — 736
Troy Ryan — 736
Gould A. Ryder — 738
John S. Sager — 739
Richard S. Sampson — 738
Earnest F. Sands — 738
Charles K. Sawaryn — 737
John Scearce — 737
Clem I. Schatz — 738
Paul Schauder —
Walter H. Schmid — 738
Harold L. School — 739
Harley C. Schreck — 737
Rollie M. Schuder, Jr. — 737
Charles E. Schultz — 739
James Scurlock — 738
Harold Severson — 736
Edward A. Sheasby — 736
John W. Shephard — 736
George Shesko — 738
John A. Simmons — 737
Oramel H. Skinner — 736
Anthony Skufca — 739
Joseph Smalec — 739
James Snodgrass — 736
Andrew Solock — 737
D. Stevenson — 737
John D. Stewart — 739
Thomas O. Stokes — 736
Robert Stone — 736
Kenneth W. Strom — 739
Lourin J. Surguine — 737
John Swisher — 738
D. Sweeney — 739
Conway A. Taylor — 736
Thomas — 736
Samuel Thompson — 738
Wayman R. Thompson — 736
Royal W. Thompson — 738
Paul L. Thompson — 737
David W. Thorn — 739
James W. Tisdale, Jr. — 738
Kenneth P. Trumps — 736
Arthur F. Utterback — 738
Rohelio Vargas — 739
Theodore Voudouris — 738
Jake Waits — 739
Albert Walker — 739
William K. Walling — 736
William J. Walsh — 737
Roland R. Warkle — 736
Rolland L. Warkle — 736
John Warnke — 738
John Warnock — 736
Oscar Washer — 737
John A. Way — Grp
Walter C. Wells — 739
Hugh M. West — 739
Orville L. Whitworth — 737
James Wiggins — 738
Adrian Willfinger — 739
James R. Wilson — 739
Wallace Wise — 737
Patrick Wittington — 737
Clarence Wittman — 739
George Wixson — 739
L.J. Wogenhauser — 739
Oscar Washer — 737
John K. Wolff — 737
Raymond P. Wright — 737
Clifford E. Zachell — 736
Aram Zakarian — 739
Robert Zimmerman — 739
Raymond Zisk — 737
Paul L. Zumkeller — 739
Walter Zwirko — 739
F. Zygmunt — 737

POETRY AND SONGS

454th Memories

I WANTED WINGS

I wanted wings til I got the gosh darned things,
And now I don't want them anymore.
They taught me how to fly, and then sent me here to die.
I've had a belly full of war.
Now you can save those ONE-NINE ZERO'S
For the gosh darn movie heroes,
And Distinguished Flying Crosses
Don't compensate our losses
I wanted wings til I got the gosh darned things,
And now I don't want them anymore.

(Tune — Ragtime Cowboy Joe)

We always spy, Jerry fighters over the target as we fly
Back and forward looking for it way up high.
Over Oberfaufenhofen and there's such a funny feeling
When you see those Jerries peeling, they don't run
When they see our gunners gun
'Cause we've missed them all before.
We're the missing, hissing, keep 'em guessing,
Sons of guns from Cerignola
Gourd-head airmen, talk about your airmen — we fly
B-24s
You gotta call 'em airmen — we fly B-24s!

AS FLAK GOES BY (Tune — As Time Goes By)

You must remember this, the flak cannot always miss,
Someone's got to die.
The odds are always too damn high, as flak goes by.
And when the fighters come, you hope you're not the one
To tumble from the sky.
You wish you had a quart of rye, as flak goes by.
One tens and two tens knocking at the gate,
Sky full of fighters, gotta kill that rate,
Bombs don't go 'way, salvo don't delay,
The target's passing by.
It's still the same old story, the tale that's too damn gory.
Someone's got to die.
The odds are always too damn high, as flak goes by.

Lyrics by Lts James Mulholland and Gascik

(Tune — Marine Song)

From the oilfields of Ploesti, to the shores of Italy,
We will fight our country's battles, wherever we may be
We will down swastickaed fighters,
We will sink the Rising Sun,
But we won't get back from Italy,
'Till this Damn war is won.

Contributed by Leon Burke (738)

THE BOMBARDIERS SONG (Tune of All American Girl)

We bombed a crap house at Bucharest,
We only missed a mile, Milan.
We killed some fishes at Budapest,
We filled the bay at old Toulon,
We miss with Norden,
We miss with Sperry,
Course and rate are never found.
They pay us double, for double misses,
So we keep goin' back, then we're walkin' back,
At least we never miss the ground.

DON'T SEND MY BOY TO STEYR (Tune of Don't Send My Boy To Prison)

Don't send my boy to Steyr,
The dying mother said,
Don't send my boy to Klagenfurt,
He's sure to come back dead.
Just send my boy to Rimini,
To bomb upon the range,
And if he should return home safe —
It will not seem so strange.

ON THE ROAD TO BUDAPEST (Tune of Road to Mandalay)

Goin' somewhere east of Danube,
Where the flak is at its worst,
And there ain't no use in dodgin'
The million shells that burst.
And there ain't no fighter escort,
For they've long run out of gas.
And they're home a drinkin' schnopski,
Just a settin' with a glass —
Just a settin' on their ass —.

Chorus:

On the raid to Budapest,
Where the Luftwaffe has its nest,
Can't you see their guns a spittin'
As they come in twelve abreast.

On the raid to Budapest,
Where there ain't no use in vests,
For the flak comes up like thunder,
From the North, South, East and West.

-2-

In the old Rumanian oil fields,
Lookin' eastward to the sea,
There's a certain target waitin'
And I know it waits for me.

For the S-2 poop is poopin,
That we missed it like the rest,
So it's back — we gourd-head airmen —
To the place you might have guessed,
Yes, — it's back to Bucharest.

Chorus:

On the raid to Bucharest,
Where we've never passed the test,
And we dropped our bombs in salvo,
All the way from Russia, west.

On the raid to Bucharest, where we've lost some of our
best, and they're walking westward homeward, to go back
to Bucharest.

Contributed by William R. Brady (736)

THE LIB

The Lib is a very fine airplane,
Constructed of rivets and tin,
With a speed of just over 200 —
the ship with a headwind built in.

Bring back, bring back,
Oh, bring back my courage to me, to me,
Bring back, bring back,
No mission tomorrow for me.

The Lib is a very fine airplane,
A stratosphere bathtub no less,
It never comes close to the target,
But for ten miles around what a mess.

(Chorus)

And if you should go on a mission,
With plenty of money to burn,
Any old crewchief will tell you,
It's two-to-one you'll never return.

(Chorus)

And if you should run into trouble
And do not know which way to turn,
Just reach up on top of the dashboard,
Push the button marked: "Spin, Crash and Burn."

(Chorus)

Oh, why did I join the Air Force?
Mother, dear Mother, knew best,
For here I lie under the wreckage,
With Lib parts all over my chest.

(Chorus)

The Lib is a very fine airplane,
Constructed of 'luminum and glue,
It's okay for transporting whiskey
I'll never know how, but it flew!

(Chorus)

Sung to the tune of "My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean"

Courtesy International B-24 Liberator Club, P.O. Box 841, San Diego, California
USA

TWAS THE NITE BEFORE THE MISSION

Twas the nite before the mission
And all through the Group
The Wheels and the Big Wigs
Were grinding out Poop.
The bombers were parked
On their hardstands with care,
Waiting for armament
Soon to be there.
The flyers were nestled
All snug in their beds;
While visions of milk runs
Danced in their heads.
When out of the darkness
There came quite a knock;
We cursed the O.D.
And looked at the clock.
"Briefing will be in two hours,"
The caller calmly said . . .
Well, that meant we'd have
Forty more winks in bed . . .
Time marches on and then,
Gapping and sighing,
We leap from the sack
To make with the flying.
We rush to the mess hall
Quick as a flash.
We eat cold powdered eggs
And hideous hash.
Then the long bumpy ride
To the Group Briefing Room,
Where the Big Wigs preside
And dish out our doom.
The target is told,
The first six rows faint —
For lo and behold!
VIENNA it AIN'T!!
The Brain has slipped up,
My poor achin' back!
We're bombing a place
That throws up no flak!
So it's back in the truck
And off to the line;
The road is now smooth,

And the weather is fine.
 The crew is at Station,
 The check list is run;
 The engines run smoothly,
 As we give 'em the gun.
 Then suddenly the pilot
 Calls in despair;
 "Look at the Tower!
 They just shot a flare!"
 We dashed to the window
 With heart full of dread;
 The pilot was right,
 The darn thing is RED!
 So it's back to the sack
 And we sweat out our fate,
 For there's a practice formation
 At a quarter past eight.

Contributed by William P. Riddling (738)

No one seems to know who composed this classic, but it so accurately and authentically depicts present day Italy that we feel that each man in the Squadron should have a copy of it.

PANORAMA OF ITALY

If I were an artist with nothing to do
 I'd paint a picture, a composite view
 Of historic Italy, in which I'd show
 Visions of contrast, the high and the low
 Ther'd be towering mountains, a deep blue sea
 Filthy brats yelling "caramella" at me
 Two-toned tresses on hustling tarts
 I'd show the Napoleonic cops, the carabinieri,
 Dejected old women with too much to carry
 Bare-bottomed bambinos, both ends smeared;
 Castles and palaces, opera house too,
 Hotel in the mountains — marvelous view;
 Homes constructed of wood, bricks, and mud,
 Scabby people with scurvy and crud.
 Chapels and churches, great to behold
 Each a king's ransom in glittering gold.
 Poverty and want, men craving food,
 Picking through garbage, practically nude.
 Stately cathedrals with high toned bells
 Covered shelters with horrible smells;
 Holding catacombs, a place for the dead,
 Noisy civilians clamoring for bread.
 Palatial villas with palm trees tall,
 A stinking hovel, mere hole in the wall.
 Tree fringed lawns, swept by the breeze;
 Goats wading in filth up to their knees.
 Revealing statues, all details complete;
 A sensual lass with sores on her feet.
 Big-breasted damsels, but never a bra
 Bumping against you — there should be a law.
 Creeping boulevards, a spangled team,
 Alleys that wind like a dope fiend's dream.

Flowers blooming on the side of the hill;
 A sidewalk latrine with privacy nil.
 Two-by-four shops with shelving all bare;
 Gesturing merchants, arms flailing the air.
 Narrow gauge sidewalks, more like a shelf;
 Butt-puffing youngsters, scratching themselves.
 Lumbering carts, hogging the road,
 Nondescript trucks, frequently towed.
 Diminutive donkeys, loaded for bear;
 Horse drawn taxis, seeking a fare.
 Determined pedestrians, courting disaster,
 Walking in gutters where movement is faster.
 Italian drivers, all accident bound,
 Weaving and twisting to cover the ground.

Contributed by Roy B. Wethy (737)

UNDER THE VICTORY CROSS

Far out cross the ocean, o'er the mountains of Caesar's
 realm

Into the Plains of Foggia, went free souls at the helm
 Of a legion of LIBERATORS, and they fought the bitter
 fight,

And they died in the sun, each one alone, to sleep the
 Eternal Night,

.....Did they win the Bitter Fight?

They marched in fear with courage, through the darkness
 of distant lands

And the Peace was there to greet them where they fell,
 upon the sands

Of the beaches that led to Victory and with outstretched
 hands,

They tried to grasp the Torch of Freedom, and in Free-
 dom's Light

They died . . . Did they stem War's Endless Tide?

They hoisted the Flag of Tolerance and the sea was their
 domain,

As they sought to find a reason for the suffering and the
 slain,

Searching the endless caverns of Oppression dark and
 deep,

.....Did they halt the Serpent's creep?

Did they loose the shackles that bind the Earth?

Did they free the tortured slave?

Or does the Peace they died for lie dormant with the
 Brave?

Is their sacrifice forgotten? Do their Souls in torment
 toss?

Then . . . many a LOSER lies asleep . . . under The Victory
 Cross!

MY DREAM OF THE BIG PARADE

I woke up in the dark one night, when everything was still

I heard the tramp of G.I. boots as they walked along a hill,
As the marchers gazed at me, I saw a tear drop from each
eye
They moved on, heading for the ramps, and I sadly won-
dered . . . Why?

I followed close then, 'round a bend, a nostalgic sight I
saw
For each man stood with head bowed low, beside a Bird
of War,
Amid the dirt of ages past, a gravel runway grew
I stood at each revetment — by "WINGED VICTORY" and
"MISS U"

"OUR LADY AND HER KNIGHTS" was there, and a bird
called "HAIRLESS JOE"
"BUZZ JOB" and "POWDER ROOM" and some I didn't
know,
"ROUGH COB" and "OUR LITTLE GUY" with "JODY" by
her side,
Stood wing to wing with "SLIP STREAM" and a "PIPER"
they called "PIED."

I walked each Squadron Area into those days of yore
To "VIRGIN STURGEON" "TAILWIND" "NINE OLD
MEN" and more,
"DINAH MITE" "PURPLE SHAFT" and a lady called
"SWEET SUE"
"EASY TAKE OFF" "WARRIOR MAIDEN" "DRAGON
LADY" too

"HARE POWER" and "STARDUST" stood with wings
outstretched to fly
As "THE ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ARTILLERY
COMPANY OF MASS"
Was standing by.

"BRUISE CRUISER" "THE JOKER" and "SPECIAL
DELIVERY"
Lined with "CLUB 400" and a maid called "MISS MARIE"
"MISS AMERICA" with "KATY DID" and "MISS MARI-
ON" were in sight,
While the "SILVER SHARK" with fangs exposed
crouched, ready for a fight.

And then . . . the dawn exploded where the green, green
olives grow,
And I heard the cries of eager men as they moved to meet
the foe
And the world awoke in a flash of light, as I heard those
engines roar,
And I was back again, with you old friend . . .
BACK IN NINETEEN FORTY-FOUR!!!

COMBAT

I've got a scorpion in my helmet
And a rat within my bunk,
And they tell me that the boat
That brings my rations has been sunk.

Now I've got no beer to drink
And no cigarettes to smoke,
Getting so that this damned War
Is one big joke.

Thought I'd write a letter home and say
That I was doing fine,
But I've got no writing paper
'Cause the toilet took all mine.

And the hash that I am eating
Is as cold as it can be,
It looks like someone ate it
Long before it got to me.

And they're rationing the water
Just to drink and not to wash,
MAN!! our smell should reach the Germans
And they'll gag and die . . . by gosh.

Then . . . the War is sure to end
And we'll all go rushing home,
Where I'll shoot the first damned veteran
WHO GIVES ME CREDIT FOR THIS POEM!!!

(These things really occurred, during our 1st months at
San Giovanni)

ETERNITY

Author Unknown

When the last long Flight is over
And the Happy Landing's past,
When the Altimeter tells me that
The Crack-ups' come at last,

Then I'll point Her Nose to the Ceiling
And I'll give my Crate the Gun,
I'll open Her up and Zoom Her
For the Airports of the sun.

And that great God of all Flyers
Will Smile on me, Sort of slow,
As I stow my Crate in the Hangar
On that Field where Flyers go.

And there . . . I know that He'll greet me
That Almighty Flying Boss,
Whose Wing-spread spans the Heavens
From Orion to the Cross.

Contributed by Hector (Ditto) DiTomasso (738)



FINAL MISSION!

SECRET

HEADQUARTERS 454TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H), AAF
 Opns Order #204 BATTLE ORDER 25 April 1945

1. Main Briefing:
 - a. Roll Call: 0455
 - b. Time of Briefing: 0500
 - c. Time of Transportation: 0555
 - d. Time of Stations: 0640
 - e. Time of Take-Off: 0710
 - f. Time of Rendezvous: 0752
 - g. Target Time: 1130 to 1140
 - h. Time of Return: 1355
2. Leader and Deputy Leader: Lt Col Large: Capt Johnson
3. Bomber Rendezvous: CERIGNOLA — 0752 — 3,000'
4. Order of Flight: 454th, 459th, 456th, 455th
5. Bomb Load: 500# RDX with .1 sec nose and .025 sec tail fuses.
6. Cruising Formation: Six ship front
7. Point of Climb: CERIGNOLA
8. Route Out: CERIGNOLA to TP (41 60N, 16 20E) to KP LEDENICE (45 09N, 14 51E) to TP TARVISIO (46 31N, 13 35E) to TP EDLING (48 03N, 12 10E) to TP DORFEN (48 17N, 12 09E) to TP VILSHOFEN (48 39N, 13 11E) to IP to target. KP time 0938 to 0948. KP altitude: 14,000'.
9. Primary Target: LINZ South Main M/Y Elev — 849'
 - a. IP: WEGSCHEID (48 36N, 13 47E)
 - b. Axis of Attack: 136 deg Mag.
 - c. Formation: Column of boxes
 - d. Base Altitude: 24,000'
 - e. Bombing Alt's: A-25,100', B-24,800', C-24,500', D-24,200'
 - f. Intervalometer Setting: 25'
 - g. Rally: Left then right around STEYR
10. Target #4: PASSAU East M/Y Elev — 987'
 - a. IP: WEIZENKIRCHEN (48 20N, 13 52E)
 - b. Axis of Attack: 316 deg Mag.
 - c. Formation and Intervalometer Setting: Same as Primary.
 - f. Rally: Right
 - d. Base Altitude: 20,000'
 - e. Bombing Alt's: A-21,100', B-20,800', C-20,500', D-20,200'
11. Target #6: FREILASSING Motor Transport Depot; Elev — 1387'
 - a. IP: WASSERBURG (48 04N, 12 14E)
 - b. Axis of Attack: 118 deg Mag.
 - c. Formation, Alt's and Intervalometer Setting: Same as Primary.
 - d. Rally: Right
12. Target #7: CORTINA D'AMPEZZO/CIMABANCHE Explosive Stores; Elev — 4900'
 - a. IP: PONTE N. ALPI (46 13N, 12 18E)
 - b. Axis of Attack: 354 deg Mag.
 - c. Formation, Alt's and Intervalometer Setting: Same as Target #4.
 - d. Rally: Right
13. Route Back: Target to TP ST. LORENZEN (47 09N, 14 24E) to KP to base.
14. Radio Procedure:
 - a. Frequencies:
VFF on Gp Frequency for bomber to bomber and Command on 6440 in accordance with SOP. Leaders call BUTTON on channel "C".
 - b. Call Signs:

	736th	737th	738th	739th
R/T:	SCHOONER	ROSEGLASS	SPLASHDOOR	WATCHPOT
W/T:	YMU	ZHP	YKX	YNG
 - c. Collective CII Signs for Bombers:
454-BELLBUOY ONE; 459-BELLBUOY TWO
456-BELLBUOY THREE; 455-BELLBUOY FOUR
 - d. Call Sign for Fighters: FRONTROOM
 - e. Call Sign for Wea Recon A/C on route out-ENCORE ONE; route back-ENCORE TWO
 - f. Recall Signal: CARSON
 - g. Call Signs for other Wgs, 5th-FOOTHOLD; 47th-PULPWOOD; 49th-CHANNEL; 55th-BURGLAR
15. Air-Sea Rescue: VHF Channel "D", Radio Operators 4535 Ko.
16. Signals for Period:

Time	Cartridge	Letter	Color	Challenge
0800-1400	E G	B (BAKER)	White	S (SUGAR)
1400-2000	G E R	F (FOX)	White	W (WILLIAM)
17. Miscellaneous Information: AF formation will be a loose column of Wgs with 304th then combined 49th and 47th Wgs, then 55th Wg and 5th Wg in order.

SECRET

DO YOU REMEMBER

454th Memories



Inside . . .



. . . and outside a "home in Italy."



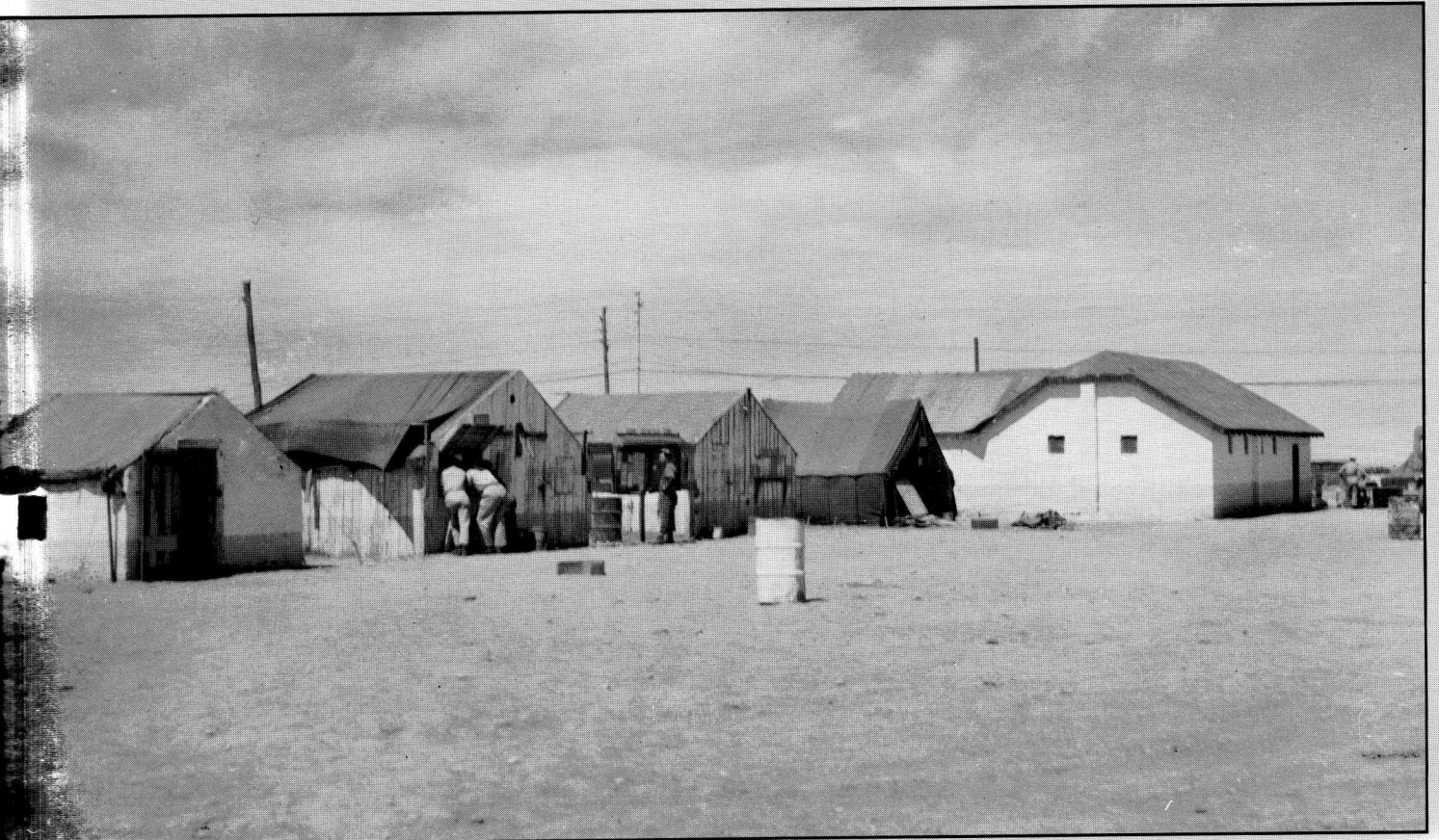
Camping Out



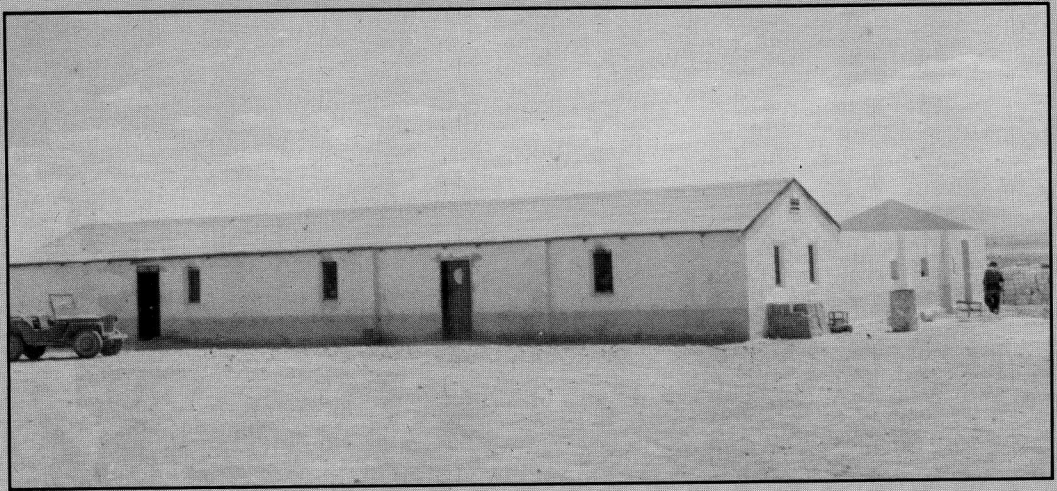
Food for the .50s.



Filling the stove gas tank.



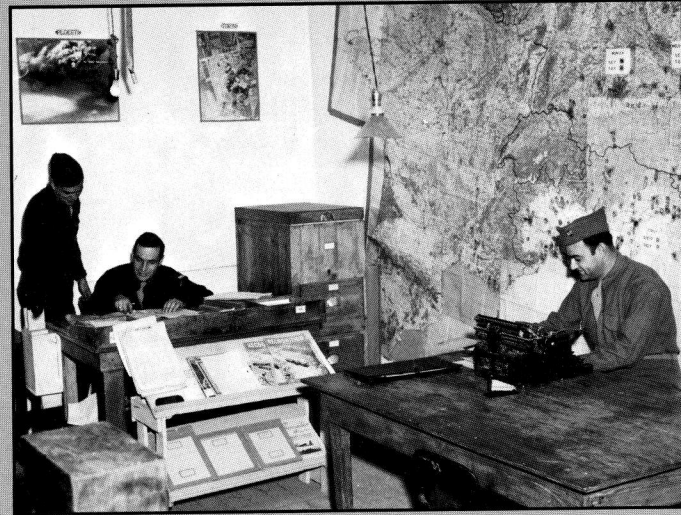
737th PX, Barber Shop, Mail Room and Supply.



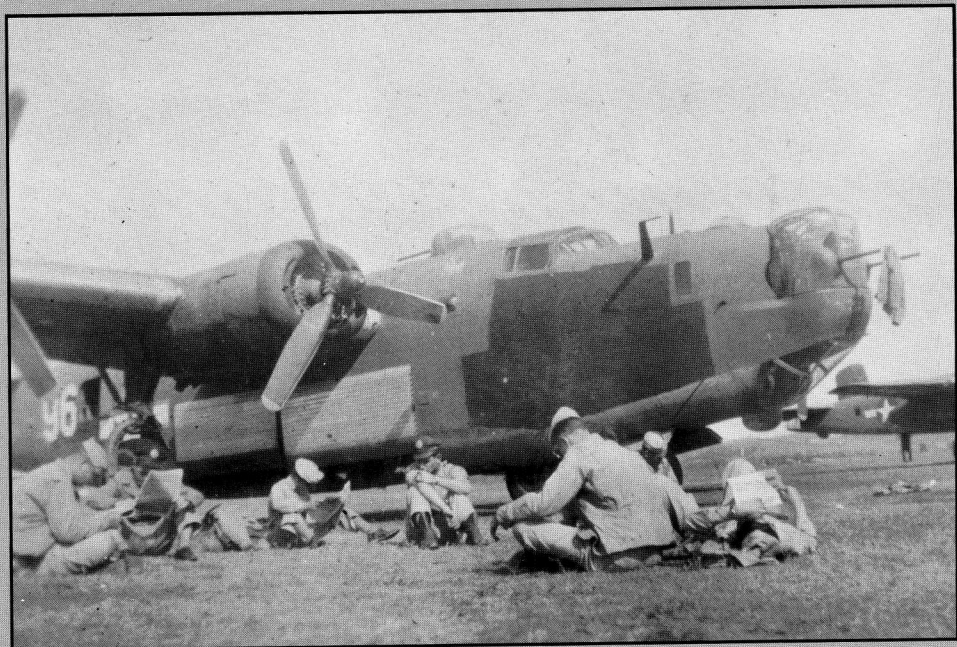
737th Orderly Room and E.M. Club.



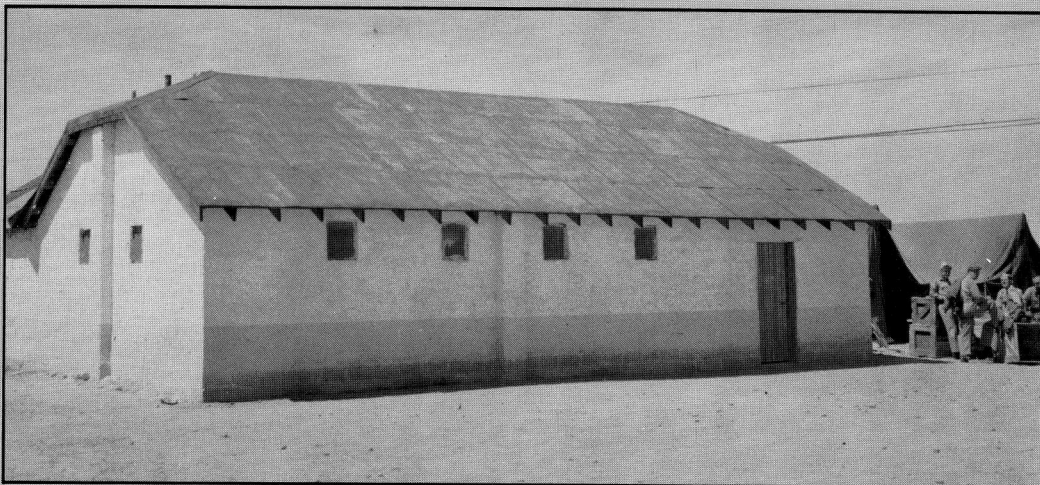
One more for the enemy.



Group S-1.



Waiting!



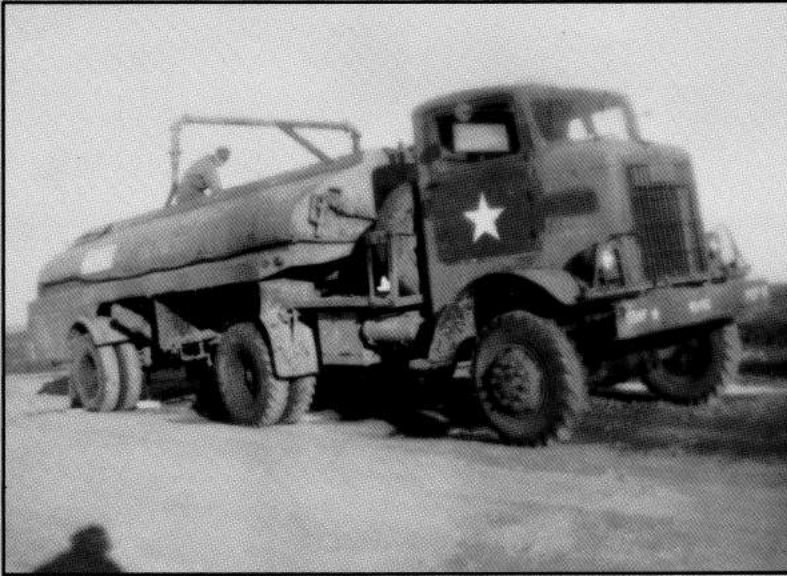
737th Personnel Supply.



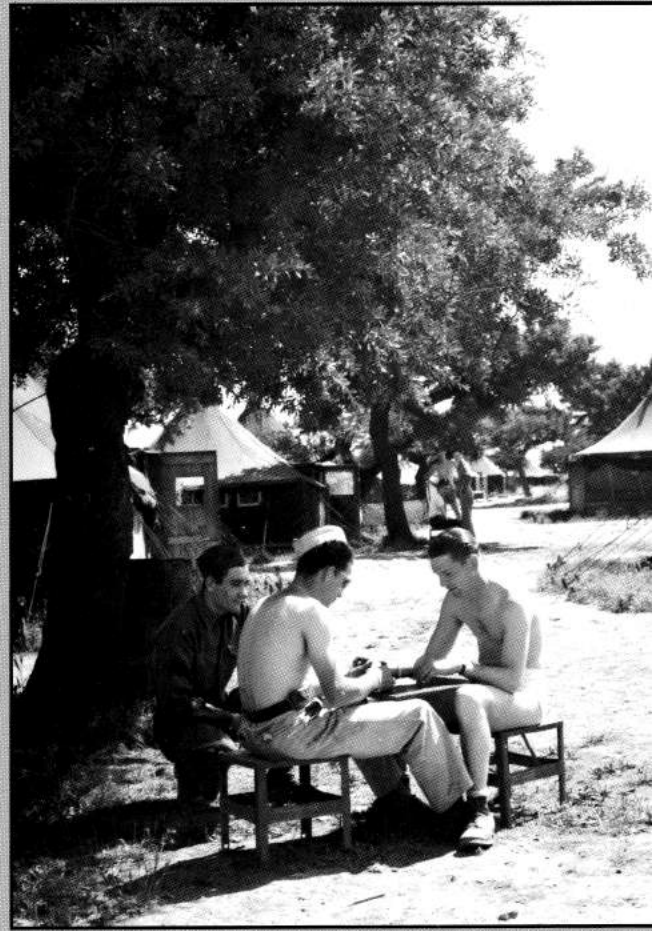
This what makes it "go"!



A/C #914 — Damage from explosion 1-9-44.



Gasoline truck



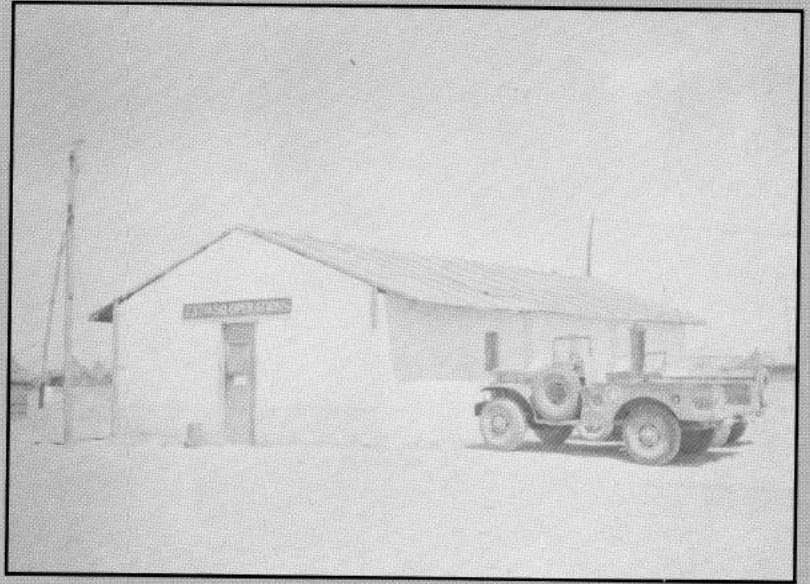
Checkers, anyone?



Handle with Care!



737th Armament shop.



737th Operations



First Aid



Pup Tent "home"



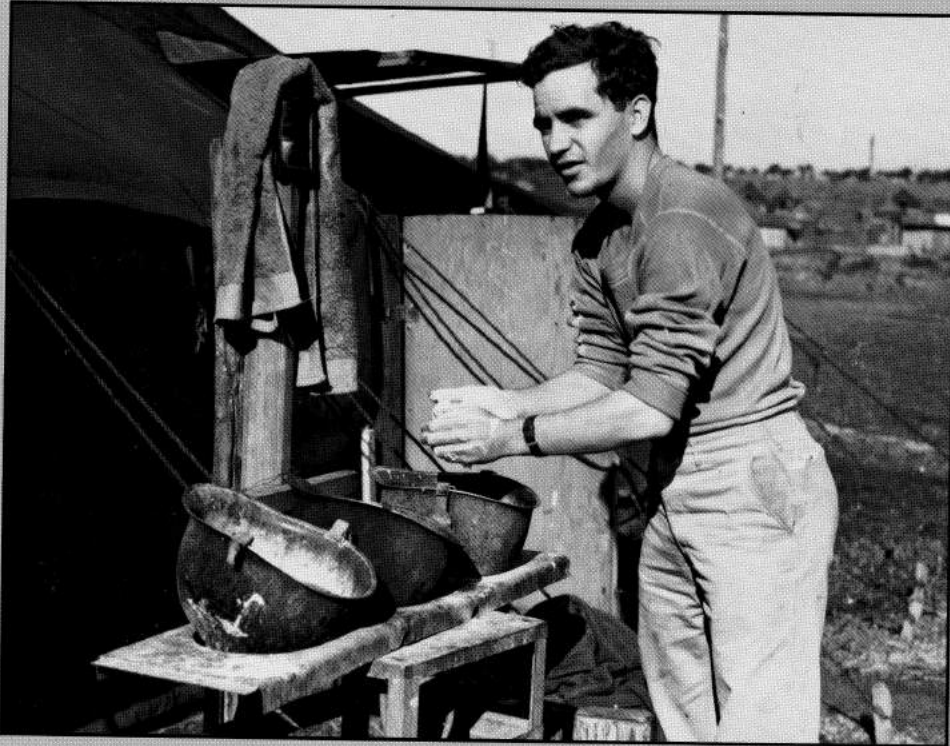
Thanksgiving (Christmas) dinner "au naturel"



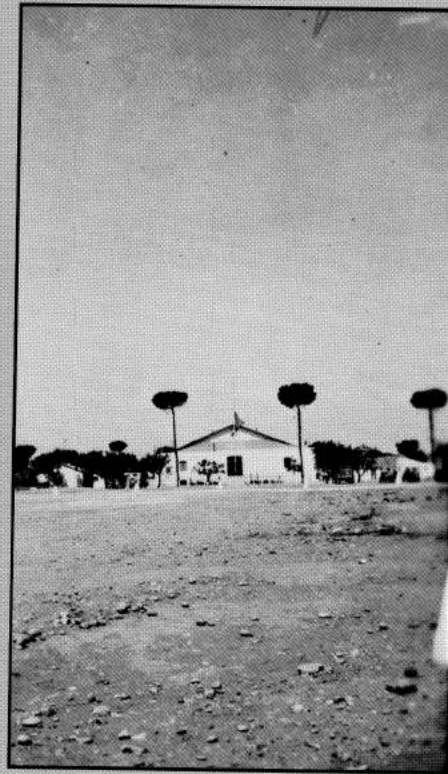
Refueling



Just relaxin'



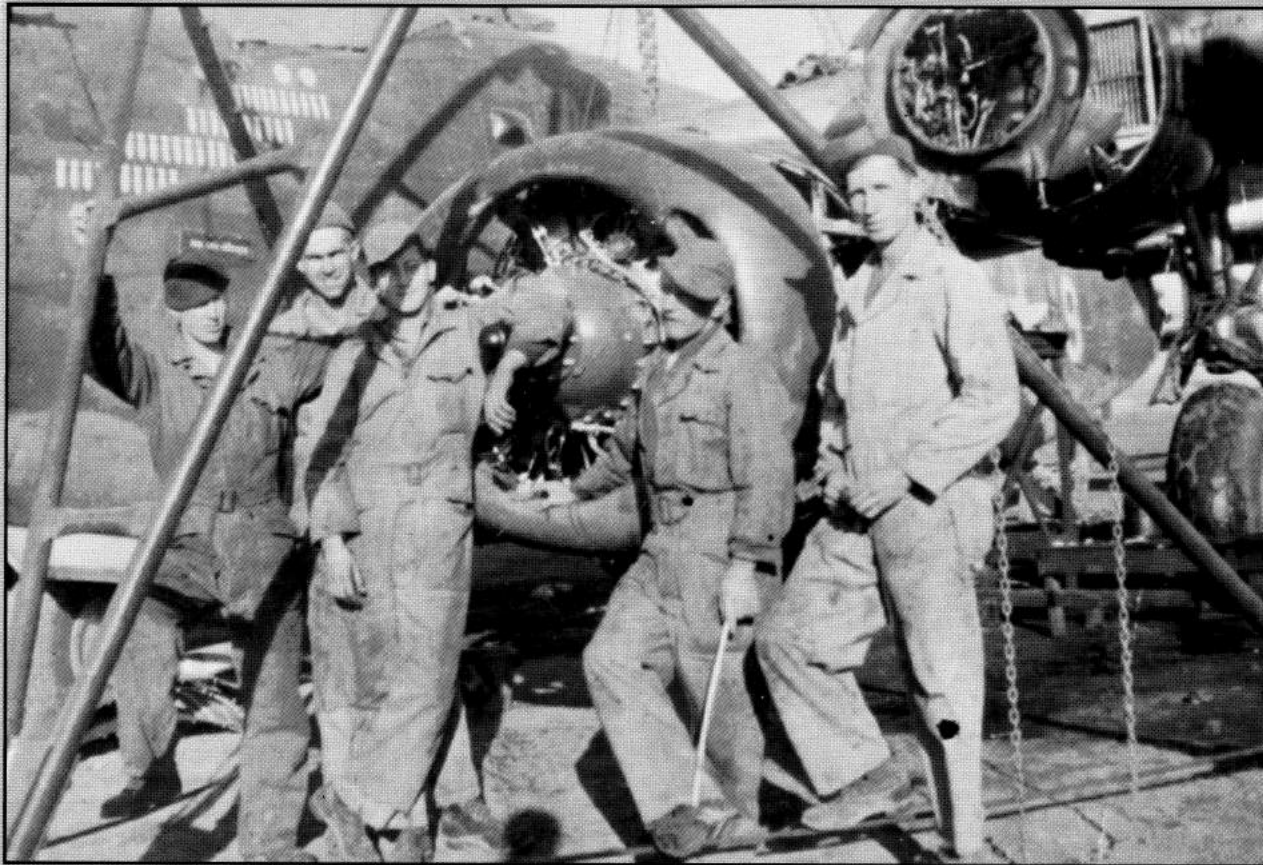
All the comforts of home!



454th Group Headquarters



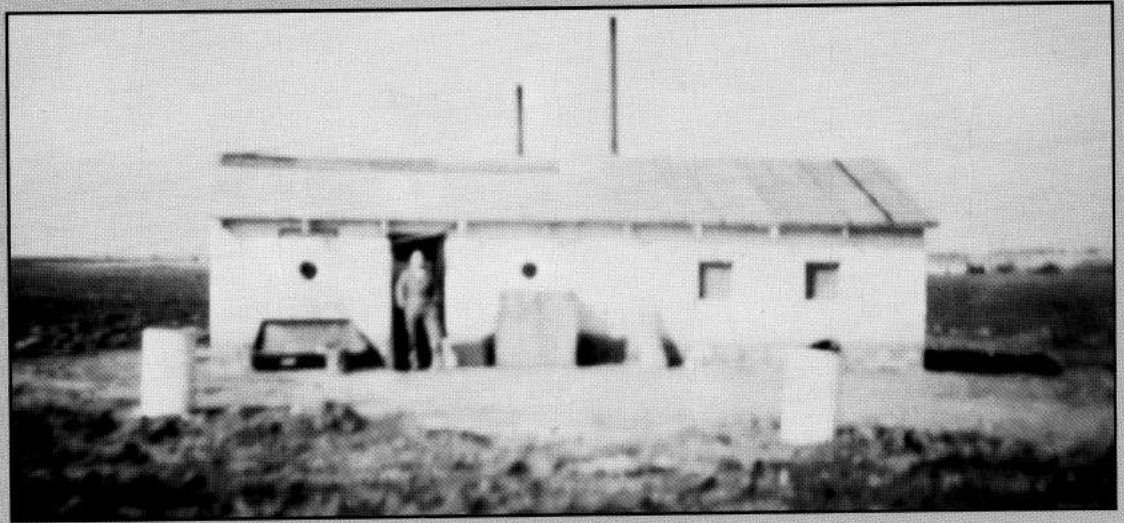
Capt. Grasse and Lt. Coker



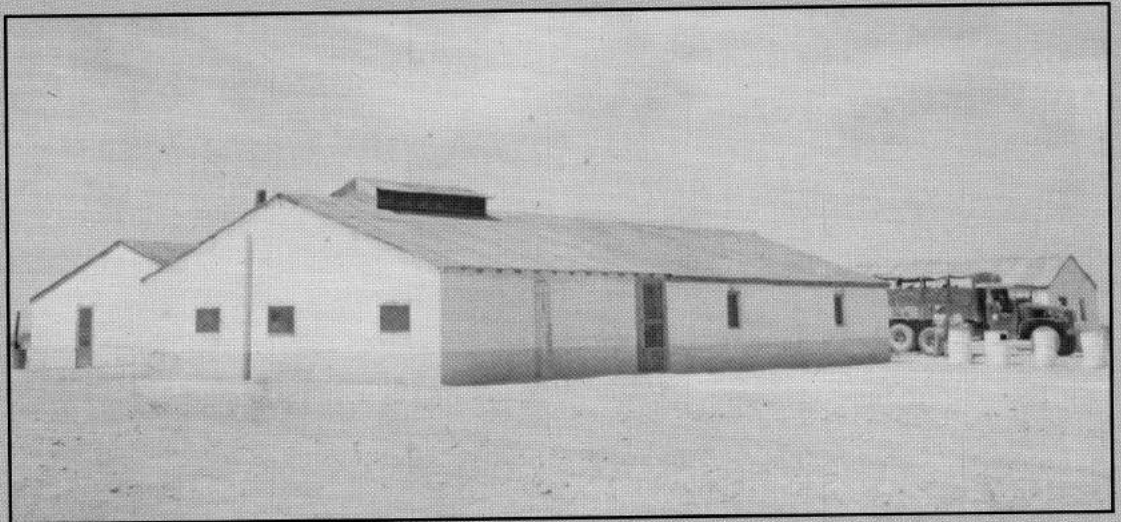
Engine change — Wilt, Harbs, Bauer, Cavanaugh, "Sparky."



454th Officers Club Bar



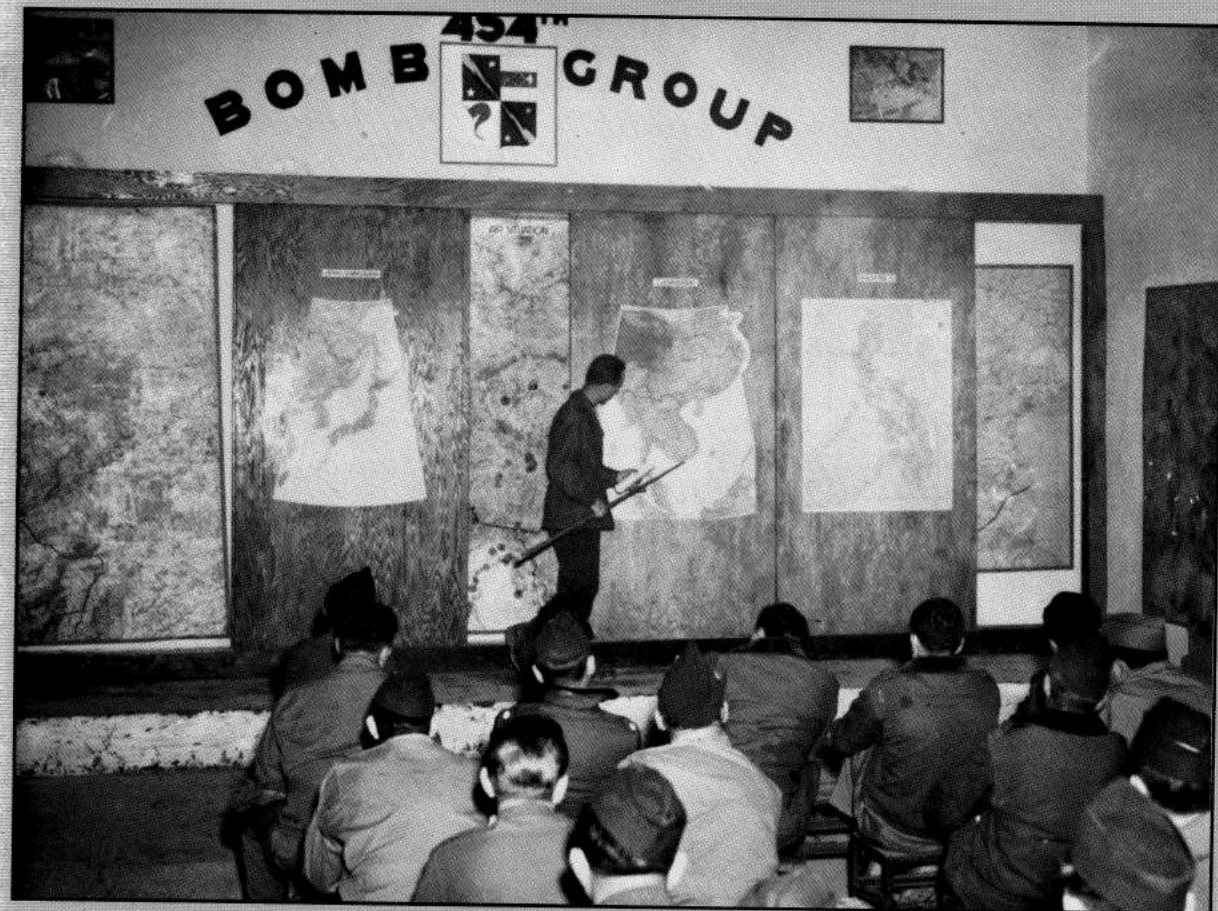
737th Turret Shop



737th Mess Hall



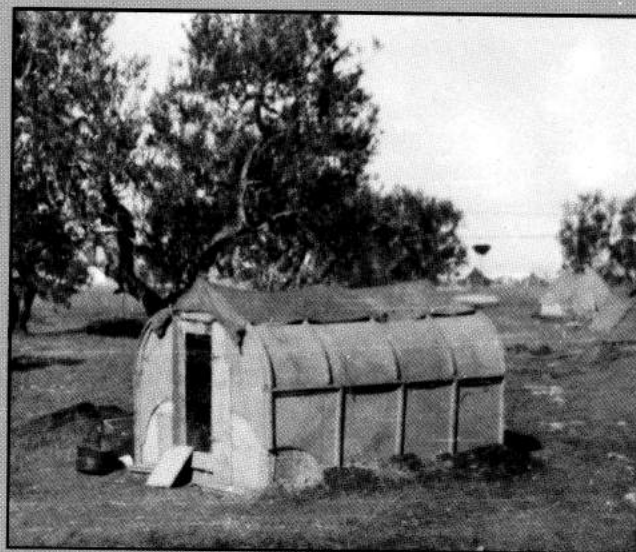
Tail Damage



Group Situation Room



1000 pounders for Hitler



Baggage container "home"

MISSION STORIES

454th Memories

FATAL TRAINING MISSION

By Lt. Thomas H. Jones, Jr. from interview
with Sgt. Reust

One of the most unusual accidents in the history of aviation occurred on October 31, 1943 when F/O Juetts' bomber exploded, the concussion hurling eight men to safety. Unfortunately, two of the crew never recovered consciousness and failed to open their chutes.

The plane was scheduled to take off 0715 Sunday morning, but because of fog, it did not leave the field until 0830. At 0940, flying at 9,000 feet, the pilot ordered oxygen masks. Then he noticed smoke streaming from the #2 engine; at this time the plane was approximately 20 miles south of the Myrtle Beach bombing range.

Smoke entered the ship, cutting down visibility to three feet. The pilot thereupon tried to feather the engine, but to no avail . . . The alarm bell was rung. Sgt. Lawrence L. Taylor (Radioman) and Sgt. Robert M. Loughren (Armorer-Gunner), jumped from the ship. Sgt. Taylor had opened the bomb-bay by hand as bombardier Lt. Puchalski left his station to put on his parachute.

The engine was now on fire, flames extending as far back as the tail assembly and lapping up through the bomb bay. Sgt. Kenneth L. Myers accidentally spilled his chute within the ship and tried to escape through the waist window. Sgt. Edward B. Mitchell attempted to open the camera hatch.

At this moment, the port wing broke completely off at the #2 engine. The ship went out of control and spun towards the earth. Navigator Lt. Thomas Sherwin, who was putting on his chute when the wing broke off, was knocked out during the spin. But he soon came to and jumped out the nose wheel door.

Suddenly the gas tanks exploded and the ship disintegrated.

Sgt. Daniel E. Reust was thrown out into space, but could not pull his ripcord as two straps of his parachute remained to be fastened. Pieces of wreckage were falling just above him. He decided to pull the ripcord without buckling two straps but discovered that he had the parachute on upside down. He pulled the ripcord and floated down "Uneventfully except for a burning wing that floated slowly over his chute." The sergeant avoided the wing by pulling his shrouds in the opposite direction. He counted five other chutes and concluded that four men were unable to escape.

The sergeant landed in a forest. His chute, catching in the branch broke his fall to the ground. His only injury was a bleeding hand that caused him little trouble. A short distance away was the burning wing and a group of Coast Guardsmen trying to put the fire out.

Sgt. Reust and the Coast Guardsmen started a search for the other members of the crew. They discovered the pilot, Flight Officer Clifton Juett, and the engineer, Cpl. Ernest M.

Green, suspended from trees by their chute shrouds and within a short distance of one another. They were lowered from the trees by ropes, F/O Juett in fair condition but Cpl. Green in considerable pain from a broken leg.

F/O Juett had given up all hope of escape when the explosion occurred. He suddenly found himself projected into space still firmly attached to his pilot's seat by the safety belt. He pulled the ripcord, although the chute was simply hung over his shoulders — no strap being buckled. One of the burning wings was seen to circle him several times on route to earth, narrowly missing him each time it circled around.

Sgt. Myers, the armorer gunner, was knocked out during the spin and killed in the crash. Lt. Puchalski never did succeed in getting into his chute and was also killed in the crash. Sgt. Mitchell, the assistant engineer, had a close call chuting down as the tail assembly shot past him by a margin of inches.

Lt. Col. Aynesworth flew to the scene of the crash as soon as the news reached him. His twin engine Cessna cracked up in landing on the rough field beside the wreckage and he sustained slight head cuts. His ship was damaged only slightly.



From a letter written by Thomas Sherwin (737) — Sept.
16, 1989

" . . . I believe we were climbing at about 10,000 feet on a routine training flight when a fire broke out in the No. 2 engine, and Juett alerted the crew. We all wore parachute harnesses, but Puchalski, with whom I shared the nose, had left his chute pack in the bomb bay, a not uncommon practice, as I recall. He was a big, strong individual and could easily have commandeered my pack from the floor of the nose, but he had the decency, rather magnificent in retrospect, to head through the bomb bay, even though the plane was losing control. This ultimately cost him his life and saved mine.

The bail-out signal was given. I got the nose hatch open, but by then the plane had lost part of a wing and was spinning. I don't recall how I got out — I think I fell thru the hatch — but once clear, I remembered about counting the seconds, and after the chute opened I experienced a euphoria I've never known before or since. I landed in a Myrtle Beach tree branch (so much for chute control), climbed down unscathed, and was collected by ground personnel who took me to a hospital in Georgetown. I felt fine, but was kept there for a day or two because I was running a 102 degree temperature purely from shock, I suppose . . ."

"MISS MARIE"

John F. Thomas (738)

I cannot provide a definite date as to the event, but I do believe there is someone in our Group who might have had this experience as far as the first part of this story goes.

"Miss Marie" was an aircraft that, for some reason or another could not complete the secondary climb portion of any given mission, causing that crew flying her at the time to explain their "inability" to complete the mission assigned to them.

After many aborts, "Miss Marie" was scheduled again for a mission and was assigned to Lt. Reily's crew. The take-off was normal, and so was the climb to form up on the lead ship. The mission progressed as usual, and then we began to prepare for the secondary climb. This secondary climb was for the purpose of getting over the southern portion of the Alps. It was part of the flight plan to begin the secondary climb at a given point in our flight path, and attain the proper climb angle.

Well, it happened again, and this time to Lt. Reily. The old bird stalled out, and fell out of formation. No matter what Lt. Reily did, this aircraft was not about to get into a secondary climb attitude. Lt. Reily would level off, gain airspeed, and the airplane would perform in a normal manner. However, every time he pulled the nose up to perform a "secondary climb" maneuver, the aircraft would fall off on one wing. Lt. Reily called for air cover, as we were in the area of known Italian piloted ME-109s. He then placed "Miss Marie" just above the cloud cover, and started our return to San Giovanni. The call for air cover was heard by the Italians, and they dispatched 5 of their ME-109s to intercept a crippled B-24.

Eyes strained to pick up any enemy fighters, when we got a warning from the waist gunners that five enemy aircraft were sighted off our left wing. The 5 ME-109s started to peel off for an attack and just as suddenly continued to "wing-over" and dive back into the clouds. The reason for this maneuver was fast in coming, for right behind the ME-109s flashed 3 P-51 Mustang fighters flown by the black fighter pilots of the squadron with the Checker Board tail markings. This squadron was stationed near the northern position of the Italian front lines, and played some kind of hell with the enemy in the air and on the ground.

Upon our unscheduled return to base, we too had to face our superiors to explain the reason for aborting our mission when there didn't appear to be anything wrong with the aircraft. Lt. Reily was not one to be questioned, and rightly so, as this man did know how to fly, and he was sure there was something definitely wrong with "Miss Marie." There were immediate flights scheduled for this aircraft with many lead pilots, and other very qualified personnel, to find out what the problem was with this bird.

After many test hops, and placing this aircraft in very unusual flight positions, it was determined that there indeed was something wrong. This launched a dedicated search into the maintenance history of this aircraft. After an exhaustive search, evidence was produced to indicate that this aircraft was involved in a ground taxiing accident. This accident was bad enough to require replacement of the entire right wing. Upon replacing the wing, an error was made in positioning of the wing to the fuselage. The angle

of incident was approximately 2 degrees more than the maximum allowed, causing this wing to stall out when the nose was raised to begin the secondary climb portion of its mission. Many of those crew members who flew "Miss Marie" were relieved to know that the truth was finally known, and that there was no cowardice amongst those who flew "Miss Marie" and had to abort their missions because of a 2 degree error made during a repair job under combat conditions.

The real ending to this story came, when, in 1966, I was being interviewed for a position with the Job Corps Program. The questions came up as to whether I had any Military experience. When that was established, the next question was whether or not I had any combat experience. When I reiterated my experience with "Miss Marie," it was then that I learned my interviewer, Ollie Miller, was the Commanding Officer of that P-51 fighter squadron. I might add, I got the job!!!

FINAL APPROACH

By Leon O. Burke, M.D. (738)

On the usual mission, I think there is somewhat of a pattern of emotion that would be characteristic of most of the air crews. There are, of course, considerable variations from this pattern according to circumstances that may be occurring or our state of mind (within the individual). Take-off is usually accompanied by a certain amount of significant tension which is somewhat relieved as the planes rendezvous and form into flights of squadrons and groups and we start to climb to target. Usually, the climb to target and most of the trip to the target is relatively low key, without much emotion. As we near the initial point and turn onto the target, there is heightening of our emotions, and increased alertness and attention to details. We are ready for the "unknown." I think "bombs away" is always accompanied by a significant amount of release of tension and a feeling of relief. The major aim of the mission has been accomplished and it's a matter of survival from this point on home. Turning off the target is a distinct relief even though we may be under fire attack and still in flak. There is an additional sense of relief as we depart from the land and find ourselves over the Mediterranean or Adriatic since, by that time, we are rather well away from threats from enemy fighters and there are no anti-aircraft guns shooting at us from the water.

Surprises can occur along the way, of course, and I well recall when my copilot accompanied the group leader, Col. Aynesworth, on a mission in which they had a very traumatic time, with the possibility of being unable to bring the aircraft home, and the real possibility of need to abandon the aircraft. Apparently, they had jettisoned much of their equipment over Yugoslavia and it was with great relief that they found themselves almost at the coastline, passing over apparently a high range of mountains. We had never encountered fighters or flak at this particular point. Suddenly, however, there were several bursts of flak and the planes on either side of them were shot down. Obviously, this was a very emotionally charged situation, but, again, it demonstrated that no mission is completely free of dangers and you really can't relax entirely until you are safe on the ground and going through debriefing.

Generally, there was another sense of relief that occurred when we came in sight of the home base, with further relief on the part of most of the crew as we turned onto the final approach, but the pilot really could not relax entirely until we had taxied onto our hardstand, turned about into appropriate position and cut the engines. Debriefing provided a sense of relief and catharsis. After this, there was usually time for a bath and a quick nap before dinner. Sometimes, one would awaken and feel that the mission had been a dream but we quickly were brought back to reality as we would look out of our tent and see the appointed individuals going through the belongings in a neighboring tent and packing away personal belongings of a crew that had been shot down.

Our final approach varied somewhat, depending upon how intact (relatively) was the aircraft and whether there were emergency landings occurring on this mission. Some pilots, for various reasons, flew in a long, low approach, bringing the plane in under power and literally flying it onto the ground from a low altitude. I didn't personally like that approach since if there was any power failure or aircraft damage that might affect its flying characteristics at the last moment, one would be too close to the ground and too far away from the runway to be able to make appropriate corrections. At the other extreme, there were a few individuals who liked to bring the airplane in high on the final approach, avoiding the prop wash of the planes ahead of them, cut back the power almost completely, dive down to the runway under controlled flying speed, and flare out at the end of the runway and land. In our squadron, "Lou" (Louis C. Kisylia) particularly favored this approach and was rather noted for it. His comments were to the effect that he avoided a lot of bouncing around in prop wash by this approach. I tended to approach in a somewhat of a more standard manner, coming in relatively high, but maintaining a moderate power and hoping to have a good control so that I could put the airplane down on the very first part of the runway.

Our parallel runways ran north and south with the 454th on the east and the 455th on the west, and the approach from the south presented no particular obstructions to the normal approach, and was, I think, somewhat favored. Approach from the north was across a rather shallow valley, perhaps 150 ft. deep with its small stream at the bottom, and we crossed over low stone fences on either side of the road running east and west at the north end of the runway. We did not have the luxury of choosing additional runways ranging in other directions so, therefore, we frequently landed with a moderate crosswind. It seemed that the wind was from the west more often than from the east, so the prop wash was somewhat of a problem for us in the 454th rather frequently.

On this particular mission, we were returning with the ship functioning well, with no major damage. We were landing toward the south. The bombardier was standing just behind and between the pilot and copilot seats and we were landing with a very standard approach, with the appropriate amount of flaps down and with minimal power. We were aware of a crosswind coming from the west and were carefully watching for turbulence that might be present from the propellers of a plane landing on the 455th runway. We were in the process of crossing over the valley and would be reducing power and settling onto the runway within a very few seconds.

Suddenly, we found ourselves in severe prop wash turbulence and bobbing about like a leaf in a turbulent stream. One wing dropped severely, and suddenly, the runway had disappeared, and all we could see ahead of us was the grass of the hillside, and, above that, the blue of the sky. There was no time for fright; only time to react rapidly. We dropped full flaps and increased full power immediately, and were careful to try not to over-control the plane in righting it to a level position since very rapidly, as expected, the opposite wing had dropped. By a combination of factors of increased power, change in the camber of the wings by the flaps, and perhaps, in part, the boiling of the turbulence and an air-ground cushion effect, we were suddenly level, jumped upward over the edge of the hill and the low rock fence, settled onto the most extreme north end of the runway, and were rolling safely down the runway at a decreased rate of speed.

Within split seconds, we had gone from a safe, normal approach to being lower than the runway with the hillside between us and the runway, and then landing safely on the runway. We had instinctively done all of the right things but we felt as if there had been a moment of Divine intervention, and factors which we had not had time to compute consciously in our minds, that had allowed us to survive. It was with relief and gratitude that we turned into our hardstand, swung the plane about into position cut the power, and prepared for the debriefing.

Truly, no mission is over until you are safely on the ground; not even then. Some of it remains with you forever in your memories.

BRADBURY TIDBITS

Jerry Bradbury (738)

This story covers the Bradbury mission flown 16 February 1944 Ceccina, Italy. This was mission number 3 for the 454th Bombardment Group, and Bradbury's second combat mission as Airplane Commander. On this particular mission, Gerry was flying Squadron lead in box formation. The formation was called a column of boxes, that is, one squadron following right after another permitting complete concentration on bombing the bridge proper. This also allowed some additional "On-the-job-training" for more critical missions.

Bradbury's right wing man was Lt. Leon Burke. His left wing man was Lt. Bradley Peyton. For the most part, the mission was proceeding as scheduled until we reached our target. There is nothing unusual about observing another group of bombers heading for the same target, until you realize that your formation is flying under, and perpendicular to their flight. This particular formation was 1000 feet higher than our assigned altitude. To make things even more hairy was to look UP into a gaping open bombay full of armed bombs.

To Bradbury's surprise, the higher echelon of bombers began releasing their bombs, and Gerry's flight was RIGHT BELOW THEM!!! The first three that were dropped, fell to the formation's left, and another group of three to the right of the formation. The third bomb from the second group hit one of the aircraft in Gerry's formation smack in the center of the fuselage, and it disappeared in a ball of fire and smoke.

Gerry's knowledge of his aircraft's limits, and knowing how to react to this situation saved the lives of his crew at this point. As Gerry pointed out . . . "knowing the top of the wings of the B-24 were only stressed for one half G if the aircraft was flown UNDER the explosion, the wings would fold under, and the Air Corps would have scratched not only one aircraft, but one crew. Therefore, I went full right rudder and aileron at the same time, with Burke following my lead, we took the brunt of the explosion on the bottom of the plane which was stressed for 3 to 3.5Gs." The nose gunner and the ball turret gunner were fully exposed to the entire incident. The ball turret gunner was, at this time, in his position, and had an excellent view of the explosion, and the subsequent ball of fire that he and the nose gunner were subjected to due to their respective positions. The nose gunner became so unglued from that experience, that he refused to fly another mission with anyone, and was replaced. I was very surprised at the minor debris that I picked up from this incident, as opposed to the amount of damage and debris picked up by Burke's aircraft. His horizontal stabilizer was damaged in such a way that it was shaking the rest of the mission. As it turned out, we returned to base with another mission under our belts, hoping the remainder of our flights might turn out to be milk runs . . . Now that was a real dream!!!

MISSION #12 TO KLAGENFURT, 19 MAR. 44

from a letter to Aaron Sosnin (739) by William R. Gray
(Grant crew)

When I came to, after we crashed, my watch showed five minutes after twelve. Overhead circled a ME 109 giving ground crews our location.

A Yugoslav Partisan came to give us aid but, in our condition, we weren't able to move fast enough. Eddie received a broken knee-cap and I had torn ligaments of the left ankle.

Within a half hour, German soldiers arrived. We asked them to search the plane and area for the rest of the crew. They replied they were (kaput) dead and ordered us on down the mountain. We struggled in knee deep snow and reached bottom at twilight. A horse-drawn sleigh took us to a small hospital.

Next day, about ten o'clock, a small plane about the size of our L5 flew us out and took us to a hospital in Laibaock (Jug) — German spelling of Ljubljana.

About a week or so after Easter, I left there by train and arrived at an all Allied hospital located on a mountain due West of Munich. Here some shrapnel was removed and my appendix flared up and during removal broke. In real trouble for a couple of months.

Left there in Sept. with two guards dressed in a British uniform and taken to Stalag Luft four. The camp is on the North Sea near the town of Grasstychow. It was either Oct. or Nov. when Eddie was brought into the camp and placed in a barracks near me. We were able to spend Christmas and New Year's together. Christmas dinner consisted of one lamb per 1000 men, cooked in a pot with potatoes and carrots and, Oh yeah, the famous black bread. Still better than nothing.

Last of March or first of April, Eddie was sent home, due

to his knee. About the same time, the camp fell apart. The invalids were put on forty and eight box cars jammed to the hilt, you could squat but not lay down. No water and no toilet facilities for four days. At night, they made sure the train was in a marshalling yard, hoping for a British attack. At last, we arrived at Stalag Luft one. The camp was located near the town of Barth. Back at Luft four, those men were placed on a forced march — many died and/or were shot.

May seventh, if I remember right it was Mother's Day, and the Russians came in and liberated us. This reminds me of while I was working, the term T.G.I.F. was often heard Thank God It's Friday — to us POWs, the same letter meant Thank God I'm Free!

After a few days had passed, we marched to an airfield in Barth, the Eighth Air Force sent C-47s and flew us to LeHavre, France. After interrogation, delousing, physicals, and outfitting with new clothes, including an "Ike" jacket, we were on our way home aboard a Liberty ship. Arrived at Hampton Roads, Virginia. Hard to believe, but German soldiers served the chow line at the Mess Hall! Milk never tasted better — a quart a meal!

Left there by train to Chicago. Given a thirty-day pass and went home. Got married to my childhood sweetheart. Couldn't ask for anything better!

MY MOST HAIR-RAISING EXPERIENCE OF THE WAR

By Corwin C. "Pat" Grimes

We had been getting shot up quite a bit after "bombs away" due to staying at the same altitude after leaving the target. I was going to lead the Group to bomb the ball bearing works in Styr. After the briefing officers completed, I asked the crews to remain a moment longer, as I had a proposal. I told them I was sick of getting "shot-up" so much after "bombs away," so I intended to use a different tactic today.

I told them that as soon as my tail gunner informed me that all bombs had been dropped from the Group, I would start a steep descending turn to the left, then after descending 2000 feet I would start a climbing turn back to the right. We would continue these descending and climbing turns until out of the flak area. I told them if they stayed in formation during this maneuvering that I would try to get it established as a normal procedure for departing the target. Everyone said they would be with me.

Thankfully, this was one of the few times that I had used the Automatic Pilot to make the bomb run (needless to say I used it on all future bomb runs). As soon as our bombs were away, I snapped off the Auto-Pilot, and shortly thereafter the tail gunner called to say all the Group Bombs were "away." I immediately started a steep descending turn to the left. After losing about 1,000 feet I was just preparing to level out and start my turn back to the right when an 88 or 105 M.M. shell hit the left side of the aircraft. It came through, hit the control bar in front of our feet, took bar and all out of the right side of the aircraft, then exploded as it passed #4 engine, setting it on fire. I told the Copilot and Flight Engineer to get the fire out. At that point I tried to roll out, but I found I had no control, no elevator, aileron or rudder. The plane had begun to turn right on its own as #4 had

been feathered. At this point it dawned on me that all the controls had left with the shell and that we were just lucky it had exploded out by #4 and not while it was still in the aircraft. I then remembered we had been using the Auto-Pilot and that it was going to be our last resort to keep us from spinning in. I switched it on and, miracle-of-miracles, it started to level out the turn as well as halt the descent. The tail gunner called to say the rest of the Group was staying right with us. At this point the #1 Alternator operating the Auto-Pilot over-loaded, caught on fire and we lost the Auto-Pilot. Fortunately we had installed a second alternator on this aircraft a few days before. I switched to the 2nd Alternator and slowly it levelled us out. We still had a fire in the aft end of the aircraft, but the gunners threw out all the ammunition and finally got the fire under control.

Shortly after we got levelled off, I found I was unable to turn the aircraft with the "Joy Stick," just raise and lower the nose slightly. The Sperry Auto-Pilot had a knob that rotated continuously on the face of the instrument panel. I found by holding this in an effort to stop the rotation would cause the aircraft to turn to the left. I then had the Navigator (I don't remember his name, but I think he was from the 739th Sqd.) (Jay Hillis, my bombardier, was the only member of the 738th Sqd. on board.) to set up a course home that would require only left hand turns, and he did a good job. The crew finally got the fire out in the aft section. We had been hit numerous times besides the shell that took away the controls and were without hydraulic power for landing.

I told the crew they could bail out over base, if they desired, but they all opted to stay with me and the aircraft. They said we had brought them this far, so they felt we could get them the rest of the way home.

The crew cranked down the gear and flaps, then released two parachutes at each waist window at landing to stop the aircraft.

At the debriefing, the other pilots came up congratulating me on the maneuvering off the target and said everyone had stayed in tight formation except #2 and #3 aircraft, who had spread out a little to keep from being included if we should blow-up from the fire they could see in our aircraft. Imagine their surprise when they learned they had been following a disabled aircraft. They all said they were in favor of the type maneuver off the target, but I was unable to get it established as a procedure.

I recommended the entire crew (except for myself — as I believed any recommendation for my medals should originate with the Group Commander) for the D.F.C., and they all received it before they departed the Group. Major Skinner, Commanding Officer of the 739th Sqd., later recommended me for the D.F.C. for this mission, and I received it after I was back stateside.

MONTPELLIER MISSION

Julian P. Pruett (737)

I was a nose gunner on the Orville L. Whitworth crew and we were in the 737th sqd. We were flying as "box leader" of the lower right box that day and were approaching the coast of France from the south. I recall that I thought at the time that we were terribly near Toulon, which we had bombed

earlier on 4/29/44, and wondered why we were coming over such an area again to get to Montpellier. There were no fighters but the AA was very powerful in that the bursts would indicate very large guns being fired. Very large bursts indicated to me that we were being shot at by possibly naval guns and perhaps 105mm's instead of 88's. Anyway the bursts made a lasting impression.

Off to our left, I saw a plane take a direct hit and it appeared to me that the top gunner was blown out of the plane. I lost sight of the plane and man who came out and do not know if he opened his chute nor do I recall what others of our crew may have reported about the fate of the plane but I am sure it went down and probably crashed in the water. Over all these years, I have assumed that the plane was hit behind the Pilot and Co-Pilot's seats and blew the top turret and gunner out and that he was dead when he came out of the plane.

Another strange thing happened about the time all this was going on and probably reduced our losses that day and time. "Buck" Whitworth, leader of a box that day, for some unknown reason turned "his box" away from the formation about 50 yards as the AA fire started and where we should have been suddenly filled with AA bursts. Not one burst but perhaps six. Had we been there it is possible our entire box would have been lost. After the mission we asked him why he did that and his reply was simply, "I don't know, something seemed to tell me to do so." Of course, we immediately moved back into position and no further incidents took place.

A TEXAS-SIZED HOLE

Condensed from a story by Leon O. Burke (738)

The initial run to the target (Munich Motoren Werke) IP was somewhat routine — although I suppose no mission is routine. We can see enemy planes far below us, climbing to our altitude like wasps swarming from their nest as we approach the initial point. Ahead of us, the flak is building its dense, towering cloud of hundreds of large individual black smoke puffs, intermingled with the smaller darker clouds of actively exploding shells at about our altitude as the group ahead of us dropped its bombs.

A battery of about six guns was tracking our squadron while other batteries were tracking other squadrons. The initial bursts were in a tight pattern, very slightly high, and at about 1 o'clock position a few hundred feet ahead of us. In a few seconds, the next several bursts were closer and nearer, at the 12 o'clock position, and the next was even closer. Without doubt, the next bursts would be at, or near, our altitude and would bracket our ship, if not the whole squadron. Suddenly, the anticipated next six bursts of the pattern surrounded us but burst perhaps a bit lower than I had anticipated. We felt the concussion and heard the explosion clearly. Almost simultaneously, we could hear and sense flak passing through our craft. Sgt. Albert R. "Tex" Luttrell, our right waist gunner, came on the intercom with unusual urgency as he cried, "I'm hit." I assured him we would be with him as soon as possible.

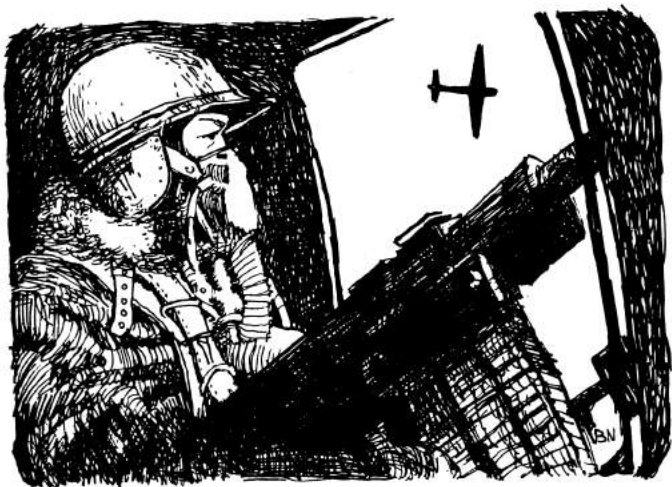
The bombs were soon away and as we came off target, the fighters were swarming over us again, keeping our guns busy as we maintained tight formation for the protection of concentrated fire. Our craft was structurally intact and the

engines functioning well as we left the target. Sgt. Leroy E. "Red" Rizer was attempting to help "Tex" as much as possible when he could be off of his guns and gave me a report of a significant wound in "Tex's" right posterior thigh.

As soon as possible, I left the pilot's seat and made my way back through the bomb bay to the waist area. As I entered the bomb bay by the catwalk, a large stream of 100 octane gasoline, about 1½ in diameter, poured out of the left wing overhead and ran a stream over the left bomb bay doors, with part of it forming a mist at this point and blowing rearward toward the main fuselage. As quickly as possible, on entering the fuselage, I grasped the waist intercom and ordered that all guns be silenced until further notice and that no radio or intercom was to be used unless there was an abandonment situation. I informed the crew of the fuel leak and asked the engineer to check on it frequently and transfer fuel out of the leaking tank to others that were intact. I prayed that no spark would ignite fumes meanwhile.

Meanwhile, I gave "Tex" a shot of morphine from the First Aid Pack. I stuffed sulfa into a large hole in his posterior right thigh at the buttocks area, and applied a bandage. He wasn't bleeding much and remained conscious. I thought that perhaps his right thigh bone was broken.

He apparently had been standing on the extra flak apron, hoping to protect his future offsprings. There was a large hole in the flak apron with a few of the approximately 2' x 2' hardened metal alloy plates being reduced to confetti by the flak, and adjacent ones bent and bloody. I still have one of these deformed plates with "Tex's" blood stains on it. We tried to keep "Tex" comfortable and he bore his wound well, although with occasional concern for his "poor Mary." We had him keep the intercom button in hand so that he could keep in contact with us and not feel so alone in his difficult situation.



The tank did seal the leak completely and by cruising with as lean a mixture of fuel as possible, we had enough fuel to land safely. I am not sure if this was the day that one engine died of fuel starvation as we turned onto the taxi strip from the runway, but I think it was. There certainly was no fuel surplus.

We visited "Tex," who was in traction in the Bari Hospital, a few weeks later. His morale was high as he anxiously anticipated a reunion with his beloved wife, Mary. "Tex" left a "Texas-sized" hole in the fabric of our crew.

FREEDOM WALK GROUP MISSION #65

Richard B. Anderson, Thomas H. Gerzel,
and John D. Swisher (738)

It goes without saying, every military encounter will have its share of "War Stories". WW II of course was no exception. One thing that has amazed me as I have read and re-read the contributions to 454th Memories is how one particular mission stands out from all the rest. I have read excerpts from many of the stories sent to us and it was interesting to see the detail of certain events of a particular mission that were so vivid in the minds of ALL the crew members.

To illustrate my point, here is the tale of a mission flown 16 June 1944. The target was the Nova Schwechat Oil Refinery close to the "best loved" target in all Europe . . . Vienna, Austria. The crew members contributing to this tale are; The Tail Gunner, Richard B. Anderson; Co-Pilot Thomas H. Gerzel; and John Dean Swisher, the Ball Turret Gunner. All members of Lt. Hubers crew. It is interesting to note which part of this mission stuck in the minds of each of these men, on the same plane, and under the same set of circumstances. The tail gunner, Richard B. Anderson, begins with his remembering, of all things, the detailed damage to the aircraft:

This mission started out like all the rest that came before, and had been flown since. An early morning call when most normal people were still sleeping, the groggy trip to the mess hall to partake of something called breakfast for the sake of a better name, not fit to print. Briefing was nothing new, except the targets, and most of those had been on the agenda in the past. This particular target was scheduled perhaps for the umpteenth time, and it was our turn to do damage once again. Hoping against hope of course that we would return unscathed. As time marched on since this particular event took place, one can only look back and marvel at the strange set of circumstances that return to haunt us in one way or another.

READ ON!!

As we prepared our bird for this mission, and having been in the target area before, I felt it was a good idea to get a couple of spare chutes as a precautionary measure. As you will see, it turned out to be one of my better ideas as we took off to face another day against the enemy.

As we approached the target, we encountered flak which resulted in direct hits to No. 1 and No. 4 engines, along with considerable damage to both vertical stabilizers. Trim tabs were damaged, as were hits inflicted on the tail turret and rear fuselage. The aircraft (#357) immediately fell out of formation leaving us in a very vulnerable position which a ME 109 found very enticing. Making several passes at us from the rear, the bogie inflicted additional damage to No. 2 and No. 3 engines along with most everything else. We had sustained a fuel leak, lost our radio, along with the hydraulic and electrical systems. To make matters worse, we also lost our oxygen. Why the ME 109 terminated his attack was beyond us. We were really at his mercy. The Pilot decided to set

down on the island of Vis, as it was clear we were not going to make it back to base, and in doing so, we were forced to pass over Graz, Austria. We encountered 40 MM fire at that point sustaining even more damage to our craft. During the barrage of flak, and the ME 109 attack, the radio operator, Jack Parrish was wounded in the neck and side.

At this point, Swisher remembered the right waist gunner, Alfred Pittman, taking a slug that went between his fingers tearing off his glove!!

Swisher also recalled the devastating damage to the aircraft, and with only one engine remaining, the aircraft lost altitude rapidly. The Yugoslavian Mountains do not represent an ideal field for any type of landing. At this point the aircraft was lower than the mountain peaks of Big Ticheo, and Little Ticheo and bail out time was here.

Most ball gunners placed their chutes on the ledge over the turret, as did Swisher, only to find that his chute was riddled with holes from the ME 109 attack. One of the extra chutes placed aboard this aircraft on this mission saved his life.

With an aircraft full of men, falling out of the sky, in an area like the Yugoslavian mountains, what other problems could one have? How about an injured crew member who was incapacitated with wounds that required sedation? Jack Parrish was unable to act on his own due to the wounds in his neck and his side. He was given morphine to relieve his suffering. This left him in an inert mode. Lt. Gerzel recalls rigging a cable to Jacks rip cord, and with the help of Swisher and Anderson, threw their wounded crew member out through the camera hatch, and following him in rapid succession. Swisher found the parachute jump to be a thriller. It was almost a tragedy had he panicked. He was wearing heated boots, having tied his GI brogans together, and holding them tightly to his chest when he jumped. He pulled the rip cord with his right hand, and nothing happened!!! As he plunged toward earth, he realized that his chute didn't open because the brogans he was holding he was holding so tightly to his chest were also preventing the chute flap to open, allowing the pilot chute from deploying. When the chute did open, he remarked, "An opened chute during a bail out is a beautiful sight". Who would argue with that remark . . .??

The crew having bailed out in rapid succession with each other, landed quite close to each other considering the windy conditions that prevailed. Landings in an old parachute of World War II vintage were quite an adventure in themselves on a nice calm day, and an open grassy field. Imagine the thrill of a landing in mountainous terrain, on a cold windy day, in enemy territory, with enemy soldiers looking for you!! Swisher recalls coming down fast, and hard, as did Lt. Gerzel. However, the Yugoslavian partisans were doing their job, and quickly closed in on the downed airmen and herded them to a "Safe place". What impressed the men most at that time, were the four very strong partisan girls that carried the wounded Jack Parrish over the very hilly, and rocky terrain without a whimper.

The highlight of this mission came for Lt. Gerzel as the crew waited with the partisans for their rescue via C-47's. Lt. Gerzel, whose parents came from Yugoslavia recalls talking with a 1st Lt of the partisan army. All crew members were instructed to never engage in discussing politics with anyone in the event they were captured, or assisted by an underground group of any nationality. This situation was no

exception. The 1st Lt spoke excellent English. I told him of my parents coming to America in their late teens and meeting in the US although they lived less than 20 miles apart while growing up. All the while we were waiting for our rescue. Our rescue was arranged by an American OSS Captain by the name of O'Mira, and a British Corporal (Radio Operator). They were parachuted into the area for the purpose of arranging transportation for us and the partisans that were wounded in their attempts to get to us, and help us evade the enemy. The rescue was to be performed by 5 Dakota (C-47) transports. Captain O'Mira took us down to a valley where the intended landing was to take place. The area was littered with large rocks which would have made any type of landing just about impossible. With the help of a group of partisans equipped with wooden shovels, we cleaned a landing strip and lined it with many parachutes that were used to drop in supplies a few days earlier on a night mission which we observed. We also made two piles of brush we intended to light to give the pilots some idea as to wind direction, and velocity. A couple of days later the aircraft arrived.

Four of them landed on the make shift runway. The fifth aircraft landed to the left, careening over rocks. It looked like he was dribbling a basketball down court, and never blew a tire or touched a prop!!!

We had positioned all the wounded at the "Take-off" end of the runway thinking the pilots would keep their engines running while loading the wounded and ourselves, and get out with a minimum of time lost. Instead, they cut their engines at the far end of the field and off loaded supplies!

We were told one of the pilots of that particular flight was a Major Randolph Churchill, a son of Winston Churchill. He started to berate everyone within ear shot as to why the wounded were not where the aircraft were parked. I take my hat off to our bombardier, 2nd Lt. Frank Hardt, who told this pompous ass off in no uncertain terms!! We then boarded the aircraft and were flown back to Bari, Italy where we were deliced, and debriefed. We were sent to the Isle of Capri for a brief rest, and then back to the old grind. Our next mission was, of all places . . . VIENNA! Post Script: From the files of Lt. Gerzel . . .

About one year ago I received a telephone call from a Mrs. Riznar, a Slovene from Ohio wanting to know if I came from Little Falls, New York. Mrs. Riznar informed me her husband is a cousin of a medical doctor in Yugoslavia and her husband, Milan Lah is a retired army General. He is, I believe, the same Lt. I had talked to while waiting for our rescue. His home town at that time was in Logatec Slovenia, the same town my mother came from. A few weeks ago I received a long letter from Dr. Lah stating that during the summer of 1946 she and her husband received two letters from my mother thanking her husband (General Lah) and the partisans for their help after our crew bailed out over the Yugoslavian mountains.

A PRECARIOUS BALANCING ACT

From a story by Leon O. Burke (738)

On this mission roll call was at 0335 and take-off at 0540. The crews came to believe that if a mission was especially important and hazardous and Deputy Group Commander

Lt. Col. "Pop" Gunn had worked it up, he would be the leader to fly it. Our anxiety regarding the mission was balanced by the fact that we knew we would be well led. This helped when the cover was removed from the map and the red yarn tracing our course seemed to stretch forever to a notorious target — Moosbierbaum Synthetic Oil Refinery, Austria.

We had a good P-47 fighter escort to the target. They did a nice job and made beautiful serpentine turns over the bombers as we neared the IP. This was the limit to their range — we silently and gratefully bid them goodbye and eagerly anticipated the arrival of the P-38 Lightnings we had been briefed to expect to protect us in the target area. A quick glance ahead revealed what appeared to be a large formation of twin engine aircraft at 2 o'clock high and too distant to distinguish more definitely. This must be our P-38 escort and they were on a course that would provide cover for us between the IP and the target.

I quickly redirected my attention to flying my #2 wing position on my leader as we turned on the IP and established our bomb run to the target at 160 mph indicated airspeed and 21,100 ft. altitude. Even in July, when we opened the bomb bay doors, it rapidly became cold throughout the craft. As the chill increased in the cockpit, there suddenly was a wide dense sheet of tracers and 20 mm cannon shells creating a layer between my cockpit and that of my lead ship on whom I was flying very close formation. Surprise! A quick glance forward showed this broad sheet of tracers to be made denser by tracers from our forward guns firing at about three waves of twin engine ME-110s and ME-210s, about 12 to 15 abreast. These were *not* our anticipated P-38s! As suddenly as it appeared, the sheet of tracers was gone. A quick glance ahead showed the sky ahead momentarily free of enemy fighters and beginning to fill with fresh bursts of flak against the dark cloud of spent flak smoke over the target. Our nose guns were quiet for the moment and the firing from the rearward-facing guns continued for a few moments.

The ball turret gunner called out that a plane well to our rear had been hit and was climbing as it flew at a faster rate of speed than the formation. The wounded and apparently out-of-control bomber moved upward and through our formation. Its nose and props would seem almost to touch a plane above and in front of it, and then that plane would rapidly move upward out of the way. The disabled bomber then climbed a few hundred feet ahead and higher than us to a 2 o'clock position, rolled onto its right wing and started a long arc of a turn downward, and disappeared from my view at about the time for bombs to drop. I'm not sure of the fate of the crew.

After we dropped our bombs with our squadron and turned off the target to return home from a target in the Austrian area, it was noted that our bomb bay doors seemed not to close completely. Sgt. Wilbur J. "Bil" Taylor, who was flying the ball turret position beneath our belly, reported that it appeared as if the left front bomb bay had been blocked by bombs that hadn't cleared the ship. The copilot, Lt. Philip J. "Phil" Millis, went back to investigate, wearing his "walk-around bottle" of oxygen. He returned rapidly! He said that there were live, loose bombs filling the left forward bomb bay and suggested we fly very smoothly, making no more motion than necessary. I took his advice *most seriously!*

It seemed that the arming vanes on some of the bombs had spun off. Only a few pounds of pressure on the nose

fuses and the bomb would explode, and so would we! If the bombs toppled or lost their balance and struck the ship or another bomb with their unarmed nose fuses, we would complete our tour instantly.

Bombardier Lt. John W. "Johnny" Rakestraw and navigator Lt. William A. "Sandy" Sanderson (who had also completed the Bombardier School course) seemed the best qualified to deal with the live bomb problem. To achieve maximum effect from the bombing, it apparently was thought to be wise to increase the number of bombs per plane without increasing the weight of the bomb load by using two 100 lb. bombs per bomb shackle. The two bombs apparently were held in place using some sort of wire cable sling. Thus, two bombs were held in place per shackle. Something had gone wrong as the bombs were released. Perhaps the cables got tangled and the first few bombs hung up in the bomb bay. The remaining ones in the left front bomb bay fell on them creating a "log-jam" effect. The slip stream had spun some of the small, propeller-like arming vanes off and those bombs were now live and ready to explode, with only slight pressure on the tip of the fuse protruding from their nose. "Sandy" and "Johnny" proposed to unscrew as many of the fuses as possible while steady-ing the bombs, and then drop the fuses overboard. Following this, they would drop each bomb separately. To do this, they had to stand on the very narrow catwalk down the middle of the bomb bay and steady themselves with one hand on the black nylon rope a few feet above the catwalk on either side. Utilizing bulky flight gloves to avoid freezing their hands, they were to try to unscrew the fuses without creating pressure on the nose or letting the bomb shift off of its precarious balance. One of them would hold the nose and the other would hold the tail fin, and with an exaggerated nod of the head to signify the count of 1-2-3, they would release their grip on the count of 3, and that would be "bombs away" for that bomb. At first, all went well and most of the armed bombs were defused. Then, as I recall their telling the story, "Sandy" got a glove caught in the fin as they released a bomb and it nearly pulled him out of the bomb bay with it while he clutched the rope with one hand and kept a foot on the catwalk. After this, they decided to carry the defused bombs onto the flight deck and store them there. They finished this hazardous and delicate chore eventually and we managed to close the bomb bay doors. We landed with several defused 100 lb. bombs on the flight deck and saved the taxpayers some money.

BRESLAU

By Leon O. Burke, M.D. (738)

After breakfast, we walked through the near dark of the early morning hours and down the ramp to the briefing room where the air crews assembled in the basement beneath the 454th Headquarters, as we had done so many times before. The briefing officer took his position in front of the room near the covered map on the wall. The buzz of conversation died away and allies turned to the covered map. The cover was removed and there was a moment of silence as if no one was breathing, followed by a faint murmur as we drew breath and as all eyes followed the red string marking our route to the target, further north than we had ever flown before. The course north into enemy territory seemed to go

on forever. It went through areas where we had previously encountered heavy, accurate and intense flak and aggressive fighters, past areas that, in the past, had proven to be sufficiently dangerous, but worthy, targets. The course went over water up the Adriatic and then overland through Western Yugoslavia, and along the Austria-Hungary border east of Vienna, and continued across Czechoslovakia into the Nazi-occupied Poland, to a point about 200 miles south-east of Berlin.

"Gentlemen, your target for today is the Breslau area," stated the briefing officer. The briefing continued in the usual manner. It seemed that Breslau had become a very vital target. It was our understanding from the briefing that the 8th Air Force and English bombers based in England had been putting a very severe strain on the Berlin Wehrmacht Headquarters, and apparently Intelligence had reported to us that much of these operations had been moved to the Breslau area. (Breslau was also known as Wroclau, Poland.) We were given to understand that if we could destroy the targets at Breslau, we might well shorten the war by several months. Obviously, this was a "high priority" target worth a major effort. However, the major effort apparently was to be carried by a select few rather than a massive force of bombers, and we were part of that select few.

As nearly as I can recall, as we air crews who were to fly the mission understood, about four groups of B-24s would be involved. (That would be about sixteen squadrons of approximately six to seven planes each.) As nearly as we could recall from our conversations later, the highest ranking officer was a Captain who was the lead navigator. Since we usually had good representation by our higher-ranking group officers on difficult missions, we believed that since very high losses were expected on this mission, the highest command echelon, at Wing Headquarters or higher, had apparently ordered that the higher-ranking vital commanders of our group level were not to be risked since they would be needed to continue directing and leading future missions.

We were briefed on enemy defenses of fighters and flak in the Trieste area, fighters and heavy flak in the Vienna area, and that we might expect heavy, accurate and intense flak on the target accompanied by significant fighter opposition in that area.

Our fighter escort would follow only part way to the target because of inability to carry sufficient fuel to accompany us all the way. Therefore, most of the way, we would be alone. We would have the maximum load of fuel that we could carry. However, when we calculated the total mileage, the total flying time and the anticipated fuel consumption per hour, it was evident that we had a major problem. In formation flight, about the only planes that could use less than 300 gallons per hour of high octane fuel, as an average, would be the lead ships since they could set their throttles and only needed to adjust them very rarely. All other airplanes would burn significantly larger amounts of fuel because of the necessity of much more frequent use of power adjustments, even though the leaders flew especially smoothly and led well. The #2 and #3 wing men could, by very careful attention, use only slightly more fuel than the leaders, but the farther away from the leader they were, the greater the frequency and magnitude of power adjustments necessary to maintain position and, therefore, the greater amount of

fuel consumed by airplanes further back in the formation.

Our calculations (privately) showed that from the standpoint of fuel consumption alone, only the lead ships could expect to conserve fuel well enough to make the round trip and return to base. With the added factors of fighters and flak belts, it very quickly assumed the appearance of a one-way trip. Hopefully, we would arrive at the target in sufficient numbers to accomplish our mission. This particular first mission was cancelled, but my crew was briefed on this mission about three or four different times.

On one occasion, we swept a light crusting of snow from the wings of our aircraft and sat in our planes awaiting weather clearance, and, eventually, the mission was cancelled. We had no regrets over this cancellation from an emotional standpoint. Another time, we started our engines and used some of our fuel on the ground before the mission was cancelled. A third time, if I recall correctly, we actually took off to fly the mission. We were recalled fairly early after the takeoff and since we did not fly very far or penetrate into enemy territory significantly, we got no credit for this aborted mission.

Although the target remained intact, there was at least some beneficial effect of these briefings that made other missions seem less threatening to our survival in that we at least felt we had the fuel to get to and from the target if we were fortunate enough to avoid the fighters and flak, and we felt our losses would likely be considerably less on most other missions than on the Breslau mission. As expected, there was some joking that this was a good psychological device to make the rest of the war seem easier. It is true that the perception of any particular trial is judged somewhat by other trials. Therefore, although I do not believe this was intended as such, the briefings tended to make other difficult targets seem less threatening to us.

Eventually, that day did come when we were briefed on the mission and took off, and apparently were going to fly the entire mission as briefed. On June 30, 1944, we were again briefed for a target in the Breslau area. It would be the 71st mission for the group and the 42nd one for me. This would be a double-credit mission since we would be flying north of the 47th Parallel, and if we completed it, it would be my missions Nos. 42 and 43, leaving me only seven more missions to fly on this particular tour.

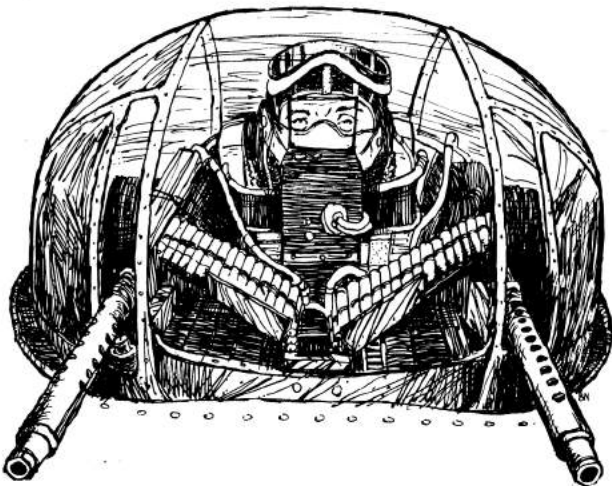
It was June and there was no snow on our wings on the ground this time and we suspected that if any snowballs were present in the region of the target, they would melt rapidly. The chances for weather to be good all the way to the target was much improved in June over that of earlier months. Our target for that day in the Breslau area was:

Odertal Oil Refineries (Breslau Area). Each airplane would be carrying ten 500# amiable-cluster incendiary bombs containing 88-4# thermite incendiaries and 22-4# demolitions.

The mission went routinely and we appeared to be conserving as much fuel as possible as we climbed to altitude. As we reached the area of Lake Balaton in Hungary, we encountered some scattered clouds and, ahead, what appeared to be a milky haze that extended from the ground to well above our altitude, and as far as we could see either right or left. At this point, our fighter escorts flew north, at as high an altitude as they could reach, seeking a passage through the weather front for the bombers. Meanwhile, our leaders could go no further north and started a holding pat-

tern of large circles over the lake area while awaiting reports from the fighters and/or orders from Headquarters. Flak in the area was light, possibly, in part, due to the fact that we were staying fairly well over the area of the lake. Meanwhile, some of the Nazis had discovered our presence and some twin-engine aircraft appeared from behind clouds and launched rockets at us, and ducked back behind the clouds, staying out of range of our 50 caliber machine guns.

We were well aware that with a bit more use of fuel in this area, we were rapidly approaching the point where none of the airplanes would possibly have enough fuel left to allow them to continue to the target, bomb it, and then return to the base. Thus, from the fuel consumption point alone, to say nothing of flak or fighters, there would be no survivors from the attack returning to our base at San Giovanni, or nearby airfields.



The crew was fully aware of the hazards facing us, the heavy, accurate and intense flak which we would be passing through, at least two places as well as over the target, and the fighters that we were expected to encounter at each of these areas. I think they, quite realistically, felt that the chances of us returning to our base that day was very minimal. One of them called on the intercom and said, "Lt. Burke, are we going to Switzerland on the way up or on the way back?" I responded that I thought the honorable thing to do would be to go to the target first if we were able to do so. However, I also told the navigator that I would appreciate it if he would draw in a few course lines to Switzerland so that we would know what heading to fly without any delay in the event that we were shot up to the extent that we either could not get to the target or could not get back to some portion of Italy (even that which was still under enemy control) or to "ditch" in the Adriatic and take a chance on being picked up by Air-Sea Rescue. This was satisfactory with my crew. They, too, wanted to do their duty first and the question had been partly in jest, but with an underlying element of serious concern.

Tension built as we circled and waited. It was with significant relief that we saw our lead ship fire the signal flares indicating abortion of the mission, and they turned to lead us to our home base.

But since we had flown only as far north as 46 degrees and 46 minutes, and not north of the 47th degree parallel, and had to abandon the target, we did get a single credit for this mission instead of a double credit. We would gladly settle for a single credit in view of the tragic outcome in casual-

ties of what would have become essentially a suicide mission if we had continued on to the target without sufficient fuel to return to our base.

While we never made the trip to Breslau, it had become, for us, one of the more memorable targets. Life is that way. Some of the more memorable events in our lives are those that we anticipated with heightened concern or anxiety, but which never really ever happen to us. In spite of all information available, one could never be completely certain exactly what might be expected on a given mission. We had found that what had expected to be "milk run" could, in some cases, become one of our hardest missions in terms of losses and conversely, on rare occasions, a notoriously dangerous target might, for our group at least, prove to be a rather routine mission on that particular day. The element of the unknown and unexpected was always present.

GROUP MISSION #75

George L. Fernandes (736)

After many years, details will be lost in the maze of the human mind, however, traumatic events seem to become sharper as years go by.

Such is the case with Group Mission #75, and the vivid memories of Bombardier George L. Fernandes. This particular mission was Georges' 41th. After this mission, George was to return stateside. It goes without saying that fate had different plans for him, for on this mission all hell broke loose, and George found himself in a "survival" mode. Here then is his account:

The day started out like any other day in this nightmare called WWII. We got the word about our target during briefing as we had in many other briefings.

The target was the oil refinery at Blechhammer, Germany on the Oder river and southeast of Breslau. Sometimes, in the telling by others, dates and targets can get confused, but when one lives the experience, there is no way anyone can erase that moment from ones mind. The group was led by Major Jamieson, the Group Operations Officer, with the 736th flying the slot position of the diamond formation. During combat when an aircraft is hit, it isn't unusual for confusion to set in, and some of the detail of that moment is lost due to that confusion. I cannot recall the extent of damage to the aircraft, suffice to say we could not keep up with the formation. Falling away from the safety of the other guns in the formation, we were set upon by German fighters, mostly ME-109's. I cannot recall how many planes were lost on that mission. I can only recall my bailing out, and subsequent landing approximately 100 miles east of a landmark town called Dubnica. I know this to be a fact, as we were forced to bail out 20 Kilometers southeast of Trencin, Slovakia.

We were taken prisoners by Slovaks operating as part of the German Army as soon as we hit the ground, and taken to a prison camp located just outside of Bratislava, Slovakia. We remained there almost 2 months, until the night of 1 September 1944, when three of us, Hede, my radio operator, a tail gunner from the 737th named Coleman, and I escaped from the camp making our way to the mountains. Slovak people helped us along the way. About the third day after our escape we joined up with four Slovak soldiers on their way to join the Partisans. My companions and I went to a partisan camp near Brezova, Slovakia with the Slovak soldiers.

The camp was attacked by Germans and we were forced to split up into small groups and make our escape. This occurred on the 8th or 9th of September. With 5 American aviators in our group, we made contact with people in a small farming community. We were given shelter for the night. One of the men in that community took us to the home of Michal Knap, a baker in Krajne, Czechoslovakia. With the help of Mr. Knap, we were able to stay in Krajne for approximately three weeks.

Mr. Knap was in close contact with the partisans, a fourth of which were Russians led by a Russian Lieutenant whose name I cannot recall. I was present on several occasions when Partisan leaders called at Mr. Knap's home to eat and talk with various friends and discuss operations.

Near Krajne, in the middle of September, the Germans unexpectedly came into the town early in the morning, and the Russian Lieutenant was killed in the ensuing skirmish. My radio operator was in the home of Mr. Knap, and I was at the home of a friend of Mr. Knap. We were spirited out of town to a farm owned by a relative of Mr. Knap. It was not considered safe to return to town which was a mile and half away, therefore we stayed at the farm. We sneaked into town on occasion to listen to BBC broadcasts from Mr. Knaps home. In the latter part of September 1944, arrangements were made with a Russian Officer, to transport us to Banska, Bystrica. With a small band in tow, we departed for Banska, Bystrica. Our group, led by Ladislav Posina (Pavel) and Doctor Jan Lesak ("Doc Ivan"), consisted of 20 Slovak soldiers, 7 American flyers, 1 Russian flyer, and 1 Englishman. After much detouring and circling, we reached our destination on night of 19 October 1944. The entire 30 kilometer trip was made by "Footmobile" to Zvelen where we took a train into Banska, Bystrica, and turned over to the American Military Mission. Ladislav Rosina, and Doctor Lesak had performed in a splendid manner.

However, resistance collapsed at Banska, Bystrica 25 October 1944, and the town was abandoned making it necessary for my group, along with the remnants of the Czech Brigade to scatter to the mountain tops. On 10 November 1944 the Brigade was attacked by the Germans in force, and the brigade was forced to retreat to the top of the mountains in a raging snowstorm. After all of our freedom since being shot down, we were finally captured after our separation from the brigade and taken to the jail operated by SS troops at Zilna, Slovakia on 12 November 1944. During our captivity at this time, the Englishman named Wilson, was tortured brutally, and finally executed as an espionage agent. The Luftwaffe learned of our presence, and we were removed from jail and returned to Germany where we remained until 1 May 1945 when we were liberated by the Russian Army.

BANSCA 2

Bob "Lefty" Hede (736)
My reflections

Most of the mission was pretty much the way it was explained by our Bombardier. He was gracious enough to leave some "holes" in his story to allow me to make my contributions to the downing of "OUR BABY". It kind of hurts when you lose an airplane in combat, especially if it was the airplane you flew over from the states. It was like losing a

flying buddy that you knew for a long time.

This, my 42nd mission, ended up to be my last. There were times when I thought I had "bought the farm". Luckily, as you can see, I just "rented" the farm for a few months. Since this episode in my life, I can reflect and state that I am glad I didn't become a foot soldier. My experience as a prisoner of war has made me a firm believer in that regard. I can recall our coming off the target, and getting hit by flak and making it necessary to drop out of formation. Almost immediately, we were set upon by fighters and finally had to bail out near the town of Trencin, Slovakia. I had been wounded with shrapnel in the left shoulder, right upper arm, and left foot. The injuries made it impossible for me to release my rip cord, so my Armorer-gunner, the dressed up name for waist gunner, released my pilot chute allowing my main chute to open when I slid out of the waist window. The waist gunner had his problems too, having one of his hands shot up.

After bailing out, we watched as our bird, "OUR BABY" went into a small mountain. Everyone had bailed out, but our tail gunner did not fare as well as the rest of the crew. Archie LaFonda, had agreed to fly with us, as the gunner scheduled to fly the tail gun position had cancelled out for some reason or another. As Archie jumped, it is assumed that he struck the vertical stabilizer, rendering him unconscious, making it impossible to pull his rip cord. His body was located, with the chute unopened by Catholic Nuns that were affiliated with the local hospital. They buried Archie in Trencin, Slovakia. His grave was maintained, and adorned with fresh flowers every day until the end of the war, when his body was shipped back to the states. Archie now lies in the cemetery in Visalia, California. Our crew was originally assigned to Lt. George Ellis. However, he was subsequently killed on a mission March 1944.

I was fortunate enough to have been taken by Slovaks to the State Hospital (Catholic) for surgery and treatment. Nick Yezdich, the Armorer-Gunner was also taken there but treated, released, and taken to soldiers (PW) camp before I was released from the hospital. On 24 August, when I was released, I was sent to the camp at Grienvova approximately 14 kilometers North East of Bratislava, Slovakia. There were about 30 other PW's in this particular camp.

On 2 September the Slovakian army revolted, turned Partisan and released everyone to the "hills". After a few hours in the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, I ran into my bombardier, George Fernandes, and Howard Coleman, an Engineer from the 737th. Needless to say, we stayed together. We received food and information from the local inhabitants who directed us to eastern Slovakia called Banasca Bystrica that was under the control of an "OSS" mission and partisans. Their mission, of 17 men, was to harass the Germans, and to fly out as many "airmen" as possible that reached the area. We reached Banasca Bystrica around the end of October!!

The strange part of it all was the feeling of having reached U.S. soil. The mission was also responsible for maintaining an "airfield", which at best was a grassy field where "That other bomber (B-17) would drop supplies, then land and pick up any "stray" airmen and fly them out. There was a total of 33 men there. 16 downed aircrew members, and 17 "OSS" personnel. It rained four days, grounding all aircraft assigned to the supply and rescue missions. On the fifth day, the Germans were closing in on the area and everyone, including the 2nd Check Brigade, had to take off for the hills.

After a few days of traveling "helter-skelter" with literally thousands of hysterical partisans who were throwing away their rifles, guns, etc., we decided we would have a better chance of getting to the Russian lines if we were in smaller groups. Ferdnandes, Coleman and I, along with two infantry men (Special Operations personnel), a Captain W. McGregor and 1st Lt. Ken Lane headed off on our own. Ironically, on November 11th (Armistice Day) the lot of us were recaptured by a German Patrol. We were marched 30 kilometers to a town called Mikulash. I was sent to a army hospital for treatment of boils, and blisters on my feet while others were sent to Germany.

After two weeks, I was sent to a "Political Prison" in the town of Ruzemberck, Slovakia where I was locked up in solitary confinement for 54 days as a political prisoner. Although I was in 'GI' clothing, they had taken my dog-tag while I was in the hospital at Mikulash, and later deny that fact. They considered me a partisan and after every session of questioning, they said I would be shot!! Thru the intervention of a Slovak guard at the prison, I was transferred to another floor in the prison that was controlled by Slovaks, not the Germans. The guards name was Franticek Kremar. He smuggled a letter out that I had written, stating where I was being held prisoner.

On 11 February 1945, I was sent up into various PW camps in Germany (Frankfort, Wetzlar, and Nurnberg). I had been marched to Nurnberg to Moosburg about 40 kilometers North of Munic, when the camp was liberated on 29 April by old "Blood and Guts" Patton. It was learned later that Patton was 75 miles into enemy territory. Upon liberation, delousing, and debriefing, I was finally released to return to the U.S. of A, being discharged September 1945.

BANSCA 3

Seen through the Eyes
of
736th Armorer-Gunner
Nick Yezdich

It is interesting to compare the differences of an experience as lived by three crew members on the same bird that was shot down during that mission.

The original impact following the realization that the aircraft has been severely damaged, is, for the most part identical. However, it is interesting to note that of the three who jumped, the Armorer-Gunner Nick Yezdich had an experience all of his very own up until he too was on the run . . .

Sometimes we get injured, and in the heat of the excitement, it goes unnoticed. My wound went unnoticed until I found myself attempting to assist "Lefty" Hede with his problem of getting out of the aircraft safely, and being able to jump and deploy his chute. That was the time I found out about my own wound. Even then I could not remember it hurting all that much, until I reached the hospital. I, like the others were immediately rounded up upon landing. Those of us that were injured, were treated quite well by the Slovaks. We were taken to a State Hospital run by Nuns. I was a patient there for about 10 days, and then flown to Bratislava, then from the airport by car to the army barracks in the same town. There were approximately 25 American POWs, including some of my crew members.

Two weeks later, we were moved to a very small camp a few miles from Bratislava. We were imprisoned there until

approximately the 5th of September 1944. Just three days prior to that, three of the prisoners escaped. Two of those were from my crew. What makes this so interesting is the Slovak guards had developed a disliking for, and had enough of the Germans, opened the gates of our camp and told us to take off!! We didn't stop to ask questions, and away we went. Walter Benner, Maurice Terry, and myself formed our own small group evading the Germans that were looking for us and the other "escaped" prisoners the following morning. It had to be a big surprise to them to find their prison camp with so many vacancies. It was nip and tuck for a few days until we ran into some Slovak partisans in the hills and they gave us a ride in a flat-bed truck. It goes without saying that the word of the day was caution, as the Germans were all over the place looking for their "misplaced" guests. Later on we were fortunate enough to get a ride on an oversized row boat which was used as a ferry. It operated by pulling on a cable. A few days after the ride in the boat, we met an old couple in the forest. They gave us a lift in their cart which was pulled by two oxen. A few days later we were on a train which took us about 15 miles. We were packed in like sardines, but it sure beat walking.

The three of us finally reached Banska Bystrica the last week of September, and the OSS was there. They took pretty good care of us, giving us food, and lodging. October 7, 1944, six B-17s, with 32 P-51s for cover, landed and unloaded equipment such as bazookas, ammunition, medical supplies, and gasoline for the Slovaks. When all the unloading was accomplished, 26 American flyers were loaded aboard and returned to Italy. I am sorry to say, that many of the POWs that escaped, (or should say let go by the Slovaks), were put in German run POW camps. I later learned that the OSS group stayed behind to continue their mission, and that their mission was ill-fated.

Unless one has experienced loneliness in a strange land, and the joy one experiences when he or she sees a happy, familiar smiling face, no words I can put down here will ever do justice to get that feeling across.

CLYDE'S LAST MISSION

Condensed from a story by Leon O. Burke (738)

If I recall correctly, the mission was #80 for the group and was on the 16th of July, 1944. The target was Munchendorf Airdrome in the Vienna, Austria, area. We were using fragmentation bombs which required our planes to spread out wing tip to wing tip at the time of the bomb run to create a wide bombing strike pattern and thus, left no room for maneuvering or evasive action by individual planes.

The mission went routinely as we circled, assembled and climbed to altitude. The sky was blue and clear and the sunshine was bright at the cold, high altitude.

As we turned on the IP to the target with our plane flying the #2 spot of deputy lead, Clyde began to use the bomb-sight so that if the lead ship was lost, we would have the target in our sights, and when our bombs dropped, the other bombardiers would "toggle" their bombs to drop at the same time as we should have "toggled" on the squadron leader's drop.

Almost simultaneously, the concussions are heard and felt closer than usual and it seems to be on all sides of us.

There is a slight lurch of the ship and a metallic rattling and tearing as a multitude of greater and lesser bits of flak tore through the ship. The left inboard engine gave immediate evidence of malfunction and loss of power and the nose tried to yaw to the left.

The intercom crackles and Clyde's voice says "Burke, I'm hit!" I respond: "Hold on. Help will be there as soon as possible."

The PDI needle is still moving; Clyde is working the bomb-sight, tracking the target. Our position is almost normal. Clyde calls out: "I'm hit bad!" I tried to reassure him. The lead ship's bombs start to fall, one by one, at precise intervals. As I see the leader's bombs first appear, I feel our ship start to lighten as our bombs make their departure. "He's done it!" Clyde got his bombs away! Intercom reports from the nose: "Clyde is down and not moving." 1st Lt. Phil Millis, the copilot, agrees to go to the nose quickly to see what needs to be done for Clyde. Phil reports from the nose: "Clyde is unconscious." Phil first found blood coming out of the heavy winter flying suit at its junction with the boot. Further search revealed that blood was coming from the body or thorax. At last, the bloody trail leads to Clyde's right armpit where there is a flak entry wound which is no longer bleeding actively or significantly.

We can cruise with three engines. Now that we are over water, I decide to leave the formation and radio the flight leader of the decision. We trim the controls for the best balance of maximum lift for minimum power and start trading altitude for speed, stretching for the best forward speed and distance for each foot of altitude lost.

I leave the cockpit and Phil flies. Clyde is pale and obviously unconscious, but warmer than I expected considering our altitude. Oxygen is going in his mask. I don't see any significant breathing; if he is breathing, it's extremely shallow. I called the crew and asked everyone to recheck the plane from their stations and call in any damage they can see. "Plenty of holes." But there is a problem in the left main landing gear wheel well! The tire seems deflated. There is also hydraulic system damage. I must have hydraulic pressure to make the brakes work and there will only be enough in the hydraulic fluid accumulator to apply the brakes once steadily.

We are almost ready to make our landing approach. "Please, Lord, you have spared me so many times. Please be with me now!" I want to land on the very first part of the runway so there will be enough runway available to dissipate our speed and not run off the end. "Careful on the approach!" We'll need to stay somewhat high so we don't have to drag the ship in under power, using our engines following their prolonged stress. The gear is down and the landing strut on the left looks as if it is okay. We will soon know if it will hold. The right wheel touches and the alignment is straight. Forward motion decreases slowly. It is time now to use the brakes — carefully. One smooth, sustained application. Drag on the left wheel is significant. The nose wheel is down and the ship tries to veer to the left towards the 455th. We're going to "ground loop" to the left! We swing in a tight, uncontrolled arc now and come to rest well down the field between the runways, facing south into the incoming planes. I give a sigh of relief and say a brief, grateful prayer as I cut the power off. The engines cough and sigh their last as the props slow to a stop.

The medics are quickly directed to Clyde and their profes-

sionalism is in evidence. They move Clyde to the ambulance. It doesn't look good. After debriefing, we anxiously inquire about Clyde and are eventually told he didn't make it. The flak had apparently caused him to bleed to death internally, as well as the initial external bleeding.

I put Clyde's name in for a Silver Star posthumously. I think he earned it. I'm afraid it's poor compensation for his parents, but there is nothing more we can do just now, and their grief may be tempered by the knowledge that he did his job well. They can be proud of him.

MISSION #84

John R. Balmer (736)

We were awakened about 3:45 a.m. as we were scheduled to fly the mission. (July 22, 1944) We reported to the Group Briefing Room to await disclosure of the target. When the curtain covering the map of our theater of operations was parted, we saw a long section of red yarn that depicted our flight path into the target and return to base that stretched from San Giovanni to the Ploesti Oil Fields. There were some groans.

After takeoff and assembly, the group assumed its assigned position in the 15th Air Force and headed East. This was to be a maximum effort. The weather was CAVU and penetration to the target was uneventful until we approached the target area. We could see huge columns of smoke from the damage sustained by the oil refineries by bombs from the groups that had preceded us. We could also see the dense smoke from the flak over the target.

Now enemy fighters began their attacks and our fighter escorts engaged them. We could see several B-24s fall out of formation and start down. There were some parachutes blossoming from the damaged bombers and, as we turned on the IP, the flak became extremely heavy at our flight altitude. Lt. Hanlon opened the bomb bays as we commenced our bomb run and he toggled our bombs on the group lead ship at the release point. Just then, a burst of flak raised our plane, holed it in several places, and severed the main fuel line to the No. 1 engine, causing gasoline to pour through the wing and into the bomb bay.

Our flight engineer, Sgt. Barry, who had gone to the waist position to man a waist gun, put on a walk-around oxygen bottle to return to the flight deck to help save the plane. With the bomb bay doors open at twenty one thousand feet, without a parachute, with gasoline flooding the bays, he negotiated the catwalk successfully back to the flight deck.

During this time, I ascertained the damage, feathered the propeller to No. 1 engine, and shut off the fuel pump. I alerted Captain Clay to our situation as he was extremely busy keeping the plane on course in formation as the group was still in intense flak and preparing to rally right for the return to base. I alerted the crew to stand by for instructions to abandon the aircraft as we now feared a fire in the bomb bay. All members remained calm and at their stations.

As we cleared the flak area, we soon left the group as we could not keep up on three engines and were now alone. However, shortly another crippled B-24 took up position on our left wing and another B-24 on our right wing. I looked right and saw a P-38, one of our fighter escort, preparing to join our formation. He was on one engine. We adjusted our

airspeed so all the aircraft could maintain position in our formation and headed West.

Now we had a makeshift element of four crippled aircraft that was extremely encouraging as we could lend one another fire support if attacked by enemy fighters.

After what seemed like hours, we crossed the Yugoslav coast and were over the Adriatic and felt relatively safe. The P-38 pilot thanked us, waved, and took off for home. Over Italy, the two B-24s left formation to return to their respective bases.

It was now late in the day and, as we circled San Giovanni Airfield, it never looked so beautiful and inviting.

Lt. Clay made a picture perfect-landing, we taxied into our hardstand, parked, cut the engines, and finally relaxed.

Our squadron members thought we had been shot down, so we received quite a reception, a belated debriefing, and a few drinks.

As we returned to the squadron, we began to realize we had just successfully completed our thirty-eighth mission, saved a valuable aircraft and rendered assistance to three other aircraft, and our crew was intact.

We were all able to complete our tour of duty without a single abortion of a mission on our record which was a testament to the ability and dedication of the Group ground support units and each individual member of our crew . . .

MISSION #93

From a letter by Robert E. Rinker (739)

The mission for the day as listed in my log book was the oil fields of Campina, one of several in the area which also contained Ploesti. I was to fly with a new crew as co-pilot. Exact number of missions experienced by this crew were few, less than five . . .

We had an uneventful take-off and took up our designated position in formation. About 30 minutes from the target, oil pressure failed in number one engine and prop was feathered. We were unable to keep up with the formation and the decision to turn back was made. Shortly after leaving the formation and headed for home, oil pressure loss was experienced in number 4 engine which soon resulted in feathering the prop of that engine. With only two engines running, altitude was being lost. A request for a heading to the island of Vis was made of the navigator. His reply was 270 degrees. He was questioned as to whether this route would keep us clear of any flak areas and he replied "affirmative". Shortly thereafter, the skies blackened with flak and we received some damage to number three engine causing further loss of power. The pilot and I both knew we could not now reach a safe haven and the crew was ordered to jettison all removable equipment from the aircraft to lighten the plane so as to gain every mile towards home we could get. It was also decided that the aircraft would be abandoned when we reached an indicated altitude of 6000 feet. The crew was so advised and were ordered to bail out when the emergency bell sounded.

Memories of 25 days earlier were going through my head as, on July 15, 1944, I had to bail out while returning from a mission over the Ploesti oil fields where the aircraft was heavily damaged by flak. Reached the Yugoslavia coast that time and landed in the Adriatic Sea just off the Island of Hvar. But, that's a different story.

The bell was sounded and the crew started jumping. We all exited the plane safely but that was the last time I recall seeing any member of the crew.

I came down through a tree adjacent to a corn field. The chute canopy was caught on the top of the tree and I was suspended so just my tip-toes touched the ground. That was after my first striking the ground and banging a knee pretty badly. The tree sprang back up pulling me back to my upright position.

I could hear voices coming from natives as they approached me. I struggled out of the parachute harness and went as fast as I could on all three appendages, two hands and one foot as my knee felt like it was broken. Time proved otherwise. I hid in the corn field until all voices subsided and decided to high-tail it in the direction of home. I traveled as much as I could in a westerly direction but always as close to some type of shelter that I could find, i.e. woods, corn fields, etc. Barking dogs always alerted me of my approach to houses. When this occurred, I would have to back track and take another course. I have no idea of how far I traveled that first day before nightfall overtook me. I was completely exhausted and slept that night in a piece of woods under the stars.

The next a.m. I took up my journey westward again and was soon faced with a deep ravine. I could see a small stream at the bottom of the steep bank and I was extremely thirsty from not having had anything to drink since the morning before. Fright was giving away to thirst and hunger so down I went.

The escape kit, as you know, was a plastic container that contained many goodies. Empty, the container was to serve as a canteen and necessary purification tablets were contained among the contents of the kit. After reaching the stream, I walked out on some rocks to the middle where the water appeared clearer and was running faster. I stooped to fill the container when something compelled me to look up. As I did I observed a man walking towards me who apparently saw me at about the same time I saw him. I quickly drew my 45 revolver and pointed it at him. He fell to his knees and started babbling at me in his foreign tongue. Naturally, I could not understand him at that time, but later learned he was asking not to be shot. I didn't want to shoot him, either, but would have had he made any loud boisterous calls or noises or had he tried to attack me. We looked at each other for several minutes, neither moving or saying anything other than his first utterances. He finally pointed at the water and kept saying "nay dobra" which I later learned meant "no good".

He pointed up to the side of him and motioned me to come and kept gesturing like he was drinking from a container. For some reason, I trusted him and motioned for him to go and I followed. He led me to a fresh water spring that gushed from the hillside and he got down on all fours and drank. He then motioned for me to drink. Again I became cautious, believing he would jump me while I was drinking and I shook my head "no". Guess he understood what I was thinking and stepped back a distance and motioned me to drink. I judged the distance between him and me and decided I had a gambling chance if he attacked me as I drank. I still had the upper hand being armed with the .45. He appeared completely unarmed.

After drinking, we sat on the ground staring at each other. He finally muttered the word "Americanski". I shook my

head "yes" and he started to move quickly towards me with a great smile on his face. I again leveled the .45 in his direction and he stopped in his tracks. He was all gestures and smiles. I thought I would take a chance and say "Tito". I first drew a star in the dirt and laid the ear phone connector from my flight helmet. After I did this, I said "Tito" and he shook his head "yes" and put out his hand to shake mine. I reluctantly put out my hand and we shook hands and he displayed a true attitude of friendliness. We stayed together all that day sitting by the spring until dusk when he got up and motioned me to follow him. After about an hour hike we came to a small cluster of houses. I hesitated to go farther but somehow he made me feel that all was o.k. so I continued with him.

He took me in a house which I presume was his home and informed the lady of the house I was American. She immediately went into an angry outburst and apparently told him to get me out of there. I gathered this from her tone and gestures. He consoled her after a fashion and I was permitted to stay. They gave me food and drink and I was permitted to sleep on a couch in the house. I stayed in this house for several days and nights being let out only after dark, and then only to the pig pen to do my daily you-know-what.

The fifth night in the wee hours of the next morning, five men came to the house and I was the center of conversation. I was asked if I could speak German, French, Italian and shook my head at each inquiry. They made me understand that it was time for me to move on and that the next night I would be taken to a field where I was to stop and put my hands up over my head. That night a man came to the house and motioned to me to follow him. We walked about 15 min. to a field where he stopped me and motioned me to raise my hands above my head. I did this and he gave out a low whistle. A whistle reply came from my right and I looked that way. Almost instantly a man sprang up from beside me, grabbed my hand and off we went on a run.

We walked all that night until daylight and took up refuge in a piece of woods. He gave me cheese and bread to eat along with water to drink. We waited there until dusk when a young man came and took me away from him to a house where I would be confined during the day for the next 5 days. At night time I was let out of the house for exercise and other duties. The house was very crude. Roof was of straw and mud. Floors were of dirt and heavily infested with fleas. These fleas were a constant menace to me. Their bites would sting and itch. As a pastime I would remove my pants and pick off the fleas. They would cluster under the extra material of the hems. I stripped the wire out of my heated flying jacket that I still had and tied the wire around my ankles and wrists as tight as I could and still maintain circulation. I did this in hopes of keeping them out of my pants legs and shirt sleeves after I had picked the clothes clean. What a nightmare this confinement was. I was so tempted to run but after giving it thought, I did not know where to go. After all, I was being fed as it were and being housed as bad as it was.

The young boy who picked me up and brought me to this house would leave daily and not come back till dark. We tried to converse but could not make each other understand our language.

On the 6th day of confinement in this house, I heard hobnail shoes and voices. I thought the jig was up and that the Germans had found me. A knock came upon the door and

I called out "come in". What the hell, I might as well call it quits and give up. The door opened and in walked a British Army Officer, one member of a 5 man British mission who were working with the Partisan forces in Yugoslavia performing acts of sabotage and espionage. I sure was glad to see them. They took me along with them and I stayed with them for a week or better. During this time, I accompanied them to drop areas where Allied aircraft would drop supplies for the Partisan troops.

The Commandant of the Partisans informed the British that I could not stay with them any longer and I would have to leave with some new recruits who were leaving for the training grounds located further into the mountains.

The next day we said our farewells and started off on foot which would turn into a six day and night march. I looked on my escape kit map and figured that we covered about 180 miles during that period.

We were fired on on three different occasions by enemy troops but luckily suffered no casualties.

Many exciting things happened during this hike but it would be too lengthy to account all of them at this time.

At the end of my travel, there was an Allied landing strip where C-47's landed briefly and unloaded supplies and took on Partisan troops for transport to Italy for training.

The first aircraft that landed that night was piloted by a Russian who would not let me board the aircraft. I was told not to despair, that a 2nd aircraft would be in and that I would be able to board as it would be piloted by an English airman.

This became a reality and I was flown to Bari and later returned to my squadron.

MISSION #97 1/2?

Bennett O. Moyle (736)

On or about 15 August 1944, we briefed for a mission to bomb the Synthetic Oil Refinery at Odertal on the Oder River boundary between Germany and Poland. Lt. Col. "Bud" Skinner, who had recently assumed command of our squadron, would be flying his first Wing Lead. The remainder of our crew were relatively new to the squadron. You might say I was "Mr. Whiskers" on that crew as it would be my 37th sortie for mission credits of 52. On or about 16 August 1944, we took off, formed up and sashayed out over the Adriatic Sea, Yugoslavia and Hungary. It was a beautiful day, almost peaceful. We had been briefed for a smoke screen defense at the target so we were hoping that "Mickey" would be able to keep his APQ-13 on line long enough to accomplish the bombing. No such luck. As we progressed northward over Hungary past Lake Balaton, "Mickey" announced great difficulties with his equipment. Col. Skinner signalled the Deputy Lead to take over and we moved into Deputy Lead position. Shortly before reaching the Initial Point for our bomb run, we noticed a Major from the forward crew of the now lead aircraft at the waist gunners' position. He was making frantic hand signals. We finally got the message that their aircraft had experienced a complete electrical failure, no bomb sight at all. It was too late to change position so our crew took over the bomb run without further ado. The Bombardier and I referred to our photos of the target. I depressed the nose turret guns to their minimum position for the best possible view of the

ground. We were able to pick out a course line and a speed line leading through the central powerhouse of the refinery from features on the ground outside the very real smoke screen the enemy had deployed. The Bombardier did a magnificent job and next day recon proved that we had dinged that place up pretty good. The remainder of the mission was relatively uneventful. All 304th Wing aircraft returned safely.

THE DAY WE WERE BOMBED

Philip L. Schultz (739)

September 2, 1944 we were being briefed early in the morning for a 5½ hour mission to Nis marshalling yard in Yugoslavia. Over 360 men were seated in the briefing room in the wine cellar of the old stone farmhouse which had been remodeled into Group Headquarters. A horrendous explosion shook the building, red flames could be seen through the ceiling high windows and the curtains were standing at right angles to the wall. "We must be under attack!" we thought. Many of us panicked and rushed to the double doors leading up and out of the briefing room only to be met by many trying to get in the room. We saw a pile of men at the door that had to untangle itself and return to their benches when it was announced that one of our planes had caught fire and detonated the load of 500 pound bombs! We had just experienced the hellishness that the recipients of our bombing raids went through!

The briefing resumed and at the close of the Chaplain's benediction, another plane blew up. After it was determined to be safe we were transported by truck to our aircraft. We checked our aircraft carefully. On return from our mission, we found a piece of shrapnel as big as a pie plate when we lowered our flags. No structural damage to the B-24! Because the Bombs went off at ground level, no one was hit by flying metal, but many were injured trying to take cover. This incident is not mentioned on pages 54-57 of the "Flight of the Liberators." Was it censored or not reported to J.S. Barker?

DOWN OVER BELGRADE

Glenn W. VanBure (739)
Mission 114

We were shot down after bombing Belgrade, Yugo. Bill Drozan was our pilot. Our Navigator, Neil Bentz, was not on that as we had a squadron lead navigator. Norton Eubanks was bombardier. Wendel Martin was nose gunner. Geo Juth, engineer. Walter Gunning, Rad. Operator. Geo Boldt, waist gunner, Ray Campo, ball gunner, and myself tail gunner. For some reason we did not drop bombs the first pass over the target but did the second time around. At that time, we were hit heavily by flak and lost one engine and another one damaged. We lost formation and were returning to base at about 8000' and were near the Yugo coast and hit again so bad we had to bail out as soon as possible. Since we were near the coast occupied by German Artillery, Geo, Ray, Martin and myself were captured immediately. Eubanks, Gunning and Juth were far enough in the mountains and were able to hide and later Partisans found them and were able to get them safely back to Italy. The pilot land-

ed near a village and was hidden for a few days then turned over to the Germans. They brought him to the jail we were being held in, (he had a broken ankle) then in a few days took him to an officers camp. We were then taken to Budapest, Hungary for interrogation then on to Stalag Luft IV near the Baltic Sea. While there, we arrived on 10th Oct I think, another Sgt from some crew that Juth later flew with said they were shot down and he and some others were able to escape for awhile but were in a position to see some of the crew that were captured immediately and those were lined up and shot by Germans. On 5th Feb. 45 we were marched out of P.O.W. camp and headed south west toward American Inf. lines, as Russians were coming from the east. We walked on the road about 500 miles, until April 26th when we were liberated by the 104th Inf. Div. near Bitterfield, Germany. Martin, Campo, Boldt and I were in the same camp. After liberation, we eventually got to France and got back to U.S. I think on June 6, 45. One of the events I remember very clearly was, since I came down directly over a village occupied by German soldiers was they shot my chute full of holes with rifles and machine gun fire but didn't touch me with a bullet. I swung into the side of a rock house about 15 ft from the ground and fell to the ground and when I came to the Germans were all around me and jabbering and pointing their guns at me and would probably have shot me but a German Officer came running over and made them lower their weapons. It wasn't long then until they brought the other 3 crew members in and put us in a small room with a guard.

MISSION #5 MUNICH, GERMANY

John Nichols (736)

On or about October 5th, our crew went on a mission to Munich, Germany. It was a day-time flight and on this occasion our group was flying air force lead. Our plane, "Sonny-the-Sailor" was flying No. 3 position in the squadron.

The trip was generally uneventful until we reached the I.P. leading to the Munich W. Main Marshalling Yard. At this point, flak hit our No. 1 engine and we feathered it. Next, we took a direct hit on #3 engine, which also had to be feathered. After bombs away, we lost a lot of speed and altitude. Our Group Commander, upon observing our condition, called for fighter cover for us. Shortly, we heard a P-51 pilot say "got you covered, boy!" He covered us until we reached the Adriatic Sea by the island of Viz. By that time our altitude was down to about 6,000 feet even with 10 deg. flaps.

At this point we decided to head for Ancona — a British Lancaster & Wellington Field. The rationale for this was that — as we had pulled excessive manifold pressure on our two remaining engines to maintain altitude — I was afraid of losing another "fan"!

Upon arriving at Ancona I kept our altitude at 3,000 feet and executed a fighter approach to the runway. Upon coming in for the landing, No. 2 engine went out and I had to make a dead-stick landing, and they had to pull us off the runway by tractor!

This was our 5th mission. The next morning the Engineering division told us that we had been hit in number 3 engine by a "dud" 88MM shell! They picked the shell out of the engine intact! Two weeks later, in our tent, Charles Berman,

the navigator, looked up from writing a letter and said "you know, Jack, that shell could have killed me". I answered, "yes Chuck — all of us."

GROUP MISSION 148

Recollections of T/Sgt Frank E. McKimney (737)
(Bonafied Static Chaser)

It's rather strange when one looks back on an event that sticks in the mind like super glue. In my recollections of my tour of duty in Sunny Italy, group mission 148 represents one of those events. I remember the conversation over the intercom, when we discovered that one of the engines was on fire and the pilot and co-pilot (Tolson and Swofford) were unable to get the situation under control, no matter what action was taken.

Even now as I think about it, it was all so incongruous and unreal. We were all very young, I being the oldest of the lot, but still too young to be scared. However, I got the impression that if it continued to burn, it would eventually get to the gas tanks in the wing, and the aircraft would blow.

After a lot of babbling, somebody said, "Let's get the hell out of here before this damned thing blows up." The bail-out was over Yugoslavia. I cannot recall the exact spot of our bailout. As I recall, navigators never get lost, only confused, and our navigator was as confused as most and due to the ensuing confusion was not able to get a "fix".

I remember trying to determine whether to try to bail out from the rear bomb bay or the hatch in the rear of the plane. After watching a couple of the guys jumping from the hatch, I decided to take the same escape route. On the way out, I hit my head on the opposite side of the hatch as I tried to tumble out. I ended up with a cut on my forehead, which could have been from that attempt to exit the airplane . . . or it could have been caused from a blow of one of my shoes when the chute opened (my shoes were tied to the parachute). If I ever remembered anything about that mission it was the jolt I received when my chute opened. Now I know why they insisted that the straps be pulled up to a point where the wearer walked practically stooped over!!!

The fear of jumping from an airplane, and depending upon an unknown factor to operate correctly, was soon forgotten as I experienced the thrill of floating down to earth in complete silence. Suddenly, I realized I was getting closer to the ground, and the descent appeared to accelerate. I remembered too late the instructions we had been given to maneuver the chute when nearing the ground. As a result, I landed on a large rock (about three feet tall), and fell off onto my back . . . luckily, no damage to the bod, only the spirit!!

What surprised me most upon landing was the appearance of two women from out of nowhere, who began arguing over possession of my parachute. Their appearance was startling, as there was no indication, on my descent, that the area was inhabited. There was no sign of any houses of any kind in the immediate area. To preclude any injury from the feminine onslaught, thru sign language, I gave them my knife and suggested they divide the chute between them. Much to my relief, they accepted my suggestion.

Shortly afterward, another crewmember who landed close by, and whom I shamedly cannot remember, came over

to me. We were then joined by some men who turned out to be Partisans. They took us to a house in a small village close by. Several other crew members were already there. Hay was placed on the floor of an upstairs room and blankets placed over the hay. I will never forget how well these people treated me. They fed us well, although they did not have much for themselves. There was a coffee, but that shortage was substituted with a good supply of hot chocolate which they apparently had taken from the Germans.

These people were large, healthy, rugged people. One could see they were of the land.

After three or four days had passed, we were taken, by truck, to another small village by a large lake. The names of both escape me. I do recall the villagers taking to boats, catching a large batch of eels which were prepared for a banquet type lunch. It appeared to me that the whole village attended.

After lunch, we were loaded aboard a sailing craft, taken across the lake, which required several hours of sailing, to a large town. There were soldiers there, and we were housed in a barrack type building. That night we ate in a large dining room with a group of soldiers. The following day we were driven by truck, down the coast. We reached our destination — Split.

At this point we were turned over to an English Naval Officer, who was living in a large villa right on the seashore. We remained with him for a couple of days until he arranged for us to be transported to Italy on a small steamer. The trip from Split, Yugoslavia to Bari, Italy was an overnigher.

What has always been on my mind concerning this entire episode was what kind of impression did we make on those mountain people — What did they think of us? I have wondered about this for a long time. Will I ever get the opportunity to find out??

GROUP MISSION 159 THE LONG WALK HOME

By James A. Angelucci/Bernard Sanderson (736)

One of the most important thoughts that crosses the mind of an Airman shot down during an enemy airstrike is to get word home to his loved ones that he, the airman, is live and as well as can be expected. This particular mission must have caused Angelucci and Brown (now deceased) a few moments of concern. This, in reality, is two episodes of one mission.

Episode one as recalled by Bernard Sanders begins:

This was a night mission. It was a first — more or less an experiment — for the Americans. The British had been flying at nite, the Americans flying day missions to take advantage of our Norden Bomb Sight with its greater accuracy.

We took off for Munich on the evening of 22 November 1944. Well into the flight we began to have engine trouble and finally lost an engine. We continued, because we had enough power, and bombed our target. Our target was a munitions factory, and our accuracy was of prime importance as this factory had a labor camp for a next door neighbor. We were directed to avoid hitting the concentration camp.

During our "target run", we thought we saw exhaust flame from another plane tracking us from a distance, con-

sequently, we received flak over the target.

Returning home, we lost another engine. I was in the rear of the plane with Brown, our waist gunner, and Jim Angelucci, the tail gunner. We were informed by intercom that we had lost a lot of altitude and were heading into some of the highest peaks of the Alps without enough engine power to climb over them.



After a lot of maneuvering we were told to prepare for bailout. When the signal came to jump, Brown jumped first, followed by Angelucci. I was thinking of the odds; jumping in the darkness, in the mountains, and the probability of capture by the Germans. I elected to take my chances with the plane. I positioned myself for a crash . . . it never came.

I wondered why we didn't crash, when the door to the rear area opened up, and there was Gentili, our Radio man. We had made it past the highest mountains, but we still had too little power and were losing altitude.

We finally made it out of the mountains to the coast of the Adriatic Sea. We were afraid to ditch, as the floating power of a Baker-24 was similar to a large rock. However our pilot, Nichols, and Co-pilot Kain, with the assistance of our Engineer Bill Kohler, barely got us to a South African fighter base just behind the lines. We had no hydraulic power and they had to stop this big bomber on a little fighter airstrip. We just knew we would run over some of the guys asleep in the tents at the end of the runway . . . but somehow we didn't . . . Meanwhile, over the Yugoslavian skies, a different episode of this mission was being played out by Angelucci, and Brown . . .

As fate or luck would have it, we listened as the drone of our crippled plane disappeared into the night, and the unknown peaks of the Alps. Little did we know what had transpired until months later. In the meantime, the need to survive was upper most in our minds. When we bailed out, we were in the vicinity of the border of Northern Italy, and Austria. In order to prevent being captured, Brownie and I had to stay and walk the crest of the deep snow-covered Alps, as the roads were heavily patrolled by enemy troops and Fascists. We begged, borrowed, and at times, had to steal to survive.

We evaded capture many times, playing cat and mouse with the enemy. We walked for 81 days through the Carnic Alps and into Yugoslavia where we had to cross the German-Yugoslavian battle lines, and then to the coast where we were picked up by a British Destroyer Escort. When the destroyer put out to sea, we became entrapped in an enemy mine field. Finally, we backed out safely and made it across the Adriatic Sea to 15th Air Force Headquarters in Bari, Italy. It was a relief to me, as I immediately wrote to my parents assuring them that all was well with me, to find out my letter reached them long before a telegram informing them of my Missing In Action status. I have since learned that Robert Brown had passed away in the year 1974. He was my crutch

through this entire ordeal, and I, Jim Angelucci, hopefully was his.

NIGHT MISSION TO MUNICH, GERMANY NOV. 24-25, 1944

John Nichols (736)

The 15th AAF decided in the winter of 1944 to send bad weather sortie flights to selected targets. Our crew was selected for this assignment since I had a large number of instrument hours. A few ships in the group were equipped with flame-dampeners on the manifolds to reduce identification in air at night. Our briefing at Group was at 22:30 P.M. Nov. 24th.

At midnight we prepared to take off in a "L" Model "Mickey" ship with a radar operator making a total of 11 crew. Our mission was to hit the West Marshalling Yards of Munich, Germany. Our "flimsey" called us to take off in #005 from Cerignola at 00:40 on the 25th.

We were loaded with 500 RDX's with two bombs for delayed action and 1 bomb a propaganda bomb. Our call signal was "Schooner" and our time to initial point at Lauderbach, Germany was two hours and 11 minutes, climbing to 20,000 feet from take-off. The cloud cover was about 9/10's. Return was estimated at 06:28 on Nov. 25th.

Our take-off and climb out was uneventful. Our navigator, Charles Berman, plotted our route to avoid "flak" concentrations, and we arrived at the "initial point" at Lauderbach at the assigned time and at 25,000 feet. However, our engines had overheated during the last part of the climb so we decided not to try for the 26,000 foot bomb level that had been assigned to us, but stay at 25,500.

We picked up our heading at initial point of 49 deg. magnetic. Shortly after this we received a flak hit in No. 1 engine. After this event, we lost power in No. 4 engine, but did not feather this engine. Upon reaching the target, Munich West Marshalling Yards, the bombardier, Keith Johnson, released the bombs on the target. As we rallied right upon bombs release, the tailgunner, Angelucci, called to say we had a German night fighter behind us and asked for "evasive action". I called for confirmation of this report from anyone. One of the waist gunners reported seeing two bluish lights to our rear. Could be a JU88! At this point we attempted to undertake evasive action — a corkscrew-like maneuver. Unfortunately, due to one engine out and another pulling only lightly, we fell into a tight spiral. The weight against the pilots' wheel was too much for us to pull out and we lost about 10,000 feet without gaining control of the ship. I immediately gave orders for the crew to prepare to "bail out" as we were in the high mountains of Southern Germany. At about 12,000 feet I called the crew to "bail out" and Brown, the Asst. Engineer, and Angelucci, the tailgunner, did. They landed on top of a high mountain in complete darkness.

At that stage, in order to reduce our excessive air speed, I pulled all engine throttles back completely, and both Kain, the co-pilot, and I finally managed to pull the ship out of the tight spiral and back to level. Our navigator then stated that

we were beyond the highest mountains, so we cancelled the bail-out order and proceeded homeward. Enroute, we had to feather #4 engine.

I decided at this point to go to an emergency base. We had Gentili, the radio operator call "Buckshot" at Rimini Airfield for instructions.

Our new heading took us to Rimini, near the front lines. "Buckshot" gave us instructions and changes in headings. As we approached the field we observed mortar fire across the lines. We landed at what we discovered was a British Spitfire base. The runway was only 1500 feet! We ran off about 50 feet more. When we got out, a full British Colonel congratulated us saying "a magnificent landing, Lieutenant"! Later on we found that No. 4 engine had burned out due to the new flame arrestor or dampener! Our trip home two days later took us through some rough zones in a six by six Army truck. We observed many burned-out tanks and other war vehicles.

On February 13, 1945, Angelucci and Brown came back to the squadron after being in enemy territory for some 81 odd days. A US-OSS mission had located them in Germany and had helped them get back to Italy. We were delighted to see them! Especially, the pilot!

GROUP MISSION 170-A

By Thomas F. Stack (737)
The Supreme Sacrifice

There are many stories of heroism, sacrifice, and hardships endured by fighting men all over the world, however, this one must be singled out as one of the most bizarre of many that have been told. The majority of the tale is from the pen of Thomas F. Stack, with some accounts for detail presented by Hodgeman and Eldrige, Jr. One very impressive part of this astounding tale is the name of the B-24 involved. There were many names given each bird, and those names cherished throughout the years. The name given this bird was in gesture of appreciation for the patriotic purchase of War Bonds by the:

ANCIENT AND HONORABLE ARTILLERY COMPANY OF MASSACHUSETTS

Forty-seven years ago, at this writing, the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts slammed into a mountain in the center of Yugoslavia at approximately 7500 feet and at that very moment, or a few seconds before, our lives were changed, never to be the same again.

Willis, Hank and Sig hit the silk as did I. Herb rode it in with Pop who gave his life to save that of his fellow crew members. Who can ever forget the torment of that day? I'll never forget it, nor the reasons why it occurred, nor the results lasting therefrom. On the icy grounds of Belgium the German Army had broken through the American and British Forces and surrounded them at Bastogne. They were driving a wedge to the sea and could have taken hundreds of thousands of prisoners. The Eighth couldn't get off the ground because of the fog and rains in England . . . the Ninth couldn't help from the South because of weather as well . . . the Luftwaffe was flying at tree top level supporting the troops blasting tanks, artillery and infantrymen . . . and the decision was joined by the HQ of the Supreme High Command that the Fifteenth would fly every available B-17 and

B-24 as far North, and as far East, to draw the German Airforces from the front lines.

Berlin was the target for the B-17's, and the oil refinery at Oswiecim in Central Poland belonged to the Fifteenth.

The 304th was one of the lead Groups but shortly after we passed out of Austria into Hungary, and beyond the point of return, one engine on the old "Ancient and Honorable" started to fade. We dropped out of formation, only to fall in with the group behind us. We started to lose altitude, and went down from 28,000 feet down to 25,000 feet. We finally lost the engine, went down a thirty minute bomb run to the target with other groups, toggled with one of them, and took a hard right for home. On the way South, streams of bombers were still coming North as you'll recall but not for long, because we were soon down to 22,000 feet and fading fast. There were fighters out there that day and luckily they didn't see us or we would have been easy prey, gliding along at 140 knots, at desperately low altitude if we wanted to clear the Alps and the mountains in Yugoslavia and would have been sitting duck for any ME-109 if our Guardian Angel hadn't been working over time.

I remember so vividly as we left the southern border of Hungary and started across the tip of Eastern Austria, heading of the eastern part of the Alps to be sure to clear them, and then into Yugoslavia when a second engine started to freeze. It was a minus 50 degrees outside!!

Pop and I were on the intercom without a break. He assured me that we could stay airborne with two engines, but we might have a tough time clearing the mountain range on the Yugo side of the Adriatic. We talked about possibly landing at the emergency field on the Isle of Vis but we also talked about how hazardous that would be. So many 24's had actually landed there and ran into a mountain at the end of the runway to be demolished and to be killed, so that wasn't the most pleasant idea.

I was navigating by dead reckoning all the way. Couldn't see a thing above or below as we were thick in the soup and the only thing we could go by were the compass and the altimeter. We started slipping altitude with the second engine acting up but we were moving southwest through Yugoslavia and getting close to the decision to go to Vis or not. If we cleared the mountains on the West coast of Yugo, we still had 110 miles to go over the Adriatic, where many tried and many failed.

We were headed Southwest, and engine two was getting worse. Pop then ordered everyone on intercom to dismount all of the 50-calibers and all of the boxes of ammunition and throw them and everything else heavy out, except the life raft, in case I proved to be the worst navigator in the history of the Fifteenth!

The icing on engine two continued . . . soon we were down to 14,000 when it quit altogether.

Pop desperately asked for position then and only by dead reckoning I was able to estimate we were nearing the West coast of Yugo, and still had to climb over mountains 7000 to 9000 feet high. He didn't think we could hold and while everyone else was off intercom throwing out the heavy stuff, we dropped to 12,000 feet. Pop then asked for a direct Easterly heading. That wasn't difficult arithmetic at all, I just said "90". He slowly turned the Ancient around so we could head for the flat valleys in the center of Yugo and hopefully get out of the soup and crash land without getting captured.

Then the third engine started to ice up and Pop, always

casual and never alarmed, showed by the tone of his voice that he knew we were in trouble. I was standing in the dome looking at him as we talked. He asked how sure I was we weren't over the Adriatic. I assured him by my calculations we were probably no more than 40 miles from the sea. He stated that if we kept losing altitude we couldn't clear those mountains and so the 90 degree heading followed.

All of this happened within a span of 10 to 15 minutes. He tried desperately to clear the carburetor on number three and he told me while everyone was working to unload the heavy stuff, that if he couldn't get the ice out we'd have to bail. He kept thrusting full throttle in brief spurts trying to blow the ice out. Every few seconds another blast.

Then all of a sudden, while I was standing in the bubble and we were talking and one more thrust didn't work, he uttered those words "bail out"! He continued: "Everybody bail out!! Confirm waist! Confirm Nose! Confirm deck . . .!"

I got down out of the bubble and told Willis "get the hell out, bail right now!" I yanked the nosewheel open and I'll never forget his last words before he clipped the chute on . . . "Dammit Tom this will be my thirteenth jump! I don't want to do it!"

I repeated "Get the hell out — let's go — we haven't any time!" He sat down on the front edge of the hatch and started to roll out, hands above his head, and all of a sudden his chute was caught on the rivets that held the night curtain. He was out of the plane, all legs and arms flapping around, but still sitting at my feet!!!

All I could do was say a quick prayer, brace myself, and give him a kick in the rear . . . out he went. I got back in the turret, still on intercom, and Pop was still trying to reach the waist to confirm the bailout. The bell had been shot out and he knew it was inoperative. When he saw my face again he yelled at me to clear the nose right now. I responded "Roger and out" I stepped down and the last words I heard before I disconnected my intercom was "Waist, confirm, God sake confirm!!"

Willis was gone. I yanked my headset off, left my 45 hang by the hook, I'd already stuffed my K-rations in my leg pocket, when I heard a terrible roar of both engines, the typical sign that the pilot had put all throttles full speed to keep it flying straight for the few seconds he needed to get out of his seat, down the steps into the bomb bay and jump. That's exactly what I thought Pop had done, but when I rolled under the bomb bay, the doors were open only 6", having to be cranked open manually, because the hydraulics had been shot out. What a sickening feeling going through my stomach. I pulled the cord and I got a sickening feeling someplace else as all of you remember so well! Then it dawned on me what Pop had said one day in Wyoming when he scared Willis and myself into a big "brownout" as we were both down in the nose working. He went into a 90 degree bank against the side of a hill, went over it, and when he approached the next, started to slow down as if he was going to land on it. His explanation that he was just practicing to land "on the side of a mountain if he had to some day to save us all."

That's what he was trying to do, save all of us.

The three in the waist were off intercom, trying to unload our heavy cargo and never did get the bail out sign. Pop knew that. He hadn't gone full throttle and left his pilot seat. He was trying to get as much power as possible to fly out of the soup and find the mountains to land on. When Herb saw

a couple of chutes open, and then seconds later start to see the tree tops coming at him, he and the other two hit crash positions behind the bomb bay, Herb behind the bulkhead, and the other two against the platform by the side windows. And then the terror. Tree top after tree top chopped off by the twirling propellers, then the body of the ship and finally the impact.

An oxygen tank had been ripped loose and tore its way through the skin of the plane, and after coming to, Herb was able to crawl through. All he could hear were the moans of his buddies, but couldn't see them. He crawled away from the ruins of the old "Ancient and Honorable" who died on her 77th mission along with the hero by the name of John Keyes Wolff, a junior at Notre Dame University, and a native of Raleigh, North Carolina, USA . . . He was only 20 years old.

It was December 18, 1944

It was 2:38 P.M.

Over 47 years have passed, but it seems like it was only 10 minutes ago . . . just 10 short minutes ago.

After a terror-filled week, climbing up and over snow-packed mountains, dragging Sig along on a hastily built sled, through enemy held territory with the help of the Partisan Underground, and three days and nights in a boxcar, stopped often by Germans for inspection, our journey ended in Sanski-Most.

It was Christmas Day, 1944. We found the town church and its priest. Neither of us understood the other until I explained to him in Latin what we wished. On that Christmas Day all but Herb received Communion. At that time we had no knowledge of the crash. Later that afternoon, however, we learned that Herb was in the town hospital. A wonderful Christmas present for all of us!!

When we visited him, we learned of the tragic crash that took the lives of "Hungry", Andy and Pop. Our joys were now mixed with sorrow, and our prayers for all three commenced then and have continued all of these 47 years.

Now it is 1991. Even though at this particular writing it is not the Yuletide Season, in memory of "Hungry", Andy and Pop, each year we would like to wish everyone, for those three brave men, and from all of us, now and as long as we can remember . . . a truly "NODLAIG SHONA DHUIT!!" (In Gaelic, that's MERRY CHRISTMAS!)

MISSION 180

Robert J. "Skeets" Wells (739)

Lt. F.K. Vosper crew

We flew several missions in December and January until the end came on Mission 180 to Linz where we were hit by flak. No bombs were dropped and the Group proceeded on to Salzburg. Because we were stragglers, we were hit again. As we passed over Graz, the pounding we took there just about finished the usefulness of our airplane. Two other airplanes joined us for mutual protection but we couldn't keep up so went on South alone. Holes in the fuel tanks shortened our range so that we were forced to bail out over Kossinje, Yugoslavia.

Flt. Eng. Joe Prikryl and I were picked up by Ustashi and spent three nights with them until rescued by Partisans who took us to a cave where they were hiding "Lucky" Russell, radioman and Charles Taylor, cameraman. By this time, the

rest of the crew were in German hands and headed North to sweat out the balance of hostilities in prison camps.

When the snow melted enough to travel, we were taken to a British mission and passed from group to group by the Partisans on to Zara. We were returned to Allied control on 6 March and very happy to be "home" again, I had dropped from 160 lbs. to 124 lbs. and I know the others didn't eat any better, but we were at least free again.

On return to Stateside, Joe Prikryl and I spent three days at the Pentagon for Intelligence debriefing and then home. I was sent to Ft. George Wright Convalescent Hospital for treatment of a back injury caused by hitting a tree on the bail out.

GROUP MISSION 181/182

By Don Jandernoa (736)

"... And now the rest of the story"

Our target January 31, 1945 was the Moosbierbaum Oil Refineries, Moosbierbaum, Austria. As usual, the day started out like most of our missions, and, as usual, we went about our business of preparing for it by performing the usual Pre-flight inspections after all of the briefings, and our preparations required for all missions. We had sustained flak damage while over the target. I requested a damage report from my Engineer. His report was that we were losing fuel due to damage to a fuel line. To substantiate his report, several crew members reported excessive vapor from the rear edge of the wings. We prayed very hard, hoping it was condensation and not fuel. To play safe, I had the engineer transfer all the gas to other tanks, hoping to make it back to an emergency landing strip to the Isle of Vis . . . Vis was only a few miles off the return flight path.

We remained in formation to minimize being picked off by those relatively few enemy fighters that preferred to pick on strays. About the time we decided to drop out of formation and head for Vis our gas ran out. We lost both number 3 and number 4 engines. I headed toward the Yugoslavia mainland about 15 miles distant, but soon lost number 2 engine, followed by intermittent operation of number 1.

We spotted the mountains of the Isle of Hvar to our right as we headed eastward. The mountains were sticking through the low clouds. Even if we had good visibility there was no place to land there. I did not relish trying to bring that Davis-winged aircraft down on the water for fear I would land it too high and not be able to walk it in. So I gave the order to bail out — bail out we did. All eleven of us. Ten landed on the island which was about 60 miles below the German lines. The natives were friendly and very supportive. There was also a stripped down PT boat there with an English crew who were assigned to pick up American flight crews. The Captain's name was Woodrow Wilson McQueen from Tayport on Fife, Scotland. He remains a friend to this day, and now lives in Los Angeles.

As the last to bail out, the strong north wind did not blow me far enough south, so I landed in a cove on the north shore of the island.

Suffice to say that I could not survive in the cold salt water for an hour but by the Grace of God, and the urging of a 14 year old boy, I was able to enjoy an additional 46 years of life.

"... And now the rest of the story."

I was later told that I was in the cold water more than an hour. It really seemed like a life time. A time that I admit to having had a very pleasant conversation with my Lord. When one is blue from nose to toes and solely dependent upon an inadequate Mae West life jacket, it's easy to talk with the Lord. He must have been listening because those fishermen, at the insistence of a fourteen year old boy, finally left their shoreline shelter and, after rowing several miles, pulled me out of the water only minutes before I expected to slide beneath the surface for the last, and final time.

I had never learned until recently that these same fishermen had been strafed by a German Fighter plane just a few days prior. For fear of being strafed again, they darn near waited too long.

As you might expect, there is much more to this story in respect to bailing out, the hour wait, expecting the worse, the last minute rescue, being thawed out with my feet in the oven of a cook stove, being toasted by the town of Starigard, etc. I have made notes many times and one of these days I will take time to write the whole story.

The final chapter . . . February, 1990, I received a letter from Vinko Pakusic of Starigard, Hyar. Vinko was the teenager who kept urging his dad and four others to rescue me. Needless to say I had invited this young man and his family to be my guest for three weeks in this great country of the United States. He accepted.

MISSION 181

William M. Newton (739)

I don't remember why we were forced to land at the small emergency air field in Pec, Hungary. We had been briefed on its existence just that morning. I believe we were so low on fuel that we felt we would not make it back to the base.

I had just joined Pritchard's crew as Bombardier/Navigator and I remember having trouble finding landmarks because the ground had a light dusting of snow. When we found the field I was amazed at the small size and its proximity to the city. I figured it might be bail-out time again. However, we spotted another B-24 at the end of the runway so Pritchard decided to give it a try and did a beautiful job of landing, we stopped rolling about 50 yards from the other plane. They had just landed but had not been as lucky and ran into a red brick house at the end of the runway.

Several of the crew were injured so I broke out our first aid kits to bandage them. I remember being angry at finding that the morphine syringes had been stolen. I had nothing but aspirin to give them. One man had a scalp wound and I dusted it with sulfa powder and gave them penicillin tablets. When I met them again they told me the Russian medics washed off the sulfa powder and took away the penicillin tablets, preferring to use their own medicines.

Both of our crews were taken into Pec and put up at a nice hotel that had been taken over for the Russian officers. It was the first time this kid from Cincinnati had seen a bidet.

We ate with the Russians at about 6 am every morning. If you didn't show you didn't eat! Breakfast was usually a meat stew, heavy dark bread and warm beer and vodka was offered too! There were no other places to eat in Pec because the Russians had confiscated all the food and any thing else they could carry. Pec had just been through 24

hours of rape, plunder and pillage by the Russian soldiers.

Around the second day we were there, we met three American doctors who had been studying medicine in Pec when the Germans invaded and had been in hiding since. We were happy to see someone who spoke the language so fluently. One of them became our interpreter during our stay. The doctors had married Hungarian girls and had great connections in Pec. We met Hungarian families thru them and had interesting conversations with people who had suffered thru the German occupation. We Americans were a curiosity in Pec and it was difficult to walk the street without being stopped several times for conversation and questions. Occasionally a Russian soldier, usually drunk, would stop us and jabber away trying to get some point across. He would be led away by one of the men who seemed to follow us where ever we went.

The day before our fuel was to arrive, the field was attacked by two German fighters. We had been told the field was protected but the planes strafed the field at will. We had to restrain our crew from running to the plane to fire back with the planes guns. When our fuel arrived we decided to take off immediately taking the two wounded members of the other crew with us. We got out at dawn, prepped the plane, charged our guns so that we would try to defend ourselves in case the ME 109s returned. I recall three Russian officers standing by the runway curious to see if we were going to make it off the small field. From the top hatch I waved to them but they didn't bother to return the wave or even smile.

Pritchard gunned the engines, the Russian soldiers pulled the chocks and we were off just barely missing the factory smoke stacks of Pec. On the way back to San Giovanni we met no fighter opposition but did run into flak in Northern Italy.

GROUP MISSION 184

By Dick Austin and Joseph M. Trepp (738)
"Look Ma, No Hands!!"

There is one thing that has been proven to be a fact where the Military flier is concerned . . . Team work is the name of the game!! On February 5, 1945, our group was assigned the target of Regenbug, an oil storage plant. It was a nice day! Things started out normally, with wake-up, breakfast . . . (ugh), briefing, to the line, take off, assembly and enroute to the target . . . It was a nice day . . . until.

While enroute to the target our number two engine developed an oil leak. Losing oil pressure, it had to be feathered. Even so, we still could keep up with the formation, so decided to continue on. Then number four engine started to develop the same symptoms, but while the oil pressure was fluctuating, it was not completely lost, only full power could not be obtained. However, I was compelled to drop out of formation. Our altitude was 20,000 feet and still had our bomb load. We were near Salzburg, Austria. With a quick mid-air conference between myself, Joe Trepp (Co-pilot); "Cully" Culpepper (Bombardier), and Sam Kaner (Navigator), we decided to "pick" our own target. The ultimate decision was an active rail yard near Salzburg. We made our run, encountering very little flak: as we were a single ship I

assume they thought we were harmless. The crew sighting the bomb hits said we were right on target, so it was effective and could have shortened the war at least by a day or two!! We had no camera about, so you'll have to take my word for it. Returning back over the Adriatic, the number four engine started smoking, with a rapid loss of oil pressure. Proper procedure . . . "Feather #4". Now we only had two engines, numbers 1 and 3.

As with every Aircraft Commander, about this time I started to get a little worried. I had Joe contact Air Sea Rescue and the Direction Finder/Locator. They responded immediately and gave us directions to the nearest emergency "landing strip" which was near Loreto, Italy. They did a superb job of directing us "in". Just over the coast of Italy number one engine showed signs of overheating and some oil pressure loss.

At this point, Joe Trepp recalls the configuration of the crippled aircraft was half flaps, and full power on the remaining engine to maintain flight while the crew had collected everything previously that wasn't bolted to the aircraft and chucked the whole mess overboard to help lighten the load. Then came another unexpected surprise!!! The Finder radioed us, the field they had picked out, was a wet plowed field 3000 feet long, with a RAF Spitfire stuck smack-dab in the center of the field!!! That meant we really had only 1500 feet worth of runway! At four thousand feet, I gave the crew the option of bailing out, which they decided against . . . probably didn't have the dollar to pay the parachute packer!!! The sky was overcast, making the field discernable, but with the directions from the Finder, he aimed us right at the center of the "runway", with the Spitfire in clear view!! By now the number one engine had to be feathered to reduce drag. Now we had only one engine, and that one started to heat up and sputter. At this point we were descending rapidly. We barely cleared some electrical wires at the field's edge and "sat" down. A one engine landing!! No one will ever know just how frightened I was except the person who did my laundry!!! Thanking the Lord for the wet field, we just cleared a fence, touched down on the edge of the field, applied full brakes, digging three furrows in the mud with our landing gear we "plowed to a stop", just 500 feet short of the Spitfire!!! Abandoning ship, we got out and kissed the ground. That was the closest thing to turning the fabled Baker-Two Dozen into a glider. We were eventually picked up by an Army truck and brought to an advanced repair depot at Falconaira, Italy. While we were there we experienced a night bomb raid by the Luftwaffe, but no damage was done. About two weeks later, they had salvaged the plane and we went back to pick it up. We found that all of our personal gear in our flight bags had been "lifted". However, adding insult to injury, our crew was accused of stealing a "Putt-putt" for personal use back at San Giovanni. This latter was a source for an investigation by the Adjutant General's staff. Our crew was restricted for about a week as reprimand. The so called "missing Putt-putt" was never found.

I was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for this episode in my military life, but I have always felt that without the team work, and dedication to professionalism by my crew, this flying feat would not have come off as it did. Their collective efforts allowed me to devote my entire energies to flying this wounded bird to a safe landing. The medal really belongs to the entire crew.

GROUP MISSION 219

By Robert E. Dunlap (739)
"Dear Diary!"

Diaries can be a boon or a bust . . . depending on ones point of view. When attempting to recount events of years past, then a diary can be considered a boon. In this instance a daily dairy was maintained, therefore being able to "fill in the holes" so to speak, of the events immediately after landing behind Russian held lines. But first things first . . .

Many an American aircraft had the misfortune of being rendered helpless during a mission, making it necessary to land at, and utilize the facilities of a Russian held field.

Being knocked out of the sky on a bombing mission is bad enough, but when one must land at a field being maintained by a so-called ally, one would expect treatment at least comparable with what one had become accustomed to at ones home base . . . Dream On!!

We were flying as Group Lead of the Red Force on 23 March 1945. St. Valentin Tank Works in Austria was our primary target.

Order of flight for the 304th Wing was as follows: the 456th; 455; 459; and 454th bringing up the rear. Richard Hibbert, Tail Gunner on Dunlaps crew made this assessment of the situation prior to being shot down . . ." It was obvious that someone had goofed over the target. There were too many groups that went over the target area too close to the same altitude and compass heading. The enemy has us pinpointed right from the start" . . . end of quote!! When we arrived as last group over the target, the anti-aircraft flak was very heavy and extremely accurate as they used the other groups to zero in their guns. After losing 2 engines during the bomb run, and with the third engine cutting out intermitently, we left the formation and proceeded to throw everything we could get loose overboard. By lightening the load any amount, allowed us to fly for an additional hour, over heating one engine in the process.

We made an emergency landing in a field near the town of Pecs, Hungary. The Co-pilot (Hinerman) was not amused to find that someone had taken the command to throw "everything" overboard to heart, throwing his G.I. shoes, which he had placed behind his seat, overboard with the rest of the "non-essentials".

After landing we had an excellent opportunity to look the plane over. It looked like a sieve, having been adequately riddled with bullet holes, and flak holes. Miraculously no one received any serious injuries. The Co-pilot did receive a cut above the right eyebrow from flak, and the tail gunner was wounded above the eyebrow on the left side of the face. Both men received the Purple Heart for those wounds. I was most fortunate, as a piece of flak cut through my flying boot, electric boot, and a pair of socks before coming to a halt, and never drawing one drop of blood!!

DIARY ENTRY: MARCH 24, 1945, CAPTAIN DUNLAP WAS INTERROGATED ON THIS DAY. Charlie Crookshank, the Ball Gunner, continues: We were housed and fed by the Russians at a field hospital in Pecs. The first evening a group of us were loafing around in the waiting room with some Russian soldiers, which also included one stocky, young Russian girl. Someone got the bright idea that it would be funny to put a Mae West on her and then inflate it to see her reaction.

I was assigned the task to get the Mae West on her which turned out to be a big problem. Without the ability to speak her language I tried to show her what I wanted to do by putting the Mae West on myself. She stood there like a big bear with a smile on her face. When I tried to get her to put the Mae West over her head, she resisted. She was as strong as a bull and the harder I tried to put the Mae West over her head, the harder she resisted. She joined the crowd in laughter as she proved how easy it was to prevent me from doing it. Finally we reached a compromise — I quit — without ever finding out what her reaction would have been to having a Mae West inflated on her. No one else was interested in proving their manhood by taking on this bear of a woman. See how much fun can be had when you don't have anything else to do!!!

DIARY ENTRY: MARCH 25, 26, 1945. NO EVENTS OF CONSEQUENCE OCCURRED. The story continues. The next morning, (25th), we were invited to breakfast with a large group of Russian officers. We arrived late and while we were eating, the toasting began. Each place had a big glass of red wine and a jigger of vodka (my first experience with vodka). There was a soldier whose apparent duty was to keep the glasses full at all times. While trying to eat and having to rise to click glasses at the numerous toasts to Stalin and President Roosevelt, I went overboard with the drinking. I cannot recall how much I got to eat, but I still remember that their vodka was powerful stuff!!! Time passed, and later in the day I was just strolling around Pecs when I spotted a beautiful pair of hand made black leather boots. I traded a piece of my parachute for them.

Later on a Bulgarian soldier saw me wearing the boots, and wanted to know if I was from Texas. I assured him I wasn't. He spoke English quite well by watching American movies in his hometown of Sofia. He listened to the words and reading the translation on the screen, had taught himself the English language. I marveled at how well he had done. His big desire was to go to America after the war. He kept repeatedly asking why he couldn't have been born in the United States. After this chance meeting, we were stopped by a group of young children wanting us to take an envelope. The Engineer on our crew was born in Germany and had left for the United States after his 18th birthday (his mother and brother were still in Germany). He repeated to me that the youngsters wanted the envelope to be taken back with us when we returned to base and have it mailed to relatives in the U.S. after returning to Italy. The letter was cleared and mailed to Patterson, New Jersey. Later a letter was received from the Police Chief of Patterson, New Jersey, expressing his families' appreciation for the letter as it was the first news they had from their relatives since 1939!! He invited us to stop by for a big steak dinner if we happened to be in Patterson. Unfortunately I never happened to be in Patterson, nor do I know if any other member of the crew did either.

The people of Hungary were very hospitable. Parents would point us out to their children as being from America. Our Radio Operator, of Greek heritage, was invited to give a talk about America to a group of young students who were studying Greek. He reported the students gave him a standing ovation when he was introduced and also when he finished.

On the 26th of March, I, along with another airman, was invited to a country estate for dinner. We arrived to find a

high stone wall surrounding the place and a big iron gate and gate keeper. We were ushered into a large stone floor court yard where we met a very distinguished looking elderly gentleman seated at a table under some trees. The house was a large stone building, which we did not enter. A large, black, chauffeur driven car was setting in the court yard. A servant brought out some wine and later served dinner. Since we couldn't speak or understand each others language, the dinner proceeded in almost total silence. After a very good meal, we thanked our benefactor and left puzzled, wondering to this day as to why we had been invited to such a beautiful place??

Earlier, during this particular day, with another ball gunner from another crew, (also a country boy like me), we wandered around the streets of Pecs. We were approached by an older man who wanted to talk. He told us that he was from Poland and after Germany invaded Poland, he had sent his wife and son to China to live. He hadn't heard from them and he wanted us to take a message back to the Red Cross to see if they could locate them for him. He also told us that he was a college professor and teaching in Pecs. While we were talking with him a couple of beautiful young girls came down the opposite side of the street. When we expressed interest in meeting them he said he could arrange it because they were students of his. He called for them to come over and after the introductions he arranged for us to meet them at the hotel for dinner. (Can you imagine anything more like a fairy tale having 2 old carefree hillbilly boys meeting 2 lovely young ladies for dinner at a hotel?) When we arrived, the girls were waiting for us in the lobby and from there we went to the dining room. We enjoyed a leisurely full 7 course dinner and with soft music played by a small band. Conversation was limited as we were unable to speak or understand their language. Fortunately they could speak a little English and with sign language we managed to do OK. The big surprise came after dinner when I paid the bill. Without tip, the total bill for 4 was only equivalent to 35 cents in American currency. I also found that the best room in the hotel was only 15 cents per day. For a brief moment I thought that with the money from the escape kit and the material from my parachute I would make Hungary my new home!!! That thought vanished as soon as it came when I considered my problems with the English language without having to master a new one!! After dinner we went with the girls to their apartment and made arrangements to meet them the next day. Now the fickle finger of fate entered the picture.

DIARY ENTRY: 27 March 1945, we were alerted at 1900 hours for immediate shipment to an unknown destination. At 2300 hours we were loaded into open trucks, one crew each. It had been raining for several hours and continued all through the trip. This shipment consisted of 4 crews (41 men).

As the Diary Entry stated, we were told when we returned to the hospital that night, we were to prepare for immediate departure to an unknown destination, therefore spoiling our hopes to getting to know the girls better, and another sad example of the rewards of war.

DIARY ENTRY: 28 March 1945. Arrived at 0600 in Czavoly, Hungary, where we joined 47 other American airmen. All men were quartered in one 20x30 foot room with straw on a cement floor to serve as sleeping accommodations. No bedding was furnished. Food furnished was the same as

that given refugees and partisans in the same town. The menu offered soup and black bread 3 times a day. Different food of better quality was given Russian Officers and men. The 47 men we joined had been quartered in this room for varying lengths of time, the longest being 22 days.

DIARY ENTRY: 29 March 1945. The Russian woman doctor gave the men a physical, preliminary to shipment. We were transported by truck to the rail station at Baja, Hungary where we were loaded on the train. Our accommodations consisted of two 3rd class wooden coaches and 3 box cars. The latter cars had lofts built on either end of each car with straw covering. Twenty men were in each car and were given 38 loaves of bread and 3 cases of canned pork (48 cans per case, 11.5 ounces). This amounted to approximately 7 cans per man for the trip. We obtained our water from wayside wells. We departed at 1700 hours.

DIARY ENTRY: 30 March-3 April 1945. Spent entirely on train enroute to Bucharest. (speed maintained for distance computed at 2.9 miles per hour. No bedding of any nature was supplied for whole trip.)

Charlie Crookshank recalls their train was traveling east, away from the front. It was side tracked many many times to allow trains traveling west to the front. It was during one of these delays that lasted 1/2 day or longer that he and four others went out into the country to see if we could buy some chickens to eat. At one of the farms the lady of the house, after she found out that we were from America, invited us into the house and then sent her young son to the field to bring her husband and other children in. After her husband and children arrived he felt so honored to have Americans in his home that he sent one of his boys to the wine cellar to bring back a big pitcher of wine. After having a couple of large glasses of wine I declined the next go around but the Engineer (German by birth) told me that it wasn't polite to refuse drink so once again I went overboard.

During our rail trip to Bucharest, on our way to Russia, and during another side tracking, a group of us were along side the bank of the Danube river with some Russian soldiers. One of the members from another crew, whose parents were from White Russia, could speak Russian, and served as translator for us.

During the discussion, a convoy of trucks came down the road with the white star on the hood and door, along with the serial numbers on the hood lightly painted over, but still visible. One of the Russians stated that the trucks were made in Moscow. At least that was what they had been told. When they were told that the trucks were made in the United States and sent to Russia on a lend-lease agreement they were not convinced. The Russians left me with the impression that they knew very little about the United States.

Another example occurred when they told us of Roosevelt's death after a delay of 2 weeks or more, and that Stalin would have to take over as we had no one else to take Roosevelt's place. They were not aware that the vice-president succeeds the President if anything happened to him.

DIARY ENTRY: 3 April 1945. American Mission Officers met us at the Bucharest Station and transported us by bus to a convent converted to accommodate crews preparatory to returning to bases in Italy. We were deloused, bathed, and reclothed. Meals were given to the men by the nuns. The menu consisted of soup, meat, potatoes, salad, tea and dessert. Airmen with dysentery and diarrhea were placed in dispensary under special supervision.

After we arrived at Bucharest we were fed and quartered in a convent run by French Nuns. That night I woke vomiting and with diarrhea. By morning I felt weak, but otherwise OK. Later in the morning I went with 2 other crew members to downtown Bucharest to look around. With my limited time in Bucharest, I found it to be very clean with wide streets and a very modern look. While I was wandering around, I found a barber shop with the walls and ceilings covered with mirrors. Since I was in need of a haircut, etc., I went in and had the works, including a manicure and massage. I don't remember what it cost, but whatever it was it was worth it.

DIARY ENTRY: 4 April 1945. After much confusion concerning whether we were to stay and be flown back to our bases, or continue on to Odessa by train. We were finally notified at 1800 hours to prepare to entrain at 2000. The American doctor detained 29 of the original complement. He deemed them unfit for further traveling. At the station we were assured by Russian Officials that we would be supplied with 1st Class transportation, 3 adequate meals per day, and sufficient water for the trip which was to last 1 day and a half. The men were given two 1st class coaches with 5 airmen to each compartment.

DIARY ENTRY: 5 April 1945. Upon arriving in Galati, Rumania, at 0800, we inquired of the Russian train commandant as to food for the men. We were informed that no food or water provisions had been made for the shipment and that the men could go into town and purchase their own provisions. We were reloaded at 1200 in trucks and transported across the Russian border 18 kilometers to Reni, Bessarabia. There we were quartered in 3 small rooms of a peasant house. No straw was provided for the floor. The conditions were so cramped that several men were forced to sleep outside on the ground. No meals or food was supplied at Reni.

DIARY ENTRY: 6 April 1945. We were informed that no transportation would be available until 2000. No food was furnished this day. At 2000 we loaded into portions of two 3rd class Russian coaches. A crew to each compartment.

DIARY ENTRY: 7 April 1945. Arrived in Benderi (Tighina, Bessarabia) at 1600. The complete complement of men waited until 2400 inside a small room approximately 15'x15' in the railroad station to obtain shelter from the rain. No food was furnished.

DIARY ENTRY: 8 April 1945. At 0030 we were loaded into one car of the aforementioned type and continued on through the night arriving in Odessa at 0730. Baggage was put on one truck and the men marched 5 kilometers, in the rain, to our present quarters.

Charlie concludes . . . When we arrived in Odessa we were kept at the repatriation camp under armed guards. Before we arrived in Russia we were allowed to carry our weapons and had no restrictions on our movements. When we entered Russia this all changed. One thing I will remember forever, was the Russian food . . . The meals consisted of barley (prepared like oat meal) for breakfast and dinner. Lunch consisted of Dill pickle soup (with not too many pickles) but enough to give the soup a salty taste, plus a small piece of black bread and coffee.

Captain Dunlap's brief observation of the situation experienced by his crew is as follows:

A. When forced down in Russian controlled territory, do not expect much in the way of material comforts. The Russian standard of living is greatly below that of

Americans. Their food is inferior, sleeping accommodations are poor, and Transportation facilities are below our standards. Don't expect too much and you won't be disappointed.

B. Authority in Russia is centralized in Moscow. Before granting your smallest request, the local authorities must receive permission from someone higher up, usually from Moscow. This will account for the great delay which takes place before the smallest favor is granted or denied . . .



MEMORIES OF ST VALENTIN TANK WORKS

From letters to Charles F. Crookshanks (739)

MISSION 219

Douglas Newcombe (737) from a letter to Charles F. Crookshanks (739)

The St. Valentin Tank Works mission was the second worst one I went on and the memory is still vivid. Leading the second squadron I watched many planes get hit as we approached the target and mostly they were lead planes of each squad. I remember calling my people and telling them to close it up and keep a sharp eye for a quick turn at the end of the bomb run. When the bombs went out I turned sharp to the left on better than a 45 degree bank but we still got hit. The first hit took #3 engine completely off of the wing and the second took out the bottom walk brace in the bomb bay and the doors as well. We did have a couple of injured men on the flight deck but those in the tail were all OK. We held as lead for a short while losing altitude slowly until we were out of the area and then I dropped down and turned it all over to Coleman. When we got over Switzerland I told the able crew members to bail out but I intended to take it home with the injured members. Nobody left and we threaded our way through the Alps and did make it back to Cerignola. The men in the waist actually came forward by hanging onto the sides of the bay to get up into the safety of the flight deck once we got down to a decent altitude. We landed "belly up" because of a jammed gear. The plane broke apart when we landed but there were no more injuries. If they had stayed in the waist they might not have made it as the entire tail section disintegrated. It was a mess.

MISSION 219

From a letter to Charles F. Crookshanks (739) by Noah B. Turney (738)

On that mission, we were in "flak" for a long while, #3 engine was shot out and one of the others giving us trouble. We made it back ok, but had to crank the gear down and when we did the right tire was in shreds. It's the only thing that prevented our wing from disintegration. Dobbs, our pilot, made a great landing, on one wheel and held the bad one off as long as possible, turned the plane off the runway and when she stopped we all scattered. No fire. Counted 70 holes, my roughest mission.

MISSION 219

From a letter to Charles F. Crookshanks (739) by William P. Riddling (738)

... Yes, I remember the mission well. As you will recall the flak was heavy and it was on target (hitting us) from the first burst.

I remember seeing you hit and I was the one that recorded your "Suitcase" call. (That was the code word that you were heading toward Russian territory.) I saw Maj. Dunlap when you all got back and talked to him. As I recall, the #1, #2 and #3 aircraft in your box did not return to base that day and there were many others.

I was in the high right box (above and to your right) and we took a lot of hits, but as I recall, all seven of us got back to the base that day. I remember, I was flying tail-end charlie in our squadron box. I used to hate that position. However, we had no one wounded on our aircraft. The high right box was from the 738th Squadron.

P.S. — Maj. Dunlap was promoted on the day you were shot down. He didn't put on his gold leaves until he returned to the group. I talked to him that day. Also, if you look at the aircraft formation on the back of the Ops Order you will see Ryder's name in the #6 position in the box I was in. Ryder and his crew were killed a few days later as I recall.

MISSION 219

From a letter to Charles F. Crookshanks (739) from John M.V. Hagen (736)

... I remember the mission very well. Because of air traffic we used no evasive action flew at the target on a straight line for over five minutes. The last 3 were in heavy flak. I was knocked off the bomb sight — was able to crawl back, get back on target and had very good hit — one of the navigators was hit in the thigh with partial severance of the sciatic nerve.

The airplane was riddled with holes, radio shot out, hydraulic system destroyed — bomb bay doors knocked out. The engines were ok and though every fuel tank was hit, the self-sealing system worked. We were able to fly home alone. Our number three plane went down, the deputy leader brought the Blue Force home. We flew a few more missions. Thank God the war ended.

ST VALENTIN TANK WORKS

By Edlone Simmons (739)

Our crew was flying deputy group lead in "Baker" posi-

tion on March 23rd 1945. The target was the tank works at St. Valentin, Austria. Due to the radar ball, our ball gunner, Bertram Henderson, was not on board. Due to assignment to deputy lead, we had an extra navigator, Solomon Stone, and an extra bombardier, Phillip Cohen.

At the pilots' command, I came down from my top turret to be on the flight deck during the "bomb run". I donned my flak jacket and kneeled on an extra flak jacket between the pilot and co-pilot. We had experienced accurate flak before but nothing like this. This was the most accurate and intense we ever experienced. The plane was literally bouncing from the concussions of exploding shells. We lost power and altitude near the end of the "bomb run" and dropped out of formation. Gasoline was spilling into the "bomb bay" and being whipped into a spray by air from the open doors. We jettisoned the bombs immediately but the bomb bay doors would not close hydraulically, so I cranked them closed manually.

Two engines were disabled so we got rid of all weighty objects to try to hold altitude. The propeller on one engine would not "feather", allowing it to windmill and cause further complications. The pilot and I decided to risk feeding the two good engines via the cross feed valve to avoid an electrical spark.

The two navigators set a course for a landing strip in Hungary controlled by the Russians — we didn't make it. The fuel supply barely showed on the sight gauge, so the pilot wisely selected to set down in a plowed field. I manually cranked own the landing gear, and deployed the nose gear manually.

The Hungarian people and some Russian soldiers showed almost immediately. We had fled the plane immediately after it stopped, fearing it would catch fire. The Russians never let us go back to retrieve our A-3 bags and parachutes which we could have used later to keep warm and trade for necessities. However, the escape kit with the \$48 in gold seal currency, the long underwear I had on, and the .45 caliber pistol were a big help.

The Russians transported us by truck to a small town in Hungary pronounced Sha-voy or Cha-voy. We were joined there by some other air crews in similar circumstances. The Hungarian people were glad for us to stay in their homes and shared what they had with us. When enough air crews were assembled, or at the Russians' convenience, we were transported by truck to a railroad yard at Dumbovar, Hungary. There we were loaded into a freight car equipped with a platform in both ends to make upper and lower sleeping arrangements. The boards were covered with straw. Our provisions for the journey were a large wooden crate filled with dark bread and a couple of cases of some kind of canned meat. No water but we had purification tablets from our escape kits. We scrounged a lot of food, mostly potatoes, that we fried with the fat from the canned meat.

We went south into Yugoslavia, and then east into Rumania and Bucharest. There we disembarked and went to an American mission, where we were deloused and issued clean OD uniforms. Orders came from Moscow to proceed by rail to Odessa. So, into our old flight clothes and into the freight cars. North, then east, passing near Ploesti, I think — due to the number of crashed B-24s, and to Odessa. Housed in a huge building overlooking a large city park, we met many liberated American prisoners of war and refugees of different nationalities awaiting transportation. We

were interrogated by Russian officers very fluent in English. The food, sleeping accommodations and sanitary conditions were bad.

After many days of waiting, we were loaded on a British ship and proceeded from the port of Odessa on the Black Sea through the Dardanelles Straits, the Messina Straits and on to Naples where we were debriefed and sent back to San Giovanni in time for the V-E Day celebration. Later, we flew home via the southern route.

MORE ST VALENTIN TANKS WORKS

Transcribed and edited from an audio tape of
Carroll E. Griffin (736)

March 23rd '45 — it was 12:30 in the afternoon when we went over the target at Linz — they really zeroed in on us. We got one direct hit — an .88 mm shell must have gone clear through the tank — if it had exploded on contact I wouldn't be talking to you. As we flew away from the target, I could see gas streaming out from the ruptured tank in the wing, and, as the plane turned, it moved the exhaust over and it made contact with the gas and set it on fire. I stood there and watched it until it got up to #3 engine, when I called the pilot and told him #3 was on fire and he said: "I think it's time to get out!" We were only about 30 miles, maybe 45 km, from Linz, when we bailed out over a little Austrian village called Heathlau. I hadn't been on the ground any time until I heard a German observation plane, so I grabbed up everything I had and hid under the parachute. I heard voices, so I climbed up to the crest of the mountain where I had landed, and saw about a thousand skiers in a bowl over the side of the mountain. I started down the mountain — stopped part way down for the night — dug a hole next to a big pine tree — wrapped up in my parachute and stayed there until daylight. Came to a cabin — and went in. Vacant, but there was a straw-covered bunk in back, so I locked the door, wrapped up in my parachute and tried to get warm. Later, I heard voices and 6 or 7 civilians and one German soldier came and knocked on the door. Before I opened the door I took my .45 off and stuffed it under the straw. The first thing they asked me "Where is your pistol?" "Nichts pistol" and they never checked that cabin out. We walked down the mountain and got down to Heathlau, maybe a mile and a half, and took me into, I suppose, the Mayor's house. They had already picked up two of our crew members — our ball turret gunner, Clifford "Cowboy" Darnell and our waist gunner, Vaughn Weir. Stayed there a couple of days until a couple of soldiers came and picked us up and took us into Stoddard, where they had an interrogation center. "Cowboy" had a terrible head wound and his story was that some civilians had gathered him up after he bailed out and had whacked him over the head. They had him digging his own grave when some German soldiers came along and took him away and delivered him to the Mayor's office. They sent a doctor in to check him out and stitch him up. We stayed there two or three days until a couple soldiers came to take us to the interrogation center which actually was in Munich. About half way through the trip, we ran into two or three other soldiers who had the rest of our surviving crew. Someone told me the story concerning Charles Mitchell, I believe, the

tail gunner, who landed in a tree. There were some kids there, 14-15 years old and assumed to be in the Hitler Youth Organization who let it be known that he was to drop his pistol and then unbuckle his chute and drop down. When they started down the mountain, they shot him three times in the back with that .45 pistol and he bled to death in a short time. The rest of the crew was there except the tail gunner and the pilot. The co-pilot, George Hoover, stated that, the last he saw of the pilot, Charles Faxon, he was between the seats and headed out. He never did see Faxon get out of the plane. The nose gunner, DeTino, was burned real bad and was sent to a hospital in Freising, Germany. After interrogation, we were sent to Stalag VIIA, I believe. We mainly survived on our Red Cross parcels, and two or three boiled potatoes a day and brown bread covered with sawdust. (No space to repeat the ingenious ways these men contrived to improve their lot!)

The American Third Army liberated us and finally flew us to Rheims, where we had a medical check-up, then shipped us to the coast of France to wait for a ship home.

The 15th AF BECOMES TACTICAL

Two Outstanding Series of 15th AF Ground Troop Close Support Tactical Missions
Col. Wm. R. Large, Jr, USAF, Ret

As the Strategic Air War was being brought to a close, the 15th AF was absorbed in Tactical Air Force Operations after March 1945. On 9 and 10 April, German positions were attacked on the 8th Army front prior to the ground force operation of crossing the Senio River. Then, on 15-16-17 April, ground positions including Hqs and troops were attacked on the 5th Army front, prior to the break-through at Bologna.

The missions were planned in great detail, executed with the highest degree of precision with the full force of the 15th AF, and were a complete success.

The ground rules for the 9-10 April Mission were, to the extent possible, that the same crews would fly both missions in the same formation for each mission.

In addition, key crew members (Manzo, Bombardier of my crew) were flown over the mission route in P-38s to familiarize themselves with the route and target area.

(Lt. Col.) Large was the Group leader on both days of the Red Force, Grant was the leader of the Blue Force.

Minimum aircraft and crew changes occurred on the 10 April mission from the 9 April mission.

Elaborate precautions were taken to assure target identification and to prevent bombing of our own forces.

Smoke signals marked the initial point; white panels (with smoke markers) and radio aids defined the route into the target; white T markers indicated the location of the front lines, with smaller red fluorescent panels (were) located in front of target areas; yellow smoke markers were located along the line of T's to aid in their recognition.

Further, flak was set to burst at 15,000 ft to further identify the front lines — and center location of each target.

In addition, bomb bay doors were opened over water. Racks were salvaged after electrical release to insure that no

hung bombs were left in the bomb bay, and doors were closed prior to crossing into friendly territory.

Also, fighter a/c flew against flak positions prior to each attack.

As the attack formation was an 18 ship front, as a point of interest, I initiated and briefed the pilots on a new "rally" procedure for both missions. Rather than the normal turn, with a/c slowly moving back to the box (route) formation, the rally was executed by a 90 degree left turn by 3 ship elements from the frag formation, going to rated power, with each element free to move on its own within the column of elements.

As soon as the last element was clear of flak, he reported and the Lead then reduced power, with the group reforming back to its' normal route (boxes) formation.

The tactic worked very smoothly — this same procedure was used on the 25th April mission on the rally (by boxes) from the Linz target.

As noted on the Mission Summary of the 9 April mission, a ball turret gunner fell from his aircraft and did parachute to safety among Allied (friendly) forces.

As indicated on the Mission Summary of the 10 April mission, one aircraft crashed shortly after take off. (Pilot, Newcombe, flying as the Deputy Lead of the No 2 Box of the Blue Force) six killed, five hospitalized.

Data on the 25 April 45 mission on Linz, the last mission flown by the Group, was included because it is mentioned in the April History, with particular attention noted concerning bombing accuracy.

On the rally, pilots were quite enthusiastic, saying things on the radio "— this is the steepest turn that I've made since flying school."

Had to tell them to quiet down!!

The job done by the 454th Bombardment Group during the 9th and 10th support of the 8th Army was so excellent as to warrant a commendation by Gen. Fay R. Upthegrove.

The missions flown on 15-16-17 April 1945 on the 5th Army front against German Hq and ground positions were different from the 9-10 April mission in that they used different bomb loads (100# GP clustered for the 15 April and 250# GP clustered for the 16-17 missions. Also, the attack for each mission was a nine ship front for each unit attack.

Col. Way and Grant led the First Attack Unit, and Fryer the Second Attack Unit on 15 April.

Capt. Grant led the First Attack Unit and Fryer the 2nd on 16 April, although bombs were not dropped because of 9/10 cumulus at target.

Capt. Grant led the First Attack Unit and Fryer the 2nd on the 17 April mission.

Again, as with the 9-10 April mission, elaborate precautions were taken to assure target identification and to prevent bombing of our own troops.

Radio marker systems — lines of red fluorescent panels spaced at one quarter mile intervals to provide visual assist on approach routes, and a series of letter markers from M, T, P, V, X, U, and O were placed for visual assist while on the axis of attack. Flak lines were established, as well as other fluorescent panels to identify roads on the approach were established.

The support given the 5th Army on April 15th to 18th was again so excellent as to bring forth a commendation for the 304th Bombardment Wing (H) by Gen. Cannon and Gen. Clark.

MISSION 232

Douglas Newcombe (737) from a letter to Charles F. Crookshanks (739)

On April 10th, we were scheduled for a return mission, low level, to the Po Valley to clean out the area with "Frag" Bombs. We had done it the day before and it wasn't a pretty sight watching men running and getting chopped down by preceding bombs and "Gelly Fire". We were at 5000 feet for that one so the view was dramatic.

The plane tested out OK during preflight but when we left the ground #1 engine blew when we hit about 150 feet. It wasn't just an engine failure — that engine actually blew up. I made a gentle turn to the right in a slight climb to bring it back in but #2 blew in the same manner at 300 feet. Aileron cables snapped and I had little or no control. Too low to bail out and we had no other choice but to ride it in. #3 and #4 were cut and we came into an open field "dead stick". We might have made it as the attitude of the plane was right for a landing but there was a slight hump in the field that I couldn't get over. We hit the slope of the hump and all of the "Frag" blew as they broke loose and hit each other. (You remember how sensitive they were.)

I remember my "coffin" seat breaking loose, turning to the right and then going out through the nose. I broke loose from the seat and slid for a long ways before coming to a stop. I could hear one of the crew yelling for help and I ran back by sound. My eyes were full of dirt and I was blind. I tripped and fell into the wreckage and burning gasoline where a couple of fellows in a passing jeep stopped, found me, and pulled me out.

All in all we had eleven men on board and only two of us survived. My co-pilot died the next day, tail gunner on the way to the hospital and my radio operator 30 days later. All the others were killed instantly — except the engineer who is the only other survivor. It was rough as most of the men on board were part of the original crew that had been formed in 1943 and we had been together all that time as an instructor crew — first as a part of the 400th Bomb Group and then in the 113th AFBU in Charleston, S.C. It was determined that the plane had been a victim of sabotage — explosives in the engines and cables that had been cut almost all of the way through.

I spent about eight months getting put back together but finally came out of it in good shape.

— But strange things happen. I moved from Massachusetts about 25 years ago and settled here in Appleton, Wisconsin. I was a Rotarian when I left Mass. and was asked to join again here in Appleton. While a member of the club I met a fellow who I became friendly with. One day, only two years ago, he and I were sitting at a table and the subject of WW 2 came up. He started telling how he had been a Navigator on a B-24 Crew out of Italy and then went on telling about an unfortunate crash he witnessed on April 10, 1945 at his base in Cerignola. He described it to the last detail and exactly how it went step by step. I almost went into a state of shock as he talked. It turned out that he had been a member of the 454th and the 737th Squadron but neither of us had ever compared notes during all of the years we had known each other. His name is Oscar Boldt — There he was — the only witness I ever ran into.



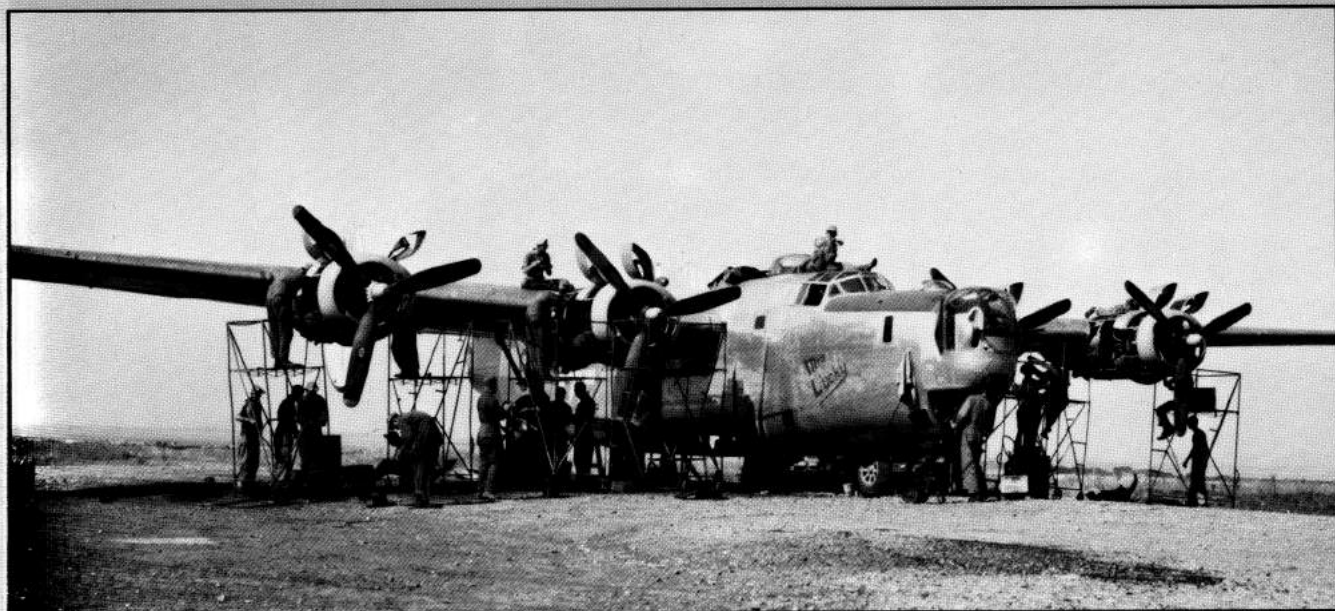
"Bruise Cruiser" Ground Crew Hake, Tandberg, Wilt, Karianen, Anderson, Bloss, Willis, Bauer.



Group Headquarters then . . .



. . . and now."



"Mrs. Lucky" gets a check-up.

A N E C D O T E S

454th Memories

SWEATING IT OUT ON THE GROUND

By Leon O. Burke, M.D. (738)

Generally, we air crews in our squadron would fly alternate missions. If we flew one mission, we might very well be the crew that got to stay on the ground the next day, while another crew flew using our airplane. Occasionally, of course, we would fly two or three missions in a row, without a break, and other times, for some reason, we might not fly for two or three missions. There were some pilots who were very eager to fly and get as many missions out of the way as possible, as early as possible, so that they could return to the United States. Those particularly prone to do this, from my experience, appeared to be young married individuals who were anxious to get their missions over and get home to their bride. There were also individuals who were, for various reasons, eager to fly as often as possible and volunteered for missions whenever possible. Other individuals were quite willing to do their duty but chose not to volunteer, but to take their turns as they were assigned, and "not tempt fate". Initially, I was rather desirous of flying my missions frequently, but as the losses mounted and more and more of my companions failed to return to base, I took a somewhat more philosophical approach and rather than volunteering, I chose to fly and do the best job I could whenever my name appeared on the flying roster. I think that turning point probably came in relationship to a replacement pilot and crew which joined our group squadron. He was newly married and as one of the seasoned pilots, it was my duty to take him along as copilot on our plane on a mission for his first experience in combat. As I recall, he sat up rather alertly in his seat and seemed rather interested, and seemed to rather marvel at the flak that was thrown up at us. After that, he flew as frequently as possible and the time came when he had flown almost as many missions as I had, although he had been there a much shorter time. He returned from one mission in which they had been rather well shot up. A piece of spent flak had ricocheted off of the armor plate behind his seat, rebounded in such a manner that it hit his boot, and he later picked up the piece of flak and was excitedly showing it about upon his return from briefing. Coincidentally, he thought it was quite interesting to note that there were a few numbers on the piece of metal that corresponded to the same order of numbers on his serial number on his dog tag. It was a coincidence, but one that was somewhat intriguing. I got to know him rather well. I tried to be very helpful to him in every way I could. However, on his next mission, he was shot out of the sky and I never learned whether he survived or not. At that point, I felt I knew too much about him for my own comfort, and I cared very much for him and other new replacements, as well as my original companions, but I found that the pain was always greater the more I knew about individuals and their families.

In any event, on a day when we were not flying a mission, it was somewhat pleasant to remain in bed and sleep in a bit longer, have our breakfast while they were going through briefing, and watch them take off and assemble in big oval course on the east side of our airfield. On days of maximum effort, the noise of this large multitude of four-engine airplanes was hard to describe. It was the sort of sound which you not only heard, but felt deep in your body. As they circled and each squadron formed and assembled into its proper position with the group, it was an attractive and very impressive sight. They would then head out on course, one group after another, and gradually disappear from our sight. It was with mixed feelings that we saw them go. In a sense, we were glad to be "sitting this one out" and yet, in a sense, our hearts were with them and a part of our being wished to be with them to help protect them and participate in their task. At this point, however, we could only join with the ground crews and ground support personnel in wishing them well. I was always impressed by the devotion of the ground personnel who remained behind. A significant portion of their effort and emotions were bound up in the mission which they helped to prepare, but could not share in the air. We were probably closest to our flight crew chief and his crew, and were most aware of their emotions. Much of the work by the armament and ordinance people was done at time when we were not about the airplanes to observe them, so we tended not to get as well acquainted with them as we did with our crew chief and his crew.

As the planes disappeared in the distance, those left behind settled down to the routines that fitted into their particular job description, and some of those who had been preparing the mission in the night now had time to take a nap and catch up on some of their sleep.

At about the time for return of the planes, a mood of anticipation settled over the air base and soon, essentially all individuals on the base were beginning to scan the sky for the returning crews. There was a sense of relief felt as each bomber returned, accompanied by a sense of increasing concern and apprehension for those that were overdue after most of the other planes had landed. Sometimes, some of those that were overdue straggled in late with various degrees of damage. All too often, as one by one the returning crews were checked off and had gone to the debriefing room, the crew chief and other friends of the crew kept their lonely fruitless vigil while awaiting any word of the fate of their particular plane and/or friends. There was a certain drama, tension and sadness, and, occasionally, jubilation on the return of the flight crews to the base.

Take-off was a time of heightened excitement and apprehension. The planes were usually very heavily loaded with bombs and carrying all the fuel that they could. There were days when there was a crosswind or little, if any, head wind when not only the pilot flying the ship, but also many of those on the ground were essentially "praying" the plane off of the ground as it gained speed but used up essentially

all of the runway before finally lifting off. There were rarely crashes on take-off. Taking off to the north, the ground dropped away perhaps 100 to 200 feet just past the end of the runway, in a small field that led down to a small stream that ranged east and west, and the northern slope up from the stream was very gentle, so that there was perhaps 100 to 200 feet of valley below the level of the runway which ranged east and west along the very small stream. I well recall one morning when one of the crews in our group, which had a very young pilot and copilot who had not worked together very much and had not developed a degree of teamwork that was most ideal, took off to the north, struggled into the air, barely cleared the small rock fence on either side of the road at the end of the runway and then disappeared out of sight in the small valley just beyond the runway. I think we all held our breath and seconds seemed like minutes as we awaited the inevitable crash, explosion and cloud of smoke in the valley beyond the end of the runway. However, the seconds stretched beyond the time when we had anticipated the impact and then, perhaps a quarter of a mile to half a mile away from us, to our right, the airplane slowly climbed up out of the valley with the appearance of having hardly enough power to remain airborne, and slowly gained power, circled in the rendezvous, and joined the squadron. That was a hair-raising experience for those of us watching with our close-cropped crew-cut hair. Apparently, some confusion in the cockpit had failed to set the control to obtain the maximum power for take-off and this error had been corrected as they disappeared over the verge of the valley.



One morning, I had the duty of Airdrome Officer of the Day. It was a cool and pleasant morning and a good morning for flying. Take-offs had been reasonably routine and the assembly was occurring in a giant oval on our side of the dual runways at an appropriate altitude, with the take-off occurring to the north. I was at Group Headquarters and became aware of the fact that there was a lone B-24 who had not been able to assemble with his squadron and was flying northward, just to the east of our runway at probably less than 1,000 ft. altitude, with one of his propellers (if I recall correctly, one of the right-hand side propellers) feathered. This meant that as our group continued to form with its circling to the right, he would be turning into the side in which he had lost an engine and power. It also seemed to me that the heavily laden airplane was flying somewhat slower than it should be and, apparently, with flaps set to achieve as much lift as possible. When it had crossed about

one-third of our airfield, it apparently stalled out, fell off on the right wing and made about a half-turn of a spin as it crashed nose first into the ground. There were no parachutes that I could see. I started running toward the site of the crash, which took me through the 738th area and down a small incline, to start up over a small elevation between me and the crashed airplane. A large cloud of black smoke had appeared almost immediately. As I raced down the incline and started up the slope on which the airplane had crashed, there was a sudden, tremendously loud explosion that shook the ground and a black cloud of smoke immediately turned into a large smoke ring as the explosion forced itself upward through it, and within seconds, the smoke ring was at the altitude at which the bomber had been flying. I had always heard the expression about the "crack of doom" but this time, I felt it throughout my body from the concussion and the feeling in the pit of my stomach as my mind realized that while there had been little hope for survival of the crew on its initial impact in that one split second of the explosion, ten of my fellow men and their airplane were irretrievably gone. Pieces of aircraft were thrown over a wide area and it was reported to me that a wheel had landed well behind the tent area of one of the squadrons nearest the site of the explosion. In retrospect, I could only be grateful that though I had run as fast as I could, I had not been able to reach the top of the incline between me and the airplane at the time of the explosion; thus, the flying debris and exploding ammunition and bomb fragments had passed over my head.

There was nothing more to be done but to bring in the special crews to clean up the area. I wonder if we can ever completely understand all of the emotions that we have in situations such as that where, in split seconds, sudden death has claimed others, and by some small circumstance beyond one individual's control, that individual is spared.

There frequently was high drama associated with the return of the group. I remember one particular date when most of the planes had already landed and there were several stragglers returning somewhat late, there was a loud, droning, whining sound in the northeast where a B-24, flying at very low altitude, was approaching our base slightly north of the tent area, in an area that would lay along the small stream in the valley just north of our base. The B-24 was proceeding on a straight line, at probably only about 200 ft. elevation when I first saw it. It gradually rolled slowly onto one wing with a loud, whining, roaring sound as it continued westward and disappeared beneath the tops of the olive trees into the valley, and a few hundred feet further to the west, there was a rending crash, a relatively small explosion, and black smoke billowing up out of the valley. At about the same time, another B-24 in obvious distress, which appeared to have been well shot up (and if I recall correctly, had a propeller feathered, also), turned to the south on the downwind leg east of the field. I doubt that he was 1,000 ft. high as he turned downwind and was rapidly losing altitude. One by one, five individuals exited the plane and their chutes opened immediately. Another individual exited the plane, which by this time was over the south end of our field. The parachute failed to open and time took on distorted proportions as we all watched, as he fell second by second in what appeared to be slow motion. We all strained with all our will to help him open his chute but he disappeared beyond the tops of the olive trees. The airplane turned to try to land on the runway to the north but crashed,

and if I recall correctly, the pilot was killed in the crash. We later learned that the crewman whose parachute failed to open had fallen through the roof of a tent, and had fallen through a GI canvas cot and was killed instantly. The occupant of the cot had heard the airplanes returning and only moments before, had left the cot and exited the tent to watch the airplanes land. We never knew whether the last jumper was knocked unconscious as he departed the airplane or not. That was psychologically traumatic and I suppose we would like to think that he was unconscious when his chute didn't open.

I recall flying back from the Ploesti area and watching an airplane gradually losing altitude between us and the Danube River as we flew along the river toward where we would cross the river. The plane was smoking from one of its engines and it appeared that the pilot was trying to get across the Danube River before bailing out. As usual, we counted parachutes as they opened, rejoicing as each one blossomed with its white canopy against the green earth below. Unfortunately, as the airplane neared the Danube, there was an explosion. I think the airplane must have been on automatic pilot and the pilot and copilot may have been sitting on the catwalk, staying with the plane as long as possible, hoping to be across the Danube before they bailed out. Unfortunately, their parachutes opened partly, but were burning, and in moments, the crewmen were falling with an ineffective, burning streamer trailing after them. No doubt, they were still conscious. We could do nothing to help them and our inability to help only heightened our emotions.

While they were not exposed to the direct dangers of combat, the ground personnel certainly had their share of emotions, drama and heartaches. It's a sad sight to watch a crew chief and his men wait in vain for their particular airplane and crew to return.

From an emotional standpoint, there were some ways in which it was preferable to be flying a mission rather than watching some of the problems at the beginning and end of the missions from the ground where you are unable to be of any help at that particular moment. At least, when one is flying the airplane, even when the circumstances are very severe and your fate is hanging in the balance, there is at least a feeling that if you have any degree of control of the airplane, you somehow have some control of your fate, and to do something even very minimally effective is somehow somewhat easier to tolerate emotionally. Anxiety is that state of emotions which occurs when one is unable to respond to a threat and danger by fight or flight. Somehow, being able to take action, even under very trying and frightening circumstances, gives some measure of comfort.

"Sweating it out on the ground" was not an easy task. We air crews may have been the "glamour boys" who flew the missions and "got the credit", and we were no doubt the ones who sustained the largest losses. But I think most of us who flew developed a very deep respect for those who kept us flying, saw us off on our mission, and waited faithfully and expectantly for our return.



THE FLIGHT FROM THE USA TO THE COMBAT ARENA

By Leon O. Burke, M.D. (738)

We climbed along our designated heading eastward into the inky blackness. The east Florida coast slipped beneath us with hardly a marker under the "blackout" conditions prevailing. We were departing from Morrison Field, Florida. We reached cruising altitude. The only light was the faint glow cast by special lights that caused our fluorescent-coated instruments to glow in the dark. I had just turned age 21 years three months earlier. I had found the mystery and adventure of taking off into the unknown to be stimulating. As crew commander and pilot, the sealed envelope of orders, stamped "SECRET", addressed to 2nd Lt. Leon O. Burke, B-24H, 41-29304, was in the pocket of my A-2 jacket. We were not to open any orders until we were several hours at sea and out of range of radio contact with the mainland. This was a precaution to avoid any accidental transmission that might be monitored by an enemy agent or a German submarine along our eastern coastal region. By the time we were to open the sealed envelope, dawn would probably be breaking over the Caribbean. The crew was curious regarding their destination, but "orders are orders" and so we all wondered about our destination and waited to open the orders. We wondered what destiny lay ahead.

Our briefing had shown the route to fly from Florida to Trinidad and on to Natal, Brazil, which lay at the most eastern portion of the South American continent. From that point, the course lay across the South Atlantic, crossing the Equator to Dakar, West Africa, with warnings not to rely upon radio signals to guide us but to depend upon obtaining an astrological fix from the stars or from the sun to determine our position and headings. There were reports of German U-boats broadcasting false signals to lure the unwary on a course slightly south of the destination of Dakar, West Africa, which was at the westernmost bulge of the African continent. If one flew a few degrees further south than the proper heading for Dakar, the route would lead over the Southern Atlantic toward the Belgian Congo and the flier probably would run out of fuel and crash in the ocean, or crash over land trying to turn back and reach Dakar. The course given at our briefing next lay across the Western Sahara and along North Africa to Egypt, from there on to India and then to China-Burma-India and the South Pacific Theaters. It was possible that we might fly north to England from West Africa during the winter months but we had heard that most crews flying to England flew the North Atlantic route. We were, therefore, fairly certain we would either be based in Southern Italy or perhaps in Southern Asia, the Far East, or the Pacific.

Our preparation thus far had been a big adventure but this was the start of the *really big adventure!*

At the appropriate designated time near dawn, I opened the envelope and read our orders. Our destination was Telergma, Algeria, in North Africa. From there, we would expect that we would "stage", do some practice flying, and then move to Southern Italy to begin our combat. No other official information was available to us at this time.

I read the orders over the intercom. Each member had his own reaction, but most seemed pleased to fight in the

Southern Europe and Balkans area rather than in the China-Burma-India area or the South Pacific. A portion of the mystery was solved, but what other mysteries lay ahead?

A semi-tropical dawn developed slowly and islands began to appear off our nose to the right. Soon, we passed Puerto Rico, which was an emergency stop only for four-engine aircraft. The deep blue of the Caribbean turned to a beautiful aqua blue-green surrounding the islands, etched by the white surf breaking on light sandy beaches, which surrounded the deep eternal green of the tropical vegetation. With the Greater Antilles behind us, we took a more southerly heading to our right and we cruised along the chain of smaller islands of the Lesser Antilles and arrived in the late afternoon at our destination of Trinidad and Tobago off the coast of Venezuela. In Trinidad, we landed on a strip fringed by tropical vegetation. We refueled and after chow and a warm December night under mosquito netting, we flew slightly inland over the tropical forests, past what was then British, Dutch and French Guiana (with its infamous "Devil's Island"), continuing on across the Equator to Belem on the mouth of the Amazon River in Brazil. A large, towering, cumulus cloud seemed to hang over the mouth of the Amazon River much of the time and we crossed what appeared to be a very large island, supporting herds of cattle, in the western edge of the shadow of the clouds.

Belem, just south of the Equator, was truly a tropical town with a Portuguese flavor. When we exited our aircraft, we found the heat and humidity of the air to be almost palpable. In Belem, most of the crew bought "mosquito boots" which tended to protect our ankles from mosquitos. We wore these as flying boots until we began to engage in combat and at that time, realized that if we were shot down, the GI shoes were much warmer and more durable. If one had to walk home from a mission or landed in a POW camp where the shoes one landed in had to last for the duration, a tough, durable, GI shoe would be our best friend. As we flew on from Belem to Natal, Brazil, the tropical rain forests appeared as a carpet of eternal green which appeared to be a soft, dense, slightly irregular, textured carpet beneath us. We could only imagine what lay hidden beneath these canopies. If we crashed in the tropical forest, I think the canopy would have closed over us, hardly leaving a trace of our crash. It was a nice, secure feeling to have our brand new B-24H Liberator bomber that had been assigned to our crew in early December, 1943. It was the latest model of B-24 and was reliable and well constructed. Also, we found that when we got the plane "on-step", it cruised faster than any other B-24 I had flown before (or after). It was trim and handled well. We had fallen in love with her already and referred to it, affectionately, as "Our Baby" while we continued to search for a name that would be more appropriate for a war plane.

We spent Christmas in Natal, Brazil, with entertainment Christmas Eve by Nelson Eddy and Jeannette McDonald performing beneath the open tropical skies. It was quite different from a "White Christmas" in the States. We thought fondly of home, but looked forward to the adventure that the New Year would bring. A few sentimental letters were written to our families and girlfriends.

We took a few practice flights while we waited for some "flooding to recede" in the area of our next landing in West Africa. Meanwhile, we met a few Brazilian soldiers and saw an old Ford tri-motor plane on the ground at the airfield.

Our Confidential Operations Orders #390 from Headquarters Station #11, Caribbean Wing ACT, Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida, 19 December 1943, listed personnel aboard our B-24H 41-29304 Flight Echelon, Shipment #1666-DZ12, as:

2nd Lt. Leon O. Burke, 0684268	(P)
2nd Lt. Philip J. Millis, 0689082	(CP)
2nd Lt. William A. Sanderson, 0743645	(N)
2nd Lt. John W. Rakestraw, 0752625	(B)
SSgt. Glenn L. Seager, 32138816	(E)
SSgt. Leroy E. Rizor, Jr., 16170249	(RO)
Sgt. Thomas R. Leitch, 34382464	(G)
Sgt. William C. Jones, 34464604	(G)
Sgt. Albert R. Luttrell, 18127472	(G)
Sgt. Wilbur J. Taylor, 12164484	(G)

The following were passengers accompanying the above crew:

2nd Lt. Charles J. McCarthy, Jr., 0689579	(N)
2nd Lt. George H. Baird, 0638297	(B)
TSgt. Richard A. Miller, 15017086	(CC)
Capt. Corwin C. Grimes, 0431279	(SQDN CO)

Our squadron commanding officer, Capt. C.C. "Pat" Grimes rode as copilot most of the time and generously allowed me to fly as pilot and function as crew commander throughout the trip to Africa. We were also grateful to have TSgt. Richard Miller, our crew chief, aboard. In Natal, Brazil, we also gained another passenger, our squadron flight surgeon, Capt. James W. "Doc" Walker. Our passengers were an excellent group of men. It was a pleasure to have them aboard.

On the night of December 30, we were briefed for the next leg of our flight which was to carry us back across the Equator to Dakar, West Africa. We departed the next morning well before sunrise, this time carrying another envelope marked "SECRET" from the Headquarters of Station #1, South Atlantic Wing, Air Transport Command, c/o Postmaster, Miami, Florida, dictated 30 December 1943 to Pilot 2nd Lt. Leon O. Burke, 0684268, Airplane B-24H 41-29304:

1. PAC Radiogram ATC 1197, dated 29 December 1943, from Headquarters Air Transport Command, Washington, D.C. Your final destination is changed to Toboudna, Tunisia, instead of Telergma, Algeria, for assignment to the 15th Air Force, reporting upon arrival there at to the Commanding General for further orders.
2. Crew members and/or passengers assigned to the same shipment or flight echelon will be notified of final destination one (1) hour after takeoff.
3. Should it be necessary to return to this station, secrecy of this movement will be maintained in accordance with AR280-5.

This leg of our flight, which would carry us back across the Equator to Dakar, West Africa, would be the acid test of "Sandy's" (Lt. William A. Sanderson's) navigational skills. Soon after daybreak, we began to approach a line of tropical storms that seemed to lie along the Equator and in a short while, we were starting to have to pick our way between them. I asked "Sandy" what heading I should try to fly and he gave me a heading and told me just to try to average that heading. He would take a nap if the turbulence weren't too great and after we had picked our way through the tropical storm, he would take some sun shots with his sextant and get a fix so that he could give me our final head-

ing and "ETA" (Estimated Time of Arrival) for Dakar, West Africa.

After picking my way about huge cumulonimbus clouds for awhile and before it was clear and smooth enough for "Sandy" to take his shots, I made a tour of the ship. As I entered the bomb bay, I was very alarmed to see "Doc" Walker peacefully asleep on the right front bomb bay's curved, concave, corrugated surface with his legs lying across the "catwalk". The bomb bay doors are supposed to come off if a 100 lb. bomb is dropped on them to prevent a tragic explosion occurring within the bomb bay. Dr. Walker was somewhat slightly built and wasn't very heavy, but he certainly was well over 100 lbs. weight. Fortunately, some of his weight had been distributed by resting his legs on the "catwalk". Nevertheless, moderate turbulence could have created enough force so that the foot-pounds of energy applied to the bomb bay doors could have taken the bomb bay door off and salvoed our medical practitioner into the equatorial Atlantic without his chest-pack parachute. He was wearing his parachute harness. I took a very firm grip on the nylon safety rope that paralleled the catwalk and carefully planted my feet on the catwalk, and then I leaned out and got a very determined grip on his parachute harness and gently aroused him. With a nod of the head, I indicated I'd like him to join me. All went well, the door held, and I invited him to enjoy the "comforts" of the flight deck where I explained a bit more about the structural characteristics of the corrugated bomb bay door to him. He was far too valuable to us to have him risk his life so unknowingly. ("With combat looming before us, it may well be that he will be saving our lives before long.")

"Sandy" took his sun shots and gave me a heading and ETA to Dakar. I flew it carefully and we actually split destination, and were within a minute of our ETA. A nice job of navigation. "He may be 'uneager' but he certainly can navigate."



We landed and taxied to the parking area. We were met by native African guards who spoke no English. They were wearing uniforms that reminded me of those of the French Foreign Legion as we had seen them in the movies. They each carried an ancient rifle. Their faces had several decorative tribal scars on them. Our guard held out his palm with a few foreign coins in it and thus communicated fully with us, indicating he would like some of our money for his services as guard. We obliged him and went off to our transient quarters to stow our gear under assigned cots covered by mosquito netting. We found a mess hall and enjoyed a warm meal. The native meat was as tough as that we had had in Brazil but the food was very satisfying. We found the Officers' Club and spent a short while with friends, starting our "short-snorter" bill. Supposedly, if one crosses the Equator, this bill is signed by witnesses and if you are challenged

later by them and don't have the bill with you, you must buy them drinks. We later added a variety of foreign paper currency Scotch-taped to this bill and collected a number of signatures of friends, which we fondly recall. It is a list of the "Quick and the Dead". Many of those names are individuals who never came home.

New Years' Day left us with spare time and "Jerry" (Lt. Gerald A. Bradbury) and I spent part of the day bobbing about in the warm tropical surf, watching the nearly-nude native fishermen in their dugout canoes fishing with nets, while naked boys and nearly-nude women and girls scooped tiny fish out of the nets as they were drawn onto the beach. The tropical sun had deepened their natural protective pigment until their skin was very nearly a deep blue-black.

The civilian base employees were largely native tribal people, scantily clad for the tropics and adorned with charms and small bags tied to their arms containing their own secret talisman or charm.

At about 15 degrees north latitude, the flora was definitely that which is seen in travel books about the Sub-Sahara Africa and the French tri-color flew on the base and in the village.

The next leg of our flight was from Dakar, West Africa, to Marrakech in Morocco, North Africa. We climbed out on course. At the lower altitudes, we crossed small native villages. These were a collection of what appeared to be round, wattle and daub (woven sticks and mud) homes with a surrounding protective corral. As we climbed north, the vegetation became more sparse as the land appeared more and more arid, and soon we were flying over the dry, barren land of the Sahara Desert. There was a beauty in the varied, bare rock formations and sands, reminding me somewhat of the colors seen in pictures of the Grand Canyon. All of this created many varied patterns and ridges in the sandy-appearing surface. Occasionally, a rare trail could be seen passing through the barren wilderness and winding up hills to a very few buildings. Some of the outposts suggested French Foreign Legion outposts. We were to fly sufficiently inland to avoid flying over the Spanish Sahara which lay along the coast of Africa near the Canary Islands.

By mid-afternoon, we were to cross the Anti-Atlas Mountains by way of a pass, with peaks in the area of about 13,351 to 13,671 ft. on either side of us. Meanwhile, the visibility had decreased due to a desert dust storm and it was not safe to try to cross the mountains through the mountain pass, though Marrakech lay only a few miles further north.

We knew of an American and French naval base at Agidir on the coast with an airfield that could accommodate us, so we took a westerly heading and soon were on the final landing approach toward the sea. The navy apparently operated slow-flying Catalina flying boats from that base. Ahead of us was another B-24 on the final approach. An American-made A-31 fighter, flown by a French aviator, passed us on the final approach and started to pass the B-24 that was only about 100 ft. or less above the terrain, as he had frequently done to the Catalinas on final approach. Unfortunately, the French pilot misjudged the greater speed of the B-24 and his undercarriage struck the #3 prop on the right-hand side of the B-24. The prop came off and sliced upward through the radio compartment wall, injuring the radio operator. The B-24 dropped several feet with the right wing low, but recovered enough to land roughly with the wings nearly level and

rolled to a stop off the runway to the left. The fighter lost its landing gear and deflected to the right, and did a belly landing, otherwise remaining intact. We touched down as the French pilot sprang from his craft, gesturing vigorously and apparently blaming the B-24 for this accident. American Navy and French personnel gathered rapidly without international incident occurring and the radioman was not critically injured but was evacuated by ambulance.

We arranged for food for our crew member who was posted to stay with our plane and the base provided a truck to take the remainder of us to a rather nice French hotel in Agidir. This was our first contact with French culture and the experience of the bidet instead of toilet tissue.

Near evening, from our balcony, we could see parts of the town and the adjacent country that appeared unchanged from "Bible times". Shepherds drove their flocks along the roads and streets. The chief religion appeared to be Islamic. On the call to prayer of the Muezzin from the Minaret of the local Mosque, most of the native dressed people paused and bowed down toward Mecca.

We strolled about to experience the town and soon an early teenaged lad, speaking excellent English, attached himself to us, as a guide, for a small price. He spoke several languages and other youths of Arabic origin hailed him as "Jude". He was from one of the few Jewish families in the city. He was kind enough to help us avoid some areas of town where trouble might have awaited us and he steered us to a small restaurant where we had a meal of native dark bread and stew-like meat dish.

The next day promised less dust in the desert but, early in the morning, we flew out over the coast and along the Atlantic Ocean, past the western edge of the mountain range, and then easterly north of the Haut Atlas Range over land with increasing evidence of agriculture, and landed at Marrakech. We didn't leave the base, and rumor had it that Winston Churchill was in conference on the base that day.

The course led us over the northern rim of North Africa, eastward to Oran and Algiers, spending the night in Algiers. It was a pretty flight. The vegetation and terrain reminded those who had lived or visited in California of that state, and it appeared to have good, though somewhat arid, agricultural land, with the Mediterranean Sea on our left and the Sahara Atlas Mountains to the south on our right.

Our home base for the next few weeks was a few miles from Tunis in Tunisia. Our headquarters was a rather large home which reportedly had been the German headquarters where the commanding general was captured when North Africa fighting ceased. There was evidence of battle with some wrecked planes, mortar cases, etc., in the countryside.

Our base runways lay along the ruins of the ancient Carthaginian Aquaduct to the east. It was an interesting background for our activities. The many B-24s were in marked contrast to the Roman armies which no doubt passed this way so many centuries before as they conquered ancient Carthage.

We slept in pyramid tents on folding canvas cots. The heating for the chill of the January nights was a large food can filled about halfway full of sand and gravel and 100 octane gasoline. The trick was to pour the gasoline into the container while outside of the tent, move the can quickly into the tent, and ignite it rapidly before fumes formed and created a flash explosion. On occasion, a dull boom would be

heard and a tent would burn. I never heard of anyone's getting a severe burn but we were all young, alert and could move rapidly, even through tent walls if necessary. If all went well, the flame danced on the surface of the sand most of the night, providing some heat. Small bits of carbon black soot also drifted upward and settled on everything, including our pale faces, and the next morning, many of us looked like members of a minstrel show cast. We washed it off as well as possible in our "tin helmets".

Our quartermaster box multi-hole toilets sat a sanitary, discreet distance from the living quarter tents and kitchen. This was fine on moonlight nights, and not as great on some others. It was especially troublesome when the French native North African guards were stationed between our tent and the QM boxes. Emergency dashes to the QM boxes were rather frequent when we had some broken sanitation and developed the "GIs". Some of the fellows had to make a rather quick priority decision as they heard a foreign-speaking guard call out a command in words that they didn't understand, twice, and then heard his rifle bolt click into place.

We were soon overdrawn on our toilet tissue ration and letters home asked for some toilet tissue and some homemade fudge to suit our increasing cravings for sweets. Meanwhile, local tangerines helped somewhat to relieve the craving. Several months later, in the heat of the Italian summer, our "Care Packages" arrived at our bases in Italy. They showed evidence of a hard, traumatic trip by way of Liberty Ship and often arrived as compacted, somewhat cuboid packages. Heat and compression had done their job and the toilet tissue and homemade fudge or other candies were condensed in an inseparable cube. It was barely usable for either purpose for which it was intended, but served best when chewed until the residual pulp lost the last lingering bit of sweetness.

One of the highlights of our time in North Africa was a trip to Tunis by way of GI truck. We were fortunate if we could make the trip once a week. There, we'd find a native bathhouse and for a few francs, we'd get a towel and a small, dark piece of "homemade" soap. The floor was covered with slimy "duckboard" slats and the air was foggy with moisture as we bathed. The hot water from head to foot was "heavenly". A voice would call out in a foreign tongue and a few moments later, the water was turned off. A few more francs and we got the soap rinsed off as the shower came on again. In time, we learned the routine and in the future, rinsed the soap off rapidly when we heard the voice.

We did some sightseeing and found some restaurants where we dined in our refreshingly clean state.

On occasion, we could take a trolley to the ancient ruins of Carthage. On the trolley, there was no doubt that the French officers were the masters and the natives were the colonials. The young native men were made to give up their seats to the French officers and from the looks on the faces of the natives, I had no doubt that soon after the war, the natives would try to become free of colonial rule.

The war had eliminated the tourist trade at Carthage so we wandered about the ruins at our leisure, and a self-appointed guide approached and was of some help. Layers of civilization could be seen in the banks of roads cut into the hillside. Bronze arrowheads and small bronze and even more rare silver coins were easy to find. Large, dry cisterns apparently had stored the aquaduct water and most of the

temple ruins were deteriorating, and the mosaic tile floors remained in part with the residual of a few columns.

I wondered about the past civilizations, their wars and the destruction of Carthage. Were the people so much different than us in their basic needs, desires and aspirations? War is so recurrent, it changes history, but it seems its lessons aren't passed on to save later generations from the same fate and folly. Ambition, vanity and greed seem to have caused most of mankind's wars.

Our main activity as an aircrew in Tunisia was to train and ready ourselves for combat. This meant many flights where we practiced formation flying. This was something we urgently needed to practice. We had not had much formation flying of the B-24 in the USA and in combat, a good, tight formation meant more concentrated firepower and, thus, greater mutual protection on the way to and from the target, and a better bomb pattern at the target. I resolved to master the skill of formation flying in this heavy bomber. In these heavy bombers, the inertia and momentum are much greater than in lighter crafts. The wingman would note that he was falling behind his leader a bit and would increase power and briefly continue to fall behind. Then he would begin to gain on the lead ship as the power overcame the lagging momentum, only to find that although he again had reduced power, he was about to go past the leader. Some of the speed could be "killed off" by climbing a few feet but this made a very poor formation of planes climbing, lagging behind, and almost passing the lead ship. The answer to this was to be brave, have courage, and get in close to the lead ship, and be alert to the very most minimal change in the lead ship and the relationship of your plane to it. The formation pilot must make very rapid, but very minimal, power changes. As soon as the lead ship starts a turn, he has to reduce power if he is on the inside of the turn or increase it if he is on the outside of the turn. This was a skill that was difficult to acquire in these heavy ships. So much more anticipation was necessary due to the relative momentum as compared with our light cadet school planes.

I liked the #2 spot (right wing position) best because I could watch the lead pilot and copilot, as well as their plane, and could more readily anticipate what I would need to do as I watched their hands on the controls and watched the ailerons on the wings.

Between flights, we painted the "nose art" on our planes. We had chosen the name "Warrior Maiden" as the name for our plane. Bombardier Lt. Johnny Rakestraw had "requisitioned" some paint at the West Palm Beach Base. We had a can of yellow lacquer and small cans of red, white and blue enamel used to color-code aircraft tubing. With a segment of aluminum tubing from a wrecked airplane and a tuft of my "crew cut" hair crimped into the end of the tubing to create a paintbrush (using 100 octane gasoline as paint thinner and brush cleaner), I painted a curvaceous, young woman in a position as if starting a swan dive with her head up and arms outstretched like wings. Her clothing was chain mail bra and panties with Air Force insignia on the wings on her helmet and sandals. We liked her and thought she was beautiful. The names of the crewmen were painted outside their stations on the airplane, completing the job, and bombardier Johnny Rakestraw wanted "Wait for me, Mary" (his fiancée) painted across the nose of the plane above the bombardier's window. Now we were psychologically ready for combat.

Eventually, we heard that our bases in Italy were ready, and in late January we made our move to our future home at San Giovanni Air Base in Italy.

Capt. Grimes, our CO, led the flight in the Warrior Maiden with its crew while I flew as copilot for him. We arrived rather late in the day with low ceilings and a few local rain showers. As we neared our destination, a strange-looking, single engine fighter plane was sighted approaching us. It really didn't look like any of the standard US fighters but had US Army Air Corps markings on it, so the gunners held their fire. We would later learn that Norman Appold, who had been on the first low level mission to Ploesti, had a rather weird fighter assembled by his service squadron from the wrecks of five aircraft. It was nominally a Curtiss Warhawk (P-40) type of aircraft, formerly used by the American Volunteer Group in China four years earlier. Appold's "private air force" was named "Bon-Bon" and he apparently was looking over the new reinforcements that were to do the high altitude missions on Ploesti (as well as other targets in Southern Europe).



Upon landing, we got some "K-rations" and then were directed to some pyramid tents whose central pole was holding up the tent with only the corners staked down. About three bales of straw were the sole content of the tent. The wind was blowing and a light drizzle of rain was carried into the tents. As dark settled, we managed to lash the tent corners together a bit and broke open the straw bales. We all crawled into the straw and huddled together for warmth on one of the coldest, most physically miserable nights I recall ever having endured. We were like so many pigs huddled together in the straw of their pigpen.

Morning broke clear and cool, and we found the kitchen tent. We spent the day getting somewhat better settled. The four officers of our crew were assigned a pyramid tent in the olive grove near Group Headquarters and our Squadron Headquarters. Our enlisted men had a tent between Group Headquarters and the olive grove near the Squadron Operations tent.

The next few days were spent chiefly getting physically settled and becoming familiar with our airfield. The "hard stand" for the parking place of our Warrior Maiden was near Group Headquarters and Squadron Headquarters in the most northeast portion of the airfield. We liked the location. It was close and we could keep an eye on our plane.

The taxiways had been built with an elevated crown down the center to provide badly needed water drainage. However, this created problems for planes with a tricycle landing gear. Our nose wheel on the tricycle gear rode high and kept our nose high while the tail skid banged against the ground almost constantly. Eventually, the graveled runways were leveled to correct the problem and the runway was covered with steel matting for better surface and less prop damage from flying gravel.

Our base had dual runways orientated in a north-south direction, with the 454th on the east side and the 455th on the west, each using the runway closest to them.

A depression in the rolling land of a former grain field on our side of the runway, which filled with water temporarily, was nicknamed "Lake Aynesworth" for our group commander, Col. Horace D. "Dan" Aynesworth. Our headquarters building was a large masonry building with the briefing room in the basement. The briefing room was reached by way of a ramp from the north yard. Myriad emotions were carried up and down that ramp, to and from the briefing, before our missions and debriefing after the missions. The emotions were lightened a bit by the Red Cross girl with her coffee and doughnuts on our return home from a mission. She was a welcome sight and was about the only American girl we saw for months. Meanwhile, we got in a few local practice flights before our first combat mission to Orvieto Airdrome on 8 February 44.

"Sunny" Italy was cold and rainy in the winter months for those living in tents and slogging about in the mud. We coped with the situation and adjusted. Soon, Yankee ingenuity began to make considerably more comfortable living quarters out of our tents. Various ingenious heating systems were arranged utilizing aircraft tubing, with a control valve, ranging from a five gallon "Jerry" can into the center of our tents where either 100 octane gasoline or diesel fuel dripped into a container, that was usually something like half of a fifty-five gallon oil drum with the cut border on the ground surface and the end on the top side, with a door cut for a draft and one for a chimney. We found a heavy piece of hollow metal, probably originally a light post, which we seated on the drum, creating a chimney for our particular tent. We dug a slit trench outside our tent for possible emergency air raid protection and hoped we didn't have to use it while it was partially filled with water. We ditched around our tents to provide drainage and as the missions developed, were able to salvage wooden "frag" bomb cases for building material and square bomb fin protectors of metal, about 1-1/2 to 2 ft. square, that could be used for flooring in the tents. Some of the engineers developed ingenious fuel combustion chamber stoves that sounded like blowtorches, were very efficient in their use of fuel, and produced excellent heating for their tents. Meanwhile, however, our initial living conditions were quite primitive and far better than that of the infantryman a few miles north of us.

Our ground support departments and personnel were busy with the logistics, organization and duties that would allow us to start our air combat missions and do our part to win the war. Much of their work was behind the scenes and not very glamorous in the mud, sand, dust or dark, but it was absolutely essential to our effectiveness and our very lives depended upon many "unsung" heroes; most of whom we never met. I'd have liked to thank each of them personally!

THE ISLE OF CAPRI ON A YOYO

Philip L. Schutlz (739)

At Christmas, my cousin in Long Beach sent a package which contained a YoYo. I started doing tricks like "Around the World" and would ad-lib a little like the Smothers Brothers. Joe Pribula (bombardier) and Ray Hennessey (Naviga-

tor) told Doc Minckler that Oscar (my nickname) was cracking up and would get me to play with my YoYo every time Doc would come by. They suggested that I needed R and R (rest and rehabilitation) on the Isle of Capri. I said I wouldn't like to go without my crew. Doc agreed. I said "Why don't you come along too?" The crew (and Doc) had a great time getting "rested" at Capri.

THE CASE OF THE MISSING SNAKE

Philip L. Schultz (739)

I found a three foot long snake going into our tent. After killing it, for kicks I grabbed its tail and slung it up on the neighboring Darcy crew tent. When I came back, laughingly the Darcy crew asked me about the snake which had disappeared. Some days later I started smelling something putrid. The dead snake had mysteriously gotten to a resting place under my cot!

LOST IN THE CATACOMBS

Philip L. Schultz (739)

While on R&R, winter of 1944, I visited the Catacombs. It was shortly after Rome had been taken by the Allies and the sole source of lighting was with individually held wax tapers which everyone on the tour wrapped around their wrists and lighted. In one of the underground chambers, reputed to be where Peter and Paul had preached, I went forward after the tour group left, to get a closer look at the marble altar. When I walked out into the connecting corridors there was total darkness and silence! No tour group and no idea how to get out! Walking slowly down several corridors with skulls in niches from floor to ceiling, I was careful to retrace my steps to the spot where I had become lost until I finally spotted candles at a distance and my fear of spending a night in total darkness was gone!

A SOLDIER'S LIFE AT SAN GIOVANNI

Robert L. Lamborn (739)

... We arrived at San Giovanni Airdrome while a few inches of snow was still on the ground. The onetime olive groves were divided into Squadron areas. The 739th Orderly Room and Mess Section had previously been a long stable.

Trucks and jeeps churned up the earth, wet with snow and rain, until it was foot-deep sticky, slippery mud. The Quarter Master had not provided us with tents and cots, so for the first month or so we slept on straw from the stable that was crawling with lice. We buttoned our shelter halves together and didn't remove our clothing when we crawled into them at night with our feet sticking out the ends.

When the tents arrived it was real vertical mobility. They became home away from home. The Army, in true tradition, was prepared to issue pot-belly, wood or coal burning stoves. But, of course, there was no fuel available.

Inventive GIs soon solved the problem by creating the 454th Drip System, a heater made from an upturned half a

fifty gallon drum. Over the bung hole was placed a four inch iron pipe that projected through the top of the tent.

Fuel was provided by hauling a fifty gallon drum of 100 octane aircraft gasoline from the huge supply dump to the tent site. Its bung was unscrewed and a replacement was inserted into which we had welded a couple of inches of 1/4" pipe. It was turned on its side and cradled in a bomb rack just outside the tent. We salvaged, from destroyed aircraft, aluminum tubing, valves and hose connectors that brought the fuel slightly underground, into the tent, through a small valve buried but protected in a Planters peanut can. Inside the "stove" a coffee-type can was filled with small rocks and the aluminum tubing was bent to drip into the can.

When the valve was opened slightly, permitting a slow dripping of the 100 octane, it was ignited also, it made the stove cherry red and kept the two Jerry cans of water hot for coffee or shaving.

During the winter we burned fifty gallons a week. It wasn't long before every tent, approximately 1000 for the 454th, had installed the system. 50,000 gallons of fuel a week. And the folks back home were rationed a few gallons a month. War is hell.

... and in time they built a small stone building where the officers could gather and relax and pull on a brew and play a little poker. It was enormously successful and the officers did relax and as a result flew straighter and the bombs fell closer to the target.

A non-commissioned officers club was also built with the same results. Dice tables resulted in all the money in the 454th once a month moving into the hands of a few people who had practiced in civilian life in Jersey and Philly.

But something was amiss. The Italians made one clear, distilled spirit. For us they tinted it with something that allowed them to crudely label bottles "Bourbon", "Whiskey", "Jin". It all tasted the same and was not a healthy drink.

"Reportedly" a B-24, with a serious service-connected disability, was stripped down of armament, the engines were re-habed and its identity removed. This mystery ship "reportedly" flew secret supply missions to Tel Aviv, hedge-hopping over Yugoslavia and Greece to avoid German radar.

At the British air base in Tel Aviv (Palestine) the aircraft was loaded with pinch-bottle Haig and Haig, Johnny Walker Red and Black, and White Horse. At \$1.50 a bottle in US dollars.

Of course, I don't know if this is true.

I was a victim, however, of an act of Fifth Column sabotage in the 739th Mess Hall. It was the Thanksgiving Dinner, November, 1944. By then we were hiring Italian civilians from Cerignola and the neighboring farms, to help detail the areas and do KP duty in the kitchen. I don't recall the arrangement, whether they were paid or given goods.

But about midnight, with five inches of snow on the ground, I heard increasing numbers of men running past our tent. They moaned and cursed as they ran for the latrine. Then the stomach pains hit me and I dashed from the tent.

In the moonlight, men in boots and skivies were dropping their shorts and squatting down in the snow, unable to make it to the line of guys at the latrine.

It was a horrible and devastating case of mass food poisoning. It was later learned that a number of bars of GI soap had been grated into the turkey dressing. The medics treat-

ed us with horse pills and we were fine in a couple of days. But that act kept an untold number of aircraft from the mission the following day.

I don't know whether it was true of other wars and other soldiers, but scrounging, and the challenge of scoring a pass, a date, a bottle, almost anything unauthorized, was a continuous stimulant.

It was in June, 1945, and the war in Europe was reaching its final stage. Captain John McGrail and Sgt. Vern Lewis, both men who knew the art of massaging the system, had gotten wind of a five-star Rest and Rehabilitation operation that was to be initiated with eight days in London and Paris.

The first flight of twelve guys would fly out of Bari on June 29th. McGrail obviously had juice at 15thAF HQ, Vern had juice with him and I juice with Vern.

The three of us were off in a cloud of San Giovanni dust, happy warriors headed for the Moulin Rouge. The twelve lucky men boarded a C-47, buttoned down and it taxied away from the base buildings.

We were on the runway, pointed Northwest and gathering ground speed when a Jeep, probably doing 60MPH, drove alongside and the passenger hysterically waved the pilot to idle back and stop. He wore an MP armband.

Col. Harper, from AF Headquarters stuck his head out the aircraft's side door far enough for his rank to show and yelled, "What the hell is going on here, soldier!" The Colonel was obviously looking forward to partying it up in Soho and the Left Bank.

"You must return to the Operations Office immediately, sir", shouted the MP.

Harper was joined by McGrail in letting the MP understand their opinion of his mission.

As the C-47 prepared to come about in the middle of the runway, the MP yelled back, "Would you rather go to Paris or go home?"

Orders had just come through that we were to be re-deployed to the Pacific for the final run against Japan with a "delay enroute", which meant a couple of weeks with our families before embarking.

My young bride and I were returning from a wonderful week in Carmel when VJ Day was announced on the car radio. It was a riotous and happy public that filled the streets for the remainder of the trip back to Berkeley.

I received a telegram advising me to not return to the 454th, but report directly to Camp Beale, California, for discharge. I had 135 discharge points and have never missed London or Paris.

BORN TO BOMB

Joseph E. Markley (739)

He was known as 2/Lt. Vernon Cox and he hailed from the small town of Eldon, Iowa. He served in the Army Air Corps as lead Bombardier in the 739th squadron of the 454th Combat Group, flying in B-24 bomber "Winged Victory", tail no. 128300.

Granted, there were thousands of other bombardiers flying in as many different aircraft and hailing from a like number of towns and cities, but few if any would continue to bombard the enemy in such fashion as Lt. Cox following his capture.

It all began on the 25th of February, 1944 in the tiny mountain village of Hollenstein, Austria shortly after we parachuted from our crippled and burning bomber. The Flight Engineer, TSgt. Henry Kiesel, and myself were the first two captured by the civilian populace — no military present in the remote location. They had us in the office of what appeared to be a town house of sorts when who should enter but Lt. Cox. Following the handshakes and embraces normally associated with predicaments of this nature, Lt. Cox finally spotted Kiesel's pack of Camel cigarettes and my bag of candy coated almonds on the desk. Assured they were ours, he grabbed them off the desk in a most defiant manner while uttering words to the effect that they had no right to take them. Experiencing nothing more than a few dirty looks, we proceeded to eat the candy and chain smoke the cigarettes until all was gone.

Later, joined by Lt. Robert Harvey, the navigator, SSgt. Michael Zsolcsak, the tail gunner, and SSgt. Klinger, the waist gunner, the six of us were picked up by German military personnel and transported by truck to a nearby railroad station. A passenger train pulled in shortly after our arrival but for some reason or other it took off before they put us aboard. And just like you might have guessed, Lt. Cox jumped on the platform of the last car as it went by. The following scene, though lasting but a few seconds, was something to behold. The guards hit what you might call the proverbial panic button. They began to chase the train down the track with arms and rifles wavering like mad and in all probability screaming louder than they had ever screamed before. Their frantic state, however, did not scare Lt. Cox in the least. He continued to wave and laugh until the train finally stopped a couple of hundred yards or so from the station and backed up so the rest of us could board. And, in spite of his unusual actions, Lt. Cox was to suffer no consequence. The guards were no doubt so happy in their thoughts of the price they might have paid for the loss of a prisoner that little else mattered.

We couldn't have been on the train for more than a few minutes when Lt. Cox once again became the center of attention. A German military officer, admittedly being educated in England, proceeded to tell Lt. Cox how Germany was going to win the war. The conversation started out friendly enough but soon evolved into a violent argument. Lt. Cox, obviously fed up with the German's boastful attitude, commenced to interrupt his conversation periodically with questions as to why they moved out of North Africa, Sicily and Italy. Each question was accompanied by that type of grin which can burn a man's inner soul. Consequently, the German officer got progressively madder with each interruption and finally stormed off not to bother us again.

His next display of fearlessness took place at St. Polten Air Base in Austria during a short wait for further transportation to Dulag Luft in Frankfurt, Germany. During our confinement in a barracks room, they made what turned out to be a feeble attempt to interrogate us. The interpreter started to address SSgt. Zsolcsak, the tail gunner, when suddenly Lt. Cox stepped between them and proclaimed, "I'm an officer and I will represent this group." So far so good, or so the Germans thought. They started firing questions at Lt. Cox and the results might have been considered an instant replay of his confrontation with the German officer on the train with but one exception. He refused to utter one word in response to the many questions involving the aircraft, pri-

mary and alternate targets, and crew positions, but used his soul searing grin for maximum effectiveness. He merely shook his head and grinned in response to each question and not unlike the officer on the train, the interrogation team quickly reached that point of frustration which prompted them to cut short their quest.

The conclusion of Lt. Cox's heroics insofar as we could witness took place in the redistribution center of Dulag Luft in Frankfurt, Germany on the 28th of February, 1944. Our four days of togetherness came to an abrupt end the following day when the officers and enlisted men were dispatched to respective camps and would not meet again until wars' end.

During the course of the day the enemy passed out what they referred to as Red Cross forms and implied with emphasis that subject forms had to be completely filled out in order that our next of kin might be notified of our status. True, the form had a place for home address, but the remaining contents of its two pages entailed every conceivable question that an interrogator might ask plus certification by payroll signature. Lt. Cox was quick to instruct the many personnel present not to supply any information other than name, rank, serial number and next of kin's address and to print one's name rather than sign the form. His positive actions while experiencing the duress normally associated with the few days following capture no doubt precluded the obtainment of much valuable information by the enemy.

His final show of contempt for his captors prior to our separation occurred just prior to bedtime. Consistent with their policy of deterring escapes, a German enlisted troop entered our room and proceeded to collect all boots and shoes to be stored out of reach during the night hours of minimum security. Twenty-five of the twenty-six men in the room reluctantly parted with their footwear, but not so with Lt. Cox. They argued back and forth at considerable lengths with Lt. Cox insisting that they send an officer for his shoes. They eventually engaged in a little fisticuffs during which Lt. Cox threw his shoes back under a wooden bunk bed. When it was clear that he could not convince Lt. Cox to retrieve the shoes, the enlisted troop finally stormed from the room. Within a matter of seconds a German major entered the room and ironically, the shoe was now on the other foot. Lt. Cox surrendered his shoes without hesitation and the good military man that he was, he never offered one word of dissent to the ensuing tongue lashing.

Call it bravery, call it stupidity or whatever else might come to mind, but one fact will forever remain. The scared kids who witnessed his courageous actions were more or less jolted back into a sense of reality where they could better prepare themselves mentally for whatever the future might have in store. And even more importantly, it was clearly demonstrated that they could survive the ordeal without aiding and abetting the enemy.

We enlisted troops went our separate way on the 1st of March, 1944 and were not to see our officers again until May 1945. Our paths crossed at Camp Lucky Strike in France where we spent three weeks sweating out the long boat ride home. Needless to say we were thrilled with the knowledge that Lt. Cox came through the ordeal unscathed. We had wondered about him on numerous occasions and, to really be frank about the whole thing, we just couldn't imagine his luck holding out for so long.

One last thing in regards to my association with the good Lieutenant and I must say that I bring it to light with much remorse. He gave me a new white bath towel at Camp Lucky Strike and despite my desperate needs, I sold it on the black market — beg your pardon — for the going rate of ten dollars. Had Lt. Cox found it out at the time, God knows he might have killed me, but now I can only hope there is truth in the old adage that time heals everything.

EVACUATION!

William M. Robishaw (737)

In early September of 1944, the camp area of the 737th Squadron was rudely awakened at the first light of dawn by the explosion of what turned out to be a 1,000 pound bomb. My first moment of consciousness came as I was rolling from my home-made cot to the floor of the tent; and followed by the fastest move I have ever made on my hands and knees. I hit the floor crawling, and headed right out the door of the tent, diving into the foxhole outside head-first — the others of the tent arriving within, I would say, five seconds — which wasn't bad at all for eight guys who had all been sleeping ten seconds or so before. Our first thoughts were naturally that somehow the German Air Force had gathered together enough strength to mount a raid on our base — and we all turned our heads toward the basin where the "line" was. Because the "line" was in a shallow basin, all we could see was the bright glow from a fire, which we knew came from one of our planes. After about ten or fifteen minutes had passed, and there were no further explosions, we felt that it was safe to return to our bunks — especially as the glow from the fire had died down considerably, evidently the gasoline having been about burned out.

As I lay on my cot, I lifted up the flap of the tent and looked toward the "line"; after only a few minutes, I saw that the glow from the fire had increased a great deal, and quickly. I called this out to the others in the tent, and headed for the foxhole again, only this time I was walking. The others followed, and we were only there a few moments when another 1,000 pounder let go, and we all ducked down; although we were probably at least a thousand feet from the nearest plane, I had seen a large chunk from a former wreck hurled that far — a chunk at least the size of an automobile generator. As the echo of this second blast came, we could see all of the tents emptying their residents.

During the next half-hour, I was as scared as most of the others. However, I vividly remember a few incidents that took place during this half-hour, that bring grins to me now — now that the incident is over, and as no one was injured or killed — just three or four aircraft destroyed by fire and explosion.

The tent nearest to us housed several men of the Communications Section, among whom was one rather short, stocky lad named Joe Kenworthy. Joe had always been a morale-booster, with his clever quips and actions. As we watched this tent-full emerge very hurriedly, we were amazed to see Joe stop just outside of the tent, and stand there. We could clearly hear him cursing, as this tent was only about one hundred feet away. Joe continued his ranting and swearing, and after things were back to normal, we learned the reason for his strange behavior. It seems that when Joe rushed out of the tent with the others, he turned

a little too quickly, and slammed a big toe into one of the tent's very secure two-inch square tent pegs; stubbing it so severely that it jarred him clear to his teeth, and the pain being so great that he would rather stay put and take his chance than put any weight on the toe.

The second incident was also quite humorous, when the story ended. Also at the second bomb-blast (which was followed by several others during the next twenty minutes), the tent emptied out, as mentioned above. One of the lads was evidently roused quite suddenly, and could think only of putting distance between himself and the area of the burning planes. As he raced past our foxhole, we were quite surprised to see that he wore absolutely nothing but a frightened look, and his helmet. Just beyond the tent area, he was seen racing through the stubble of a recently-harvested wheat field — and we all marveled aloud to one another at his speed of foot through the wheat stubble bare-footed. Some time after the burning had died away, we all saw this same fellow returning, gingerly picking his way back through the wheat stubble, still "dressed" in only his helmet. We all had a good laugh, recalling the difference in the speed of departure from the tent area, as compared with his return trip.

TENT LIFE

William M. Robishaw (737)

After several months at the 454th Air Base a few miles outside of Cerignola, Italy, several of the guys became tired of living in the general "tent city" some distance from the parking areas of the aircraft. Too, some became weary of living in the rectangular pyramid tents that were issued to groups of six men. It is interesting to note that with all of the organization that the armed forces has, the men were not assigned to any specific tent, nor were the men even grouped by assignment; nor were the tents required to be located in any particular pattern, and they were not in any pattern. Instead, as four to eight men would decide on their own, they would become tent-mates; I say four to eight, although usually six shared a tent.

Many sought ways to expand their quarters. One very early venture of this sort occurred before the pyramid tents were sufficient in number to be doled out to the ground crew personnel; all of the enlisted men having been issued a shelter half (half of a pup-tent). Two of the ground crew men were able to acquire two extra shelter halves from two of the flying boys, who of course were quartered in the pyramid tents. They then joined the four shelter halves together, thus getting twice as much space as the rest of us poor ground crew men. Not satisfied with this much extra room, they dug out the ground to the depth of about one foot, the shape of the four shelter halves, and then set up there tent sections over the dig, thus being able to even sit up in their "home". The Italian February weather was somewhat mild; and when the inevitable Italian liquid sunshine came down in a fine terrific storm, their glorious abode was converted into a foot-deep pool one night — this completely demoralizing the expansionist philosophy of others who were thinking of so enlarging their shelters.

I shared one of the pyramid tents, when they became available, with seven others. Just in front of the doorway, we paid a couple of Italian youths to dig us a comfortable

fox-hole. After some weeks, during which time we added a few pieces of home-made furniture, the tent had become quite crowded. To help ease the situation, we decided that we would lift the four sides, one at a time and as we were able to obtain the necessary materials — the four-foot-high sides of the tent actually become a part of the roof. This expansion would give us a four-by-sixteen foot additional space, in which we could place two bunks — and some duffel bags or other paraphernalia. In fact, we would get three of these four-by-sixteen spaces; along each side and the back of the tent. The fortunes of war really dictated the pace at which this expansion would proceed, as the "materials" necessary were to be procured from the packing cases of certain types of bombs — anti-personnel fragmentation bombs, to be exact. These packing cases were about four feet long, and ten inches square, made of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch pine, with a two-hinged lid with a pair of locking hasps. The cases were also fitted with a sheet-metal liner, with a clamp-on lid for it. Because these bombs were not used too often, at least by our group, the empty cases were always at a high premium, throughout our stay in Italy. When it was learned that the next day's mission was to carry such a bomb-load, many ground-crewmen would visit the aircraft parking revetments, waiting for the armament men to load the bombs into the aircraft. The armament men had a very difficult time convincing the others that the empty cases could not be taken from the area immediately, but had to be kept in case the plane(s) would return from the next day's mission without having dropped the bombs — in which case the bombs would have to be repacked in the cases and returned to the "bomb dump". Of course, some planes were frequently unable to reach the target because of mechanical failure, and these of course would bring back their bombs.

I was fortunate to be in one of those tents that had a number of Armament men as inhabitants — five of the eight being in that line of work. As such, these bomb-jockeys knew what the bomb loads were going to be for the next day as soon as other enlisted men, or sooner. As a result, our building expansion program moved along quite nicely, and in due time not only did we expand the two sides and rear of the tent — but also were able to lift the front tent sides and gain spaces for the seventh and eighth bunks — leaving the sixteen by sixteen foot center area of the tent for living quarters, except of course for the four-inch tent pole; and all eight of us were sleeping in space that was originally outside of the tent walls.

Before spring had arrived, nearly every tent had its own little gasoline heating stove inside — fed from a storage tank outside via tubing from wrecked aircraft. These of course could become very dangerous — and I do not know of any tent that had the stove going all night. I know that one evening during a real spring downpour, someone noticed that some sparks from our chimney (which ran up the tent pole and out at the top of the pyramid) had evidently landed on the tent, and several burnt spots were noted. Some nights later, the same thing occurred, but without the help of the rain. We all scrambled outside, and someone grabbed a can of water, and we boosted Pellegrini onto the roof, as he was the lightest. He scrambled up the steep slope of the tent, carrying the water, and put the smoldering embers out. We learned from this that we must control the flow of the gasoline a little closer, and not let the fire get too hot, no

matter how cold the outside air.

Also during the first spring, small one-hundred ten volt gasoline generators were made available for the flying crews' tents, so that they might have electric lights in their quarters. The tents were so limited because the small size of the generators made it impossible for them to carry a great load. In spite of this and orders from headquarters, several ground crew men could be seen after dark running wires from their tents along the ground and tying them into the wires running to the tents of the fly-boys. By late summer, generators of sufficient power were available that made such "bootlegging" unnecessary.

RETURN TO SCHOOL

William M. Robishaw (737)

Due to the fact that I was the only bombsight and autopilot maintenance man in the original cadre of the 737th Bomb Squadron, I was selected and designated to accompany the airplanes and flying crews to the overseas destination. I and three other ground crew personnel were assigned to fly in the B-24 the flying crew had named "Gentleman Jim," — named after the former heavyweight boxing champion; and because the pilot and commander of the plane was also named James Corbett. The average age of the crew was probably twenty-two. After flying to Mitchel Field in New York, and spending about a week in final preparations and indoctrination for flying across the Atlantic (or perhaps Pacific), we headed south to West Palm Beach, Florida.

We left New York in mid-December, and flew south over Baltimore on our way south. It seems that the plane's navigator had attended high school in a Baltimore suburb, although none of the ground crew nor gunners were aware of this, until later. Being cold, the waist deck windows were closed (these windows would be removed before flying into combat). Most of the six of us in the waist section were dozing about the time we were approaching Baltimore, when we were aroused by the feel of the plane being in a steep dive. One of the ground crew assigned to the plane was a parachute rigger, and he awoke quickly and rushed to one of the waist windows. He had this window open in just a few seconds, even before the rest of us were completely awake to the rapid descent. In fact, he had one foot on the sill of the opening, preparing to jump out and parachute to safety, when the plane suddenly leveled off and went right into a steep climbing turn. Upon leveling off at a somewhat safer altitude, the plane again headed into a rapid dive, and repeated the previous maneuver. As we changed from a dive into a climb, we saw a high school right under us, and realized for the first time that we were for some reason doing a "buzz job" on this building — but we still did not know why. We must have buzzed five or six times before continuing our journey southward. We were able to see the U.S. Capitol Building in the distance — flight regulations permitting no plane to approach within five miles during the War. Needless to say that the six of us in the waist section were thoroughly shaken by this buzzing experience — and there was little snoozing during the rest of that flight.



PREPARATION FOR OVERSEAS

William M. Robishaw (737)

While stationed at Charleston Air Base, the word got around that we were in our final training preparations, prior to being shipped overseas. The base was known as a final training area, and other groups were also stationed there, making final training preparations.

In one of these other outfits, a ground crew member felt that he had not received enough basic training to prepare him for overseas duty; and he reported this to his commanding officer. Perhaps he thought that this complaint would save him from going across the ocean to serve; but he was fortunate to have an understanding commanding officer — as nearly all personnel on the base found out. This understanding CO saw to it that the complaining GI DID receive sufficient training for overseas duty; and he did receive training in the proper methods of protecting himself in case there were any enemy air or ground attacks. This untrained one was sent out every day, for at least one week (during which time nearly everyone on the base visited that area, in order to see the poor soul in training), in full field pack, carrying an entrenching shovel and a carbine. He was sometimes led by a non-com, in stealthy approaches to "enemy" positions, — such as barracks or trees or coal bin sheds; and he was also instructed in how to retreat and take cover. Much of his training was the proper method of digging a fox-hole — which must have been something to see. In order to more-nearly simulate battle conditions, he was instructed to dive into the partially-completed fox-hole whenever someone would open the squadron headquarters door and blow a whistle; he was to remain crouched there until the next time someone would blow the whistle, when he was to crawl out of the fox-hole, still in full field pack, and resume the digging.

The day that I drove through the area in our section's jeep, he was being directed by a sergeant — directed in a mock attack upon various items in the area — a tree, then a wood-storage box, a corner of a building — and he was making his attack approach flat on the ground, while the sergeant ambled along behind, pointing out to him the various means of cover he might make use of in his approach to his objective. The poor guy certainly received a sufficient amount of overseas training, in a concentrated period of time. His plight perhaps kept many other frightened GI's from complaining in a similar manner — once they saw how much good the complaining did this one guy. In fact, we all felt, after seeing him in his "training," that we were very well prepared for overseas duty.

SOMEBODY GOOFED!

William M. Robishaw (737)

While at Charleston Air Base, our bombsight and autopilot section had the opportunity of being helped to learn about the workings of the Sperry bombsights and autopilots through the services of a Sperry "feather merchant". "Feather Merchant" was a term applied to civilian employees of companies that supplied equipment to the Air Force — a sarcastic term referring to the fact that these company

representatives had a feather-soft job, with expenses paid. This representative would be sent to the armed service bases to help the GI's learn the proper care and maintenance of the company's equipment. The better the job these "feather merchants" did, the greater the satisfaction the armed service would have with that company's equipment — making for more orders in the future, of course.

Naturally, this man was a technical representative for the Sperry Gyroscope Company, and was a very conscientious worker. He gave us many valuable tips on the operation and maintenance of the equipment we were responsible for — tips that continued to prove valuable for us for many months to come, in Italy. Some of these tips simplified our routine maintenance; some helped us in trouble-shooting for malfunctions in the equipment; some helped us in making adjustments to the equipment. His help relating to the autopilot was especially helpful.

On one occasion, he wanted to find the cause of a malfunction of the autopilot on one of our planes. These autopilots consisted of two high-speed gyroscopes, spinning at 25,000 revolutions per minute. These were electrically connected to three hydraulic-powered servos, to operate the three control-surfaces of the aircraft. The servo operating the elevator was located just forward of the rear turret, at the top of the fuselage; the one operating the rudders (twin rudders on the B-24) was located on the floor of the half-deck, above the rear bomb-bays; and the third servo operating the ailerons was in the center-structure of the wing — being available for maintenance from the catwalk of the bomb-bay at about the middle. After having done some preliminary ground-checking of the equipment, and testing the emergency release-of-servos cables (this cable hook-up would disengage the servos so that an electrical short would not cause one of the controls to lock in a full-over position), the company rep asked for a flight test. So the rep and I boarded the plane, which was manned by a minimum-permissible crew of pilot, co-pilot, and flight engineer — and the pilot taxied the plane to the end of a runway. As we waited clearance for take-off from the control tower, the pilot said that he was going to practice a short-field take-off. In order to do this, the co-pilot held the wheel brakes locked, and the pilot took the flight controls. The engineer adjusted the engine controls and throttles, as the Sperry rep and I stood just behind the pilot and co-pilot, looking over their shoulders, and bracing ourselves against the armor plating behind the seats. The plane vibrated terrifically as the four engines reached their maximum power — the plane shaking as though uncontrolled. Finally the pilot called "brakes off" to the co-pilot, and the big flying boxcar lurched forward precipitously. I was nearly thrown from my feet, backward, as the big bird rapidly gathered headway, the flight engineer rapidly calling out the airspeed. Within two hundred yards, I am sure, the plane was airborne, containing one mighty shook-up ground-crewman, believe me.

As we reached altitude and began testing the autopilot, everything worked well until we began checking the aileron controls. For some reason, the ailerons did not respond at all, let alone respond properly. Upon the suggestion of the Sperry rep, I went into the bomb-bay to check on whether the aileron servo was properly engaged, after our ground-checking of its release. I found that this servo was not engaged properly, as I had evidently goofed after the ground-testing, and reported so to the rep. He told me to go

back and re-engage it properly, and he would have the pilot hold the ailerons steady while I did so. This was against Air Force regulations, as fingers could easily get caught and mangled in the cables if the aileron controls were suddenly moved. Although frightened, and not positive that the pilot would be able to hold the ailerons steady, I nervously made my way again along the catwalk. After all, I had goofed, and better not to have to report the goof to any officer on the ground. Although I was fearful of catching my fingers in the cables, I was more fearful that this accident might make me step inadvertently off the catwalk onto one of the bomb-bay doors, which would not have held me — and I could not move along the catwalk with a parachute on. With great care, I disengaged the servo with a screwdriver, and then just as carefully re-engaged it properly — and being very sure to do it properly.

All concerned were pleased that the malfunction had been found and repaired in the preliminary ground checking — especially yours truly.

NO KP!

William M. Robishaw (737)

When we arrived at the Charleston Air Force Base, we found that the flying crews were to receive advanced training in their particular "trade". Because I was the section head for bombsight and automatic pilot maintenance at the time, I was responsible for setting up four bombing trainers in a hangar set aside for the purpose. These trainers had arrived crated, and had to be assembled where they were to be used. Each trainer was a rolling platform, approximately fifteen feet high. The framework was constructed of pipes bolted together, with a wooden platform and bombsight mounting bracket atop this framework.

None of our section had more than seen these trainers previously, and thus the construction of the first one took much effort — reminding me now of those children's toys that fathers spend all Christmas Eve putting together "in a few simple steps". There was a deadline to be met, so that the bombardiers that would be arriving at the base would be able to get in more practice than would be available in real flying practice missions. The 737th section took the initiative, probably because Lt. Robinson, our section officer, appeared to be the only squadron section officer for bombsights and autopilots — at least, I cannot remember the other three squadrons having one in Charleston. So the three of us comprising the 737th section — Ralph Pelligrini, Mel Ames, and myself — set to work. After completing the first two of the trainers, we were happy to note the arrival of the sections from the other three squadrons, to help on the last two trainers. We worked for twelve to sixteen hours a day over a two-week period in order to complete the work on schedule.

During this time, Mel Ames was a PFC, and as such was of course subject to assignment on KP. Lt. Robinson did try to get him released from this duty, as we needed all the help we could get, but was unsuccessful. Mel was assigned to report at five one morning, when we were at our busiest. He told the Squadron Adjutant that he did not have any shoes due to the Supply Room not having his size in stock. He had tried to get these shoes for some time, but was still awaiting them — wearing his low-cut civilian shoes until the supply

room could properly fit him. The Adjutant looked at his feet when Mel gave him the story of no shoes, and was quick to point out that Mel did have shoes on. Mel told him that those were his own shoes, and that he would not wear them for KP. The Adjutant thereupon ordered him to report to the mess hall the next morning, as scheduled.

The next morning at five, Mel arrived at the mess hall, wearing GI socks but no shoes. The mess sergeant on duty questioned him as to his unusual footwear, as the rest of the KP's laughed. Mel told him the story, and asked what his KP task was. The mess sergeant told Mel that he would have to get shoes in order to work there; the story finally getting past the Adjutant to the Commanding Officer of the squadron. The CO ruled that Mel would not have to pull KP. As the KP's served for a full week at a stretch, we welcomed our KP hero back to our working ranks setting up bombing trainers — where Mel worked harder and longer than if he had served on KP. — And oh, yes! He did wear his low-cut civilian shoes to work with us. It was just the principle of the thing with Mel.

REMORSE

William M. Robishaw (737)

One of the nicest lads we met from the flying crews was a Jewish radio operator, who had arrived late in 1944 from stateside. He was a friendly fellow, who was well-liked by everyone. He was the member of an ordinary flying crew, eager to do his best.

One day he and his pilot, co-pilot, and flight engineer, were to take the plane up for a test-hop after it had received some minor repairs. This Jewish boy awoke that day with a terrific head cold, and was not permitted to fly. Another young radio operator from the States had arrived a few days before, and asked to be permitted to take the Jewish boy's place; as he had no flying time in since arriving in Italy. He was granted permission, and the plane set off on its test hop.

Somewhere during the midst of the test hop, the pilot decided to buzz the Adriatic Sea, skimming along above the waves. As we later learned from the lone survivor, the pilot kept lowering the Liberator, closer and closer to the waves, refusing to pull up even when one of the crew asked him to do so. Inevitably, one wingtip struck the water, throwing the plane into somersaulting rolls, ending up by plunging into the sea and killing those within on impact, or drowning them — except for the surviving flight engineer.

The Jewish lad, the regular member of the crew, who had such a cold he was unable to be along on the test-hop, moped around for many days, feeling that he was responsible for the death of the younger replacement radio operator. And what could anyone do to ease his troubled conscience, even though everyone knew that it was certainly not the fault of anyone, except perhaps the pilot?

DELAYED-ACTION FUSES

William M. Robishaw (737)

On a few occasions, to provide a demoralizing as well as damaging effect, our bombs were to be equipped with

unique ultra-sensitive detonating fuses. These fuses were rather tricky to install in the bombs, and once installed, they could not be removed without also detonating the bomb. A reverse turning of the screw-threads of the fuse even a small fraction of an inch would, in fact, cause detonation. As a result, these fuses were installed just minutes before take-off, when there was no longer a possibility that the mission would be called off.

Another feature of these fuses was that they could be set to detonate at impact, or at a certain time delayed until after impact, up to as long as twelve hours after impact. Thus, when a raid passed a target area, and many bombs had exploded, the people might return from their shelters only to find that they would be subject to sudden unexpected explosions for several hours. Of course, they did not know when these types of fuses were being used, and if any unexpected bombs were found in the area, they would have to be left alone, or defused — which was impossible with these fuses. Such knowledge must have been rather unnerving to the population of any target area.

If, for some reason, one of our planes had to return without reaching the target (such occurrences were common due to engine failure), these bombs would have to be disposed of, because they could not be unloaded from the airplanes. On one occasion, one of these returning planes crashed into the fields some miles away, exploding in flames. The flames activated the time fuses, and the military police were informed. A patrol had to be put on duty for over eight hours, in order to keep all persons, G.I. or native Italians, away from the wreckage. By the end of this time, all bombs aboard had exploded, with the patrolling M.P.'s keeping count so as to be sure when the area could be declared safe.

FATAL BUZZ JOB

William M. Robishaw (737)

So that the planes could take off early in the morning, the armament crews would begin loading them the night before, with whatever type of bomb loads were called for by the target, and the damage desired. Sometimes the decision as to the target and/or the bomb load would not be reached until late in the evening, which meant that the armament crews responsible for loading bombs would be working late at night, perhaps beyond midnight. Then, if for some reason such as weather, the mission would be called off, the bombs would have to be unloaded the following morning, for safety and/or convenience of the ground crew personnel working on maintaining the planes. Sometimes the mission would be called off at the last hour, perhaps even after the flying crews had been briefed for the mission, and already were at the planes.

Such was the case at an airfield some miles away one bright morning in the midsummer of 1944. The pilot was at the plane with his crew, ready to go, when word came from the Fifteenth Air Force Headquarters to forget the mission for the day — a mission which called for each Liberator to drop eighteen bombs of two-hundred fifty pounds each onto a rail yard in Austria. The pilot wanted to fly that day, the weather being so fine, and decided that he would take off without waiting for the armament crew to unload the

bombs. His full crew boarded the plane, and they took off for what was expected to be a joy-ride.

At our base, the same morning, we were able to hear the bombs of that ill-fated plane exploding, four or five separately-spaced explosions. We later learned that the pilot had succumbed to that malady known as "buzzing" — flying the plane at slightly above ground-level over a tent area and thus frightening the occupants, perhaps even to the extent that some would jump into foxholes. As happened many times, these pilots thought that they were "pretty good" fliers, and as many others did, this pilot became overconfident. In banking to make a low-altitude turn, his plane lost just enough altitude to drag a wing-tip along the ground — and as result the big lumbering Liberator cart-wheeled along, finally splatting into the earth and breaking into flames. The tail-section of the plane had broken free of the rest of the fuselage, and tumbled some hundred yards away from the burning remainder of the plane. There were four crewmen in the tail-section, who fortunately survived, receiving only severe bruises as a result of their tumbling. Of course, the six men in the fore-part of the plane died in the crash and resultant fire.

Many planes were lost in similar fashion in our area of the European theater — just because the pilots thought themselves to be "hot shot" pilots.

CLASSIFIED MATERIAL

William M. Robishaw (737)

The Armed Services have several classifications into which all data and written material fall. Many written materials are available to the public, and the bulk of the remainder of the information concerning guns, tanks, planes, and so on is classified material. It falls into one of several classifications — restricted, confidential, secret, or top secret. During the World War II, bombsight and autopilot information started out as secret, and by late 1942 had been changed to a confidential status. This meant that certain personnel only were to be given the information regarding bombsights or autopilots, and that any written materials concerning these items were to be the responsibility of authorized personnel only.

On one fine sunny morning a few months after our arrival at the Cerignola base in Italy, I was making my way toward our maintenance shop, carrying several "log-books" in which the running record and maintenance records of bombsights were noted. These, of course, were my responsibility, and when they were out of the shop were to be with me. As I passed our squadron orderly room, or headquarters building, I gazed into the clear blue sky and noted one of our silver Liberators approaching at a low altitude. I was curious as to the reason for the low altitude, and so paused for a few seconds. The orderly room stood on the lip of a saucer-shaped depression, in the center of which were the two side-by-side runways, and the parking revetments and several maintenance buildings — this area being referred to as "the line". As I stood on the edge of the lip, I made out that the approaching lumbering plane had its left outboard engine stopped, and the propeller "feathered" (turned so that the edges of the prop faced front-and-rear, thus reducing air drag and preventing the prop from turning, or "wind-

milling"). As I watched the plane approach, it began a slow turn to the left, preparing to line up with a runway and land; the dead engine forcing the plane out of that day's bombing mission. As it slowly banked to the left I was surprised and horrified to see the two right-side engines overpower the single left-side engine — carrying the plane completely over on its nose, at an altitude of what must have been far less than five-hundred feet. As the plane rolled over onto its nose-down position, it spun into the ground very quickly, as I watched while my feet were glued to the spot. The plane struck the ground with a terrific crunch, and the wing tanks filled with high-octane aviation gasoline erupted into a flaming funeral pyre for the unfortunate ten men of the flight crew — who were probably figuring themselves lucky to be missing the bombing mission, up to just a few seconds previously.

I soon recovered from my horror-struck awe, watching the flames leaping high into the sky amidst clouds of heavy black smoke. The nearest tent and foxhole was but a few rods away, and so I jumped right in, without waiting for an invitation from its inhabitants — the few other ground crew personnel that barely beat me to the haven of safety. We all crouched down, with the knowledge that the bombs aboard the plane, and now surrounded by the flaming fuel, might go off at any moment. In discussing this possibility, we found that one of the men in the foxhole was an ordnance man — the personnel that dealt with bombs. He reported to us, upon being questioned, that the five hundred pound bombs aboard that plane would kill a man, just from the shock of detonation, at a distance of some sixty-plus feet. We were within a distance of two-to-three hundred feet; and there were ten bombs aboard.

With some quick mathematical reasoning, we figured that we were twice as close as we should be, to feel completely safe. (later, it was found that we had not considered other factors in our reasoning, and that we had been perfectly safe in that foxhole, from concussion at least). Some of the fellows in the foxhole were afraid to leave, and make a run for it, because the bombs might go off before they reached another foxhole, which was at least three hundred feet away. However, a few others and I decided that sitting there, too close, was not good, and the sooner we started the farther away we could be before any explosion took place. I had already placed the log-books on the edge of the foxhole, and so away we went.

About three hundred feet away, I dove to the ground, but at the time I did not know why — and still do not. I landed prone just as the sound of a bomb-burst reached my ears. I turned over and looked back, to see a great column of black smoke rising above the wreckage of the burning plane. As I gazed in wonder at this sight, I saw a piece of the wreckage falling toward me; I got to my feet quickly, and judged the approach of this large piece of the wrecked plane — judged just as a baseball outfielder judges the flight of a long fly ball. The piece of wreckage struck the ground about twenty feet to one side of me, bouncing ten-to-twelve feet into the air when it hit; and continued bouncing and rolling for several yards. I went over to look at this smoking piece of wreckage, and found that it was about the size and weight (evidently) of an automobile generator, perhaps larger.

At this moment, a ground-crew man stepped from a tent nearby, evidently not having been aware of the wreck until

the bombs exploded. As he turned to look toward the explosion, I saw him glance at his hand — discovering that a very minute piece of the plane's "skin" or some such fragment had slightly scratched his hand.

After awaiting nearby until the smoke of the fire had died down, and it being evident that there would be no further bombs detonated, I made my way cautiously back toward the orderly room, and looked down from the saucer lip. There, a short distance away, lay a complete mass of unrecognizable metal, with no shape resembling anything man-made at all. It smoked for several hours; it was no use for fire-fighters to approach it, for the ten unfortunate fly-boys that went down in the craft had no chance for survival whatsoever.

After gazing at the wreckage for several minutes, I returned to the first foxhole, to find the log-books untouched. I picked them up, making sure that all were still there, and made my way down to the maintenance building; and continued the day and my small part in a very big war.

NOSE-OVER

William M. Robishaw (737)

The main landing gear struts of the Liberators were of tubular steel or aluminum alloy, approximately four to five inches in diameter. These struts carried the four-foot main-gear wheels, and retracted laterally into the wings. After the plane had lifted from the runway in takeoff, the wheels were retracted quite quickly so as to reduce drag and permit an increase in speed, which was important so as to get more lift — especially when the plane was fully loaded. There was an appreciative increase in speed too, as I know from watching the air-speed indicator on occasions when landing from a training mission or test-flying mission for the auto-pilots. The air-speed indicator would drop approximately twenty miles per hour when the landing gear was dropped in preparing to land. As the planes needed at least one hundred miles of air speed in order to become air-borne, and usually attained one-hundred ten before the pilot would attempt the lift-off, this increase of speed was very desirable, and was to be sought as soon after lift-off as possible.

The Air Force Headquarters staff in the States, as well as the plane's manufacturer (Consolidated Aircraft) was constantly testing and modifying the Liberator in order to improve the plane. The main landing gear struts came under such scrutiny, for some reason, and it was found (overseas personnel were told) that these struts were being put under an unnecessary strain during retraction. The large main gear wheels were quite heavy, and were acting as gyroscopes during the time right after lift-off, due to the speed of rotation. This gyroscopic action was placing the strain on the struts, weakening them so that they might collapse under the impact of landing, especially if the landing were a bit rough.

As a result of the tests in the States, Air Force authorities sent out a tech order that, in the future, all Liberator pilots were to apply their brakes after lift-off, before retracting the landing gear. This would stop the rotation of the wheels, so that no strain would be applied to the struts during retraction.

As a result of the above tech order, our base experienced two tragic and unfortunate accidents within a few days of

one another, both identical in that they were caused by pilots attempting to follow this tech order; and also identical in that each accident took the lives of the full crew. The second accident was slightly more spectacular, however, and will be described here.

Mel Ames and I had been living in our "hut" near the "line" for some time, and had gone so far as to put a kind-of-a picket fence around the yard. There were several of us sitting around inside, as the planes had begun wending their way to the far end of the runway for take-off, carrying one-thousand pound general purpose demolition bombs. Suddenly a muffled explosive-type sound struck our ears, and all hands made for the door and turned and ran away from the accident we all knew must have happened at the runway. About two hundred feet away, we fell into a shallow ditch, and turned to locate the cause of our concern. All that was visible to us was a large cloud of what appeared to be yellow smoke at the nearby end of the runway, where the planes should have been rising from the ground. After a few minutes, the yellow cloud (of dust, as it turned out to be) dispersed, and to our amazement one of the Liberators was seen standing with its tail empennage pointing directly skyward. As we saw that there was no fire, due to the fact that the wing tanks had not ruptured (as they usually did upon crashes of any kind), we approached near enough to ascertain how the plane could remain in such a precarious balanced position.

Nearing the plane, we immediately knew what had occurred. The pilot had followed the new tech order, and had applied his wheel brakes before retracting the landing gear. Unfortunately, as in the case of the other plane, the plane had not quite accomplished the lift-off; what he did was actually to apply the brakes, which slowed the plane down, causing it to lose the flying speed it really did have, and as it settled down the brakes became even more effective. This sudden braking of the plane caused its nose to dip, as the front end of an automobile dips when the brakes are applied. The sudden dip put an unbearable strain on the nose wheel strut, which collapsed, and the nose itself dipped into the runway. This applied yet more braking action to the plane, and it slowed more, causing more friction and drag, which made it dip even harder into the ground. And so on, literally causing the nose of the plane to be ground away as it skidded along the gravel surface of the runway. The whole front section of the plane was thus ground away, and with it the six occupants of that part of the plane. The four crew members in the tail section were thrown about violently, also being killed. The plane's momentum ended as it reached a shallow ditch, which was holding the plane in its precarious position, balanced by the four propellers straddling the ditch. Somewhere in my scrapbook can be found a photo clipped from the Army newspaper "Stars and Stripes" showing this plane in its unusual position.

CRASH LANDING

William M. Robishaw (737)

After one particularly trying mission into the heart of the Nazi-held fortress of Europe, our Liberators returned quite the worse for wear. Many bore the scars of German flak, and some were damaged to the extent that they returned

with only three engines functioning, the fourth having failed during the air battle. This was a rather common occurrence, and such planes were usually given a priority to land before the more-able aircraft. Too, on some occasions, the flying crews were unfortunate in that they also were struck with the flying fragments of ack-ack shells, or the projectiles from German aircraft. Those bearing wounded personnel would signal to the waiting ambulances and medical personnel, upon approaching the runway, by firing a red flare. Also, the pilot would signal that there was some mechanical defect in the same manner, so that both ambulances and fire-fighting equipment would follow the plane along the runway after landing.

This particular incident refers to a plane firing a red flare as it approached, but which had no injured aboard, and all engines functioning well. As always, the crews already in, and all ground personnel about, stared at the plane, trying to determine the cause for the flare. I happened to be at one of our parking revetments nearest the runway, meeting a plane that had just taxied into its parking spot. The crew had just debarked, and were also watching the approaching plane as it fired its red flare. As it neared the point of touchdown on the runway, we were all able to spot the reason for the flare — one of the main landing gear had failed to come down into place, remaining locked in the wing. It happened to be the gear on the near side of the plane, and as the pilot brought the plane in softly on its one main gear and nose wheel, I could feel the silence building in the air, as those nearby (and I'm sure all others watching) waited with literally-stilled breathing. It seemed that the best to be expected would be a cart-wheeling effect as the near wingtip fell heavily into the earth runway, with good fortune perhaps permitting no outbreak of fire from the torn gasoline tanks — at least no fire until the survivors could be removed from the wreckage.

As the plane continued down the runway, the pilot miraculously was able to keep the near wingtip up, until finally the plane lost too much ground speed. As it was still rolling, we were able to note the engines stopping, in sequential order from the near side toward the far side, so as to prevent the propellers from striking the ground while still turning rapidly. Of course, the near wingtip did finally settle to the runway, but surprisingly softly for such a large and awkward bird.

As the wingtip met the ground, the plane continued on, veering slightly toward our side of the runway, slithering to a halt a few yards off the runway. As it halted, the crew poured from its hatchways, all uninjured, as we counted the full compliment of ten.

As the last emerged, it gave me a feeling of great pride in men to see all those at the revetment, and at nearby revetments, break into spontaneous applause and cheering — of course unheard by the pilot of the plane who caused the applause. The pilot certainly deserved this great praise, which was indeed great, coming from others of his own profession. It was too bad, I felt, that he was so far away that he was unable to hear the cheers and applause of these appreciative guys who felt a kinship and pride in their fellow-man.

SECRET (?) TROOP MOVEMENT

William M. Robishaw (737)

In the fall of 1943, our stay at McCook came to an end, and, as our departure time approached, there were many sad GI's to be seen in camp. Many of our wives had been staying in McCook, with their Army husbands living with them in McCook much as civilians did, coming home every day when off duty. It was felt by the majority of this group of couples, especially, that the 454th was bound for overseas from McCook.

During the War, troop movements were a secretive Army affair. Posters cautioning soldiers, sailors, and Marines to remain quiet when in the presence of strangers; warnings by base personnel at all bases to be careful what you wrote home about, especially upcoming movements of military personnel; and other precautionary measures to prevent the sabotaging of troop trains — the American GI was very much aware of the need for keeping such things mum.

Of course, everyone at the base knew we would be soon leaving McCook, but did not know the exact time or where we were going. It was a safe bet, though, that we would be traveling by rail, and there was but one railroad line through McCook — the Burlington. As the final hour of departure approached, wives were telephoned from the base that the time was soon to arrive. The evening of departure came upon us with a dismal slightly-more-than-a-drizzle rainfall. Trucks whisked the 454th through the prairie mud-and-gravel roads-in-the-making into the outskirts of McCook, where we were mustered into a column of fours, with field packs — sending our duffle bags ahead via the trucks. To our surprise, this "secret" troop movement was marched through McCook to the railroad station, led by the McCook Air Base Marching Band; and we were cheered on by not only our wives, but by nearly the whole town of McCook and many of the nearby farmers. As a typical Army follow-up (or was it foul-up?), we spent about three hours standing around outside in the rain at the railroad yards, waiting for our train to arrive, or be made up; and unlike the Army, we were permitted to visit with our wives during this time, and did not have to remain in formation.

SPAGHETTI AND . . . !!!

Hector (Ditto) DiTomasso (738)

Within walking distance of our Squadron Area was located a two-storied building. The top floor was a small hall. Here, one evening each week, we were served a generous-sized dish of spaghetti, covered with a generous amount of sauce and seasoned with a generous dash of coarse black pepper. The meal was tasty, the price reasonable, and the evening enjoyable, as it congregated fifty or more of us in one room. Thus, the conversations were lively, the mood friendly, and a feeling akin to a family gathering prevailed. It was one of the few events that many of us looked forward to whenever we were not duty-bound on this very primitive field that was referred to as an Air Base.

One evening we were enjoying this delectable repast as we had so many times before when someone in the hall called out one word loud and strong . . . "ANTS!" A murmur spread throughout the hall as we searched the table tops and floor expecting to find an army of these creatures scurrying around us as at an outdoor picnic.

"ANTS!!!" another voice cried . . . "Where??" . . . "Where???" other voices questioned.

"Here", another moaned, "In the sauce!!!" — and thus the sauce was carefully inspected by all diners present and a rumble spread thru the hall, like the sound of falling rain driven along by a swift moving storm.

"That's not Black Peppers, them's ANTS!!!" "Yeah, we've been eating ANTS!!! . . . ANTS . . . YUCK!!!"

Thus, an event that we had looked forward to with great anticipation came to an abrupt end . . . with one word . . . ANTS!!!

I must add that everyone to whom I spoke about that incident agreed that . . . the little rascals didn't taste too bad . . . IN TOMATO SAUCE!!!

THE LITTLE CORPORAL

Hector (Ditto) DiTomasso (738)

He rode astride his donkey, five miles or more, to our place of encampment. He came there to collect our dirty laundry. He rode and walked along the dusty dirt road that went winding through a somewhat scenic countryside. Our barracks bags filled with a variety of clothing hung onto the back of this little pack animal. He would lead this faithful servant back along that dirt road to home, where his mother washed and ironed to supplement an income that certainly was at a level of poverty. Our government supplied us with soap which we placed in with our clothing — this gave the family extra bars for their own household use.

He couldn't have been more than ten or so. He wore a pair of baggy pants that might have been hand-me-downs from an older brother. Shoes that were scuffed and well worn, a shirt of brown topped by a service hat of like material. The outfit had the look of an old discarded Italian Army uniform.

He would stand before us, head held high, shoulders thrown back, with one hand thrust into his shirt front in a Napoleonic pose and declare, in his native tongue, such things as "I am what I am and I am the greatest!!!" — thus we dubbed him "The Little Corporal".

As of this writing he would be in his fifties . . . I wonder . . .

How has he fared these many years?

Does he have children of his own?

Does he remember us?

Does he still live?

..... Much good fortune to you

Our "Little Corporal".

THE LAST INVASION

Hector (Ditto) DiTomasso (738)

The convoy of drab-colored Troop Trucks sat in the warm Italian sun, engines silent, backs empty, — waiting . . . waiting for their cargo to arrive. The cargo of Freedom Fighters who were scheduled to ride them to the Troop Ship that would maneuver them through choppy sea waters and drop them on another shore, in this, their last invasion.

"One more time!" Some of them said "One more time and it's done . . . all over . . . one more time!!" They came in great numbers, marching in unison, clamoring into the backs of the vehicles, crowded together as they waited impatiently for the order to "Move them out!"

Some were silent, thinking perhaps of the past, or the

future, if there was to be one. Others were loud, voicing their inner thoughts — perhaps both actions covered the feeling of anticipation and excitement that prevailed.

The final push was about to begin, 'The Last Horrah', so to speak. "One more time and it's done. One more time, God, guide us through in safety . . . no more dying . . . no more horrible sights. Please, no more bad dreams . . . Good Lord, make it quick, this is the Big One, the important one, the final jump, the Last Invasion!"

The trucks rolled into the Harbor of Naples and thousands of soldiers snaked their way up the gang plank of the Troop Ship. It weighed anchor, moved out through the Tyranian Sea, across the Mediterranean, through the Straits of Gibraltar, out into the broad Atlantic Ocean and, some nine days later . . . we hit the beaches . . . of HOME!!!

REVENGE OF A P-51 DRIVER

Emmett E. Beyers (736)

In the earlier part of the war when the P-51 arrived on the scene, they sometimes were misidentified in the air as the ME-109. A few had their platforms shot out from under them when they turned their noses into the group to join with them. The fighter group brought a P-51 to the field to try to impress upon us the difference between the two aircraft. We, in like manner, informed them if they wanted to come into the group for protection, they should slip in and not point their noses at us. Both sides made adjustments to cut down losses.

Sometime in June 1944, the wheat had headed out and the evening was warm and balmy. Our tent was the last tent in the 736th Squadron to the East and on to open fields. We had 4x8 box latrines, commonly referred to as "the library", placed throughout the Squadron. The evening chow had been dispensed with and the "libraries" were filled to capacity. At this serene moment, someone looked to the East and saw a fighter literally cutting the wheat with his prop. Someone yelled: "Fighters!" You've never seen a more chaotic scene in your life! The patrons of the "libraries" were departing with their pants up, pants down, diving to the ground and bare bottoms showing! As the P-51 flew by, he did a slow roll and departed. Needless to say, if that Jock is alive, he is still laughing!

LUFBERRY — THE DEFENSIVE CIRCLE

Emmett E. Beyers (736)

It was July 27, 1944 and another trip to Bucharest, Rumania. This was one target that could become quite active with flak and fighters. This day was no exception. The flak was very heavy with a few fighters near the target.

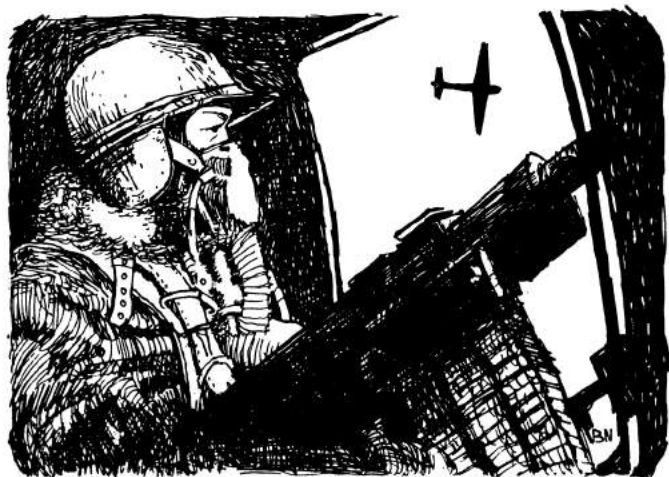
On the return trip, I had the chance to witness an unbelievable battle. The "Jerries" had been hitting the other group in the formation and picking off the stragglers, finishing them. It is the loneliest feeling in the world to see your group pull away from you. You against the world.

At this point, a large group of P-51s arrived on the scene. The "Jerry" leader, spotting the superior number of P-51s, pulled his fighters into a defensive circle. This became the undoing of a gaggle of ME-109s. The leader of the P-51s

pulled his drivers into a larger circle on the outside of the "Huns". Every time a "Jerry" lost his nerve and broke, he was shot down.

This show began at about 24,000' and continued in a spiral down close to the ground when the last few "Jerries" finally broke. I last saw them with the P-51s in hot pursuit.

I was lucky enough to be one of the few people to witness this air battle from its' inception to its' conclusion. It was a fabulous show from the ball turret which gave me a ring-side seat!



"BUZZ JOB" — AIRCRAFT #967 — 738th SQDN

This aircraft was a replacement in the 738th Sq, received early in 1944. The plane failed to return from Grp. Mission No. 181 on Jan. 31, 1945 its' 100th mission and was piloted that day by Lt. Nixon. The target was oil storage facilities in Moosbierbaum, Austria. Lt. Nixon returned in 967 on Feb. 2, 1945, having landed on Vis, Yugoslavia on Jan. 31.

John Thomas was the Engineer-Gunner on "Buzz Job" when she was shot down on 8 March 1945, flying Mission No. 207, bombing the Kapfenberg Steel works in Germany. When Lt. Reilly's crew was shot down, they landed behind Russian lines in the town of Kesmet, 60 kilometers SE of Budapest, Hungary. They were given a "hero's" welcome by the Russians because they had elected to land with a full bomb load, as opposed to salvaging the load over unknown terrain. They "lived" with the Russians for three weeks, repairing "Buzz Job" with parts cannibalized from other more severely damaged B-24s. Upon completing two engine changes, repair to fuel lines, and other minor maintenance problems, they returned to 15th Air Force Headquarters in Bari, Italy. There they were deloused, debriefed, and almost demobilized because of a Russian Major who had stowed away aboard "Buzz Job". It is believed that the Major entered the aircraft at the rear of the bomb-bay while the crew were performing their usual pre-flight tasks. After engine start and taxiing between parked Yak-9s, Lt. Reilly and crew departed, on 22 March 1954, for Italy. While flying at 18,000 feet, south of Yugoslavia, one of the Waist Gunners noticed a movement in the Center Wing section. Upon investigating, he found the Major, half blue with cold and lack of oxygen, under a tarp. 15th Air Force Headquarters was immediately informed, with explanation, and, upon landing, the Major was turned over to the MPs, never to be heard of again.

"Buzz Job" was a B-24-H-FO, one of 65 produced in San Diego. She was originally in the 485th, and transferred to the 454th. She had the second highest record of missions flown in the 454th with 126. — Vaughn Marker (738) and John Thomas (738).

A PERSONAL RECOLLECTION OF THE BARI HARBOR EXPLOSION

Friday, April 13, 1945 — "Hundreds Killed In Bari Blast — Over 1,000 Injured As Bomb-Carrying Ship Blows Up"

This news article from the Italian edition of Stars and Stripes is of significance to me and our crew (AP Commander Gene Barter), because we were in Bari on April 9, 1945 to bury our Bombardier, John (Jack) O'Connor in the Military Cemetery just outside of the city. Jack was on his 31st mission and died of anoxia caused by a frozen oxygen mask.

Transport to Bari was by a base ambulance for the EM, and a staff car for the officers. About noon time, after the funeral, we stopped at the military hospital for dinner before the return trip to home base. The hospital was located on a bluff just outside of Bari. Just as we were exiting the ambulance all hell broke loose. We saw this gigantic column of smoke from the harbor area, and several seconds later heard the concussions.

We piled back into the ambulance and headed for downtown Bari. The carnage we witnessed was indescribable. There were totally and partially wrecked buildings everywhere, including the Red Cross Canteen with its 15 foot doors blown off its hinges. Broken glass littered all the streets, and black goopy oil was splattered everywhere from a burning tanker in the harbor. What is still etched clearly in my mind was the frenzied paroxysm of the people. What I was witnessing was a mindless people stampede. Thousands of people were of only one mind: to escape from the city at all costs. They believed the German bombers had returned without warning as happened 16 months earlier.

The narrow streets of Bari could not accommodate the crush of this uncontrollable mob and many of the unfortu-

nate ones that lost their footing were instantly trampled. I saw several go down in this manner. I believe that most of the deaths reported in the news article were caused by this stampede rather than by the explosion itself.

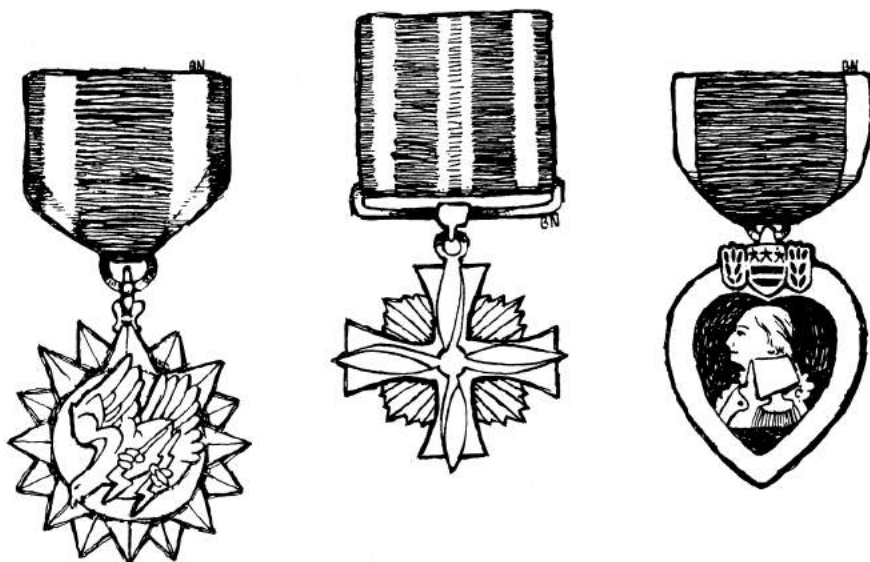
We were ordered by the MP's to leave the area immediately, so we high-tailed it back to the hospital. When we arrived, the wounded were coming on any conveyance that could carry them. Two of our crew, Joe Talbott and Marshall Bryan, were dispatched back to pick up casualties, and Willard Hubsch, Russ Chamberlain and myself remained at the hospital to assist in carrying in the casualties. The hospital quickly filled to over-flow and canvas cots were set up in the hallways.

The condition of the incoming wounded was appalling. The British stevedores working in the dock areas were in the worst condition. All were saturated with black oil, many were severely burnt, some had arms and legs missing, some were blinded, and all were bloody. The doctors and nurses had to first clean off the oil before they could attend to the injuries.

I remembered thinking that war in the rear echelons could be just as dangerous as in the front lines or flying missions over Germany. After most of the military personnel were cared for, an endless stream of Italian civilians received help for their injuries. The hospital staff was superb in coping with the conditions of this sudden disaster, and I understand that no one was turned away.

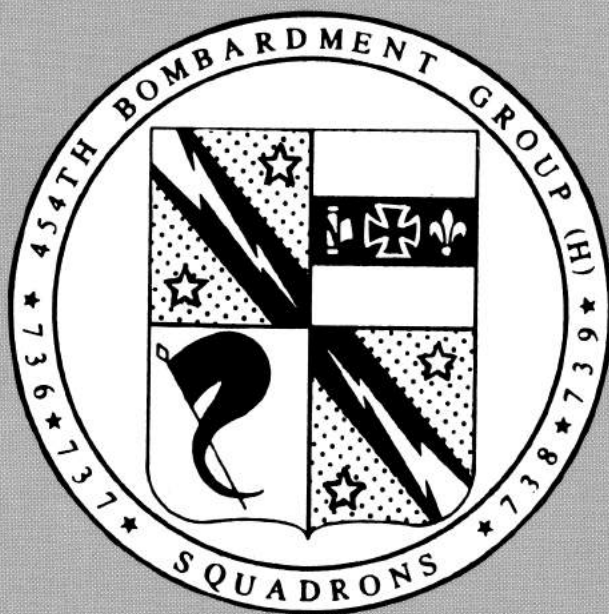
We also learned that our officers, Gene Barter, John Pallas, and John Cody were in the downtown area at the time of the explosion, and that John Pallas, our Co-Pilot, sustained a minor head injury from flying debris.

By now, the hospital staff had received additional reinforcements and we were relieved of our tasks. We had our dinner and then drove the 50-odd miles back to Cerignola and the Air Base. I was surprised when the news of the explosion appeared in the Stars and Stripes because the war was still in progress, and the policy was usually to never disclose any disasters that could give comfort to the enemy. But for me, being there was quite different than just reading about it in the paper. — William P. Taube (738)



BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

454th Memories



All biographical sketches were written and submitted by individuals of the 454th Bombardment Group, their relatives or close friends. The facts as they appear are the best recollection of the writers.

IRVING ABRAYAYA

An Advanced Pilot Instructor. Was assigned a crew at Westover RTU. Served as Squadron Commander of 739th Squadron, 454th Bomb Group.



Irving Abravaya

Was great to travel around Italy as he understood and spoke the language. Many pleasant and interesting memories of Rome, Capri, and Cerignola.

Completed 35th mission 22 Feb 45. Was reassigned to Ferry Command, Memphis.

After separation from service, flew commercial route, Peru, SA to Panama. Died in a flying accident in South America.

LESLIE M. AMELANG

Born 5 June 1920 at Ottumwa, IA. Enlisted in March of 1942. Served on 105mm howitzer on self-propelled half-track in 5th Armored Division. Transferred to Army Air Corps in Sep. of 1942.



Leslie M. Amelang

Classification and Preflight at SACC, San Antonio, TX. Primary at Pine Bluff, AR; Basic at Coffeyville, KS and Advanced at Altus, OK, Class 43H. Commissioned on Aug. 30, 1943. Assigned as Co-Pilot on B-24s, with training at McCook, NB and Charleston, SC. Was Co-Pilot on Switzer's crew, one of the original crews of the 454th. In Dec. 1943, our crew flew "B-Boys, coming and going" via South America to Africa and to San Giovanni Air Field, Italy — 736th Squadron. Shot down over Budapest with a new crew on my 12th mission on 13 April 1944. POW in Stalag Luft III and Stalag VIIA. Liberated by Patton's 14th Armored Division on 29 April 1945. Discharged on 23 Dec. 1946. Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, but I am not sure about the Oak Leaf Cluster.

Returning from a mission, our Bombardier said he wanted to see me in our tent. Once inside, he showed me a flak hole in the seat of his sheepskin pants. He then dropped his pants and asked me how serious it was. I replied, to his relief, that though the spot was

red, the skin was not broken. "Do you want a Purple Heart?" "No," he replied.

Retired now, accountant for 36 years at *Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times*, Louisville, KY. First wife, Margaret, died of cancer at age 54. Divorced second wife in 1989. Daughter, Jean, is a professional librarian. Son, James, and wife, Elena, are professors at University of Madrid, Spain. 2 sons have dual citizenship.

NORMAN E. ANDROSS

Enlisted in USAAF in October 1941 after release from U.S. Navy flight training for medical reasons. Trained as a Flight Engineer/Gunner on B-17's and went to England with the 305th Bomb Grp. (LeMays' outfit). Completed 25 missions in 1943 and qualified for Navigator training. Completed training at Hondo AAF and assigned to B-24's at Mt. Home AAF, Idaho. Assigned to Lt. Leo Venable's crew with 739th Sq. and arrived at San Giovanni AB in October 1944. Promoted to 1st Lt. and Sq. Navigator in February 1945. Flew with Col. Wm. Large (D Grp CO) and lead many Grp and Wing Lead missions. Made a career in USAF as a Navigator and Electronics Officer. Flew over 13,000 hrs. in WW II, Korea and Vietnam.



Norman E. Andross

Decorations: Silver Star, 3 DFC's, 2 Bronze Stars, numerous Air Medals and other decorations. Retired in 1972 as a Lt. Col. Presently a Consultant on Navigation and Electronic Warfare near Vandenberg AFB, California.

JAMES A. ANGELUCCI

Graduated from Vineland, NJ High School in 1940. Served as a heating and oil service man for about a year and then was employed as an ammunition handler for the D.O.D. Enlisted in the Air Force and took Air Crew Training C.T.D. (College Training Detachment) for 6 months at Butler University, Indianapolis, Indiana. Classification at San Antonio and Gunnery School at Harlingen, Texas. To Westover A.F.B. for O.T.C. and shipped out of Hampton Roads, VA on the Liberty



James A. Angelucci

Ship Smith Thomson. Took 27 days to reach Bari, Italy in Sept. 1944.

While returning from a night mission to Munich on Nov. 22, 1944, was forced to bail out over the Austrian border. Landed safely and made contact with the Partisans. Joined up with our waist gunner, Robert R. Brown, and, after walking for 81 days, crossed the Alps into Yugoslavia. Eventually came in contact with a British Destroyer which took us to Bari and finally back to base.

Presently divorced with two sons, Barry and Mike, and one grandchild, Kristen. Retired on disability April 29, 1977 from the CHUBB/LIFE America Insurance Co. after 25 years service as an agent. Have been living in Florida since Feb. 1980.

RICHARD C. AUSTIN

Richard C. Austin born June 24, 1922, Detroit, Michigan. Enlisted in the AAF in October 1942. Married Shirley Ellen Schmidt in June 1943. Entered Cadet training in July 1943. Went through the Southeastern Training Command. Graduated in Class 44C as a Pilot, Second Lieutenant, from Columbus, Mississippi. Went on to B-24 transition at Maxwell Field, Alabama. Assigned a combat crew in Lincoln, Nebraska. This crew turned out to be the best crew in the Army Air Force during WWII! Then on to Crew training at Biggs Field, Texas. Shipped overseas as a crew in October 1944, arriving at San Giovanni 454th BG. 738th BS in November 1944. Flew 29 combat missions.



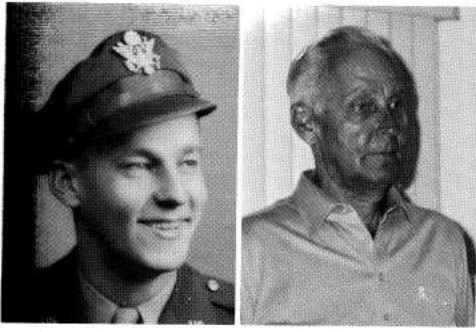
Richard C. Austin

Decorations include: Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, Good Conduct Medal, American Theater Ribbon, with Battle Star, European Theater Ribbon with 4 Battle Stars, Victory Medal, Army of Occupation — Germany and Presidential Unit Citation.

Discharged November 1945. Graduated from Michigan State University with a B.S. M.E. degree in 1947. Registered Professional Engineer in the State of Michigan. Worked for Detroit Edison Co for 39 years, as a Project Engineer, retiring in 1986. Active professionally in; American Society of Mechanical Engineers, Instrument Society of America (Fellow Grade), Engineering Society of Detroit, and Boy Scouts of America, at local and National levels. Daughter, Nancy born in Sept 1946 and Son, Ronald in Oct 1950. Now proud grandparents of 3 granddaughters.

EDWARD P. BACSIK

I know Ed was proud to serve in the Air Force. He enlisted on July 20, 1942 in Newark, NJ. Basic Training was completed in Miami Beach, FL. Went on to Sioux Falls, SD, where he trained as a Radio Operator-Mech. Then to Santa Ana, CA for Pre-flight Bombar-



Edward P. Bacsik

dier School. Thence to Victorville, CA for Advanced M-9 Bombardier training.

His active duty started June 13, 1943. Their Group flew the B-24 on 37 sorties over enemy occupied Europe. He flew Flight Bombardier, Group and Squadron leads. Navigated — Dead Reckoning — 800 total flying hours, 232 in combat. On return to U.S., instructed cadets and student officers in Bombardiering, Squadron Information and Squadron Intelligence.

Decorations: Air Medal with 4 clusters, Distinguished Unit Citation, European Theatre Ribbon with 6 Battle Stars, and Purple Heart. Ed was discharged July 8, 1945.

Ed talked very little about his time in service until the 454th had their first reunion. I did meet 3 men from the original crew. These men talked non-stop for 2 days.

About 2 years ago, Ed joined THE MILITARY ORDER OF THE PURPLE HEART Chapter 36 in New Jersey. They work very hard raising money for veterans and their families. He enjoyed this very much.

Ed died May 3, 1991. — Dolores E. Bacsik

GENE R. BAKER

In September of 1941, while attending Iowa State College, I enlisted as an aviation cadet, and was called to active duty in February of 1943. As a member of the class of 44F at Lubbock Army Air Field, I received my wings and commission in the Air Force.



Gene R. Baker

The nine member crew of Lt. Felix Harrod, of which I was Co-pilot, was assembled at the base in Lincoln, Nebraska. We spent the next few months training in the B-24 near Boise, Idaho. Our next stop was Cerignola, Italy, in December of 1944, via the Atlantic Ocean. We were assigned to the 738th Squadron, and our crew was kept intact throughout our missions, which included Vienna, Linz, Graz, Austria, and the other routine targets. My memories date back to the wonderful crew we had, and the association with the members of the 738th.

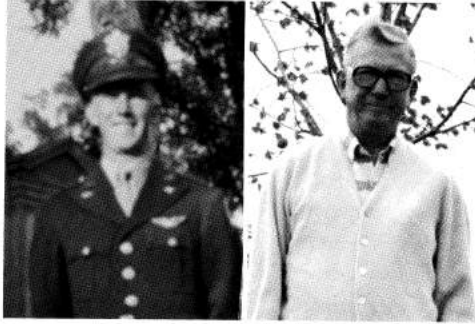
With the war ending in May of 45, so did our missions in Italy. Our last mission ended in

Puerto Rico as we were flying our tired B-24 back to the States. With two engines out, we left her behind on this island, and found another ride back to the States.

After graduation from Iowa State, we spent our life in farming, where we raised our family, and my wife and I are now retired near State Center, Iowa.

JOHN R. BALMER

Entered military service as a Private in the U.S. Army in 1941. Enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in 1942. Graduated as a Pilot, 2nd Lt, USAAF in August 1943. Joined the 454th BG as a Co-Pilot on Marvin J. Clay's crew in September 1943. Our crew went combat operational in January 1944 and completed 50 missions.



John R. Balmer

I was awarded the DFC and several Air Medals.

Returned to the U.S. in November 1944 and was assigned to Tyndall AAF as a First Pilot on B-24s training aerial gunners from France, China and the U.S. Assigned to reserve duty in 1945 and flew with the 231st Group Missouri Air National Guard until May 1951.

I was employed as a Cartographer/Aeronautical Information Specialist at the Defense Mapping and Aeronautical Aerospace Center in St. Louis, MO from 1945 through 1973 when I retired. While at DMAAC, I conceived, designed and developed the Bound Pilot's Handbook of Instrument Approach and Landing Charts used by the DOD.

My most treasured recollection of my association with the 454th was the total dedication of our air crew and the ground crews that enabled us to successfully complete each of our missions.

EUGENE H. BARTER

Flying Cadet Class 44-C, Central Training Command. Graduated March 12, 1943 as Pilot — 2nd Lieutenant. Then to B-24 transition in Liberal, Kansas and RTU at Westover Field, MA. With the crew survived, impatient-



Eugene H. Barter

ly, a 29-day Liberty Ship cruise ending in Bari, Italy. Assigned to the 454th Bombardment Group, 738th Squadron, in October 1944. First mission was flown October 20, 1944. Finished the tour as Captain in April 1945 after flying 35 sorties throughout the 15th Air Force Operational area.

Decorations: Distinguished Flying Cross; Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters.

Memories remain of a very compatible "work together" crew, each qualified and capable in his respective duty.

Married in 1940, my wife Sylvia also served as a pilot in the Air Force, Womens Airforce Service Pilot (WASP). We may have been among the few husband and wife teams serving in the armed services at that time. Subsequently, we parented four children with a resultant ten grandchildren.

JUNIOR E. BAZZLE

I was a Nose Gunner with the 454th Bombardment Group and the 737th Bombardment Squadron. I entered the Air Force October 1943. One year later, I was still here by the grace of God. On November 4th, 1944, we ran out of gas as we hit the runway. Three engines had stopped. If it had happened a couple of minutes sooner, we would have crashed and been killed. On November 6th, we were nearly hit by another plane, but, thanks to our pilot Robert Cooper's quick thinking, it was prevented. Nearly every plane had holes in their boxes except ours. The Lord was with us. Also, on December 15th, we lost #3 and #4 engines and had lots of holes. (That was the day the camera man was along.) Jinx! I was in Italy 7 months and flew 35 missions.



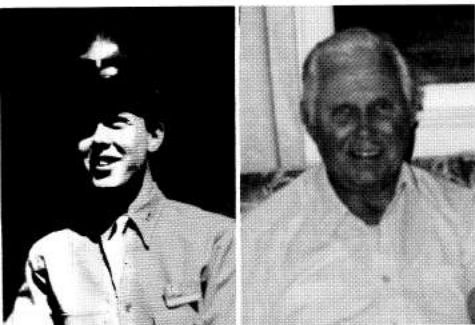
Junior E. Bazzle

I was discharged on November 5, 1945. On April 5, 1945, I married Edna Mongold. We had five children and now seven grandchildren.

I went into the trucking business and now, along with our sons, I am J.E. Bazzle & Sons, Inc. We haul all of Wampler-Longacre-Rockingham turkey feed.

LORENTZ T. BENDIKSEN

Born Mar 9, 1924 in Brooklyn, NY. Entered Army Air Corps on Aug 21, 1942. Basic Training in Miami Beach, FL, then on to Radio School in Sioux Falls, SD. Called to Aviation Cadet at Santa Ana, CA for Pre-flight, arriving on Christmas Eve 1942. On to Thunderbird Field, AZ for Primary Flight Training — Class 43-J. Cracked up a brand new PT-17 on my last cross-country flight. Washed out — what a disappointment! On to Radio School, this time at Scott Field, IL. Gunnery School — Laredo, TX and crew training at Westover Field, MA.



Lorentz T. Bendiksen

Ferried a new B-24 to Gander, Newfoundland — the Azores to Marrekeh, Morocco, Tunis — to Foggia, Italy and to the 454th Bomb Group, 739th Squadron.

Our first mission was on Nov 1, 1944 to Graz — then Linz, Vienna, Verona, Munich, etc. On our 18th, Brenner Pass, we took a hit through the left stabilizer, cutting our rudder cable. Capt. Willfinger did a great job getting us through those Alps and back home after leaving formation. On another mission, we were shot up badly and had to land at a British Spitfire field to get patched up, refueled, and limp back to Cerignola.

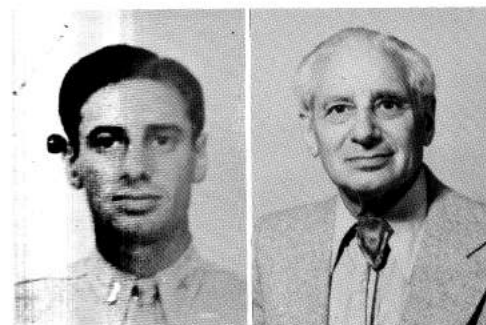
I especially remember two aircraft — "Miss America", the oldest and most shot-up but always returning, in her olive drab colors; and the "Silver Shark", unpainted, and seemingly aborting for one reason or another. I'll never forget the one that cleared the runway on a "frag" mission, dipped down out of sight and exploded in a black cloud of smoke — it was all over!

I managed to finish my 35 missions — Air Medal with 3 OLC, EAME theatre ribbon with 5 battle stars, and 2 Group Presidential Citations. Discharged Oct 4, 1945, enlisted in the Air Force Reserve April 1946. Assigned to an A-26 Bomber Sqdn at Floyd Bennett Airport and discharged April 1949 — just before the Korean War broke out!

Went to Aviation School on the G.I. Bill and attained my Commercial Pilot license with Multi-Engine Rating. Worked in Private Aviation — and, lo and behold, won an Aviation Safety award!

LT. COL. CHARLES D. BERMAN, USAFRet

My military and aviation careers were synonymous. I initiated my careers studying Aeronautical Engineering at New York University, but before I finished my Engineering, I changed over to Aviation Mechanic's school in order to get started in aviation. I became a licensed mechanic and was employed as such in factories and airlines from 1938 to 1942, when I enlisted and became an Aviation Cadet in the U.S. Air Force.



Lt. Col. Charles D. Berman, USAFRet.

I attended Preflight School at Maxwell Field in Montgomery, AL, Primary at Dorr Field, Arcadia, FL, Basic at Buckingham Field, Macon and Advanced at Blythville, AR. I washed out before completing Pilot School and then attended Navigation School at Selman Field, Munro, LA. Having graduated as a 2nd Lt, Navigator, I attended Westover Field in Springfield, MA for crew training. Overseas to Italy on a 29 day boat trip, August 1944, I was then assigned to the 454th Group for my tour of combat which lasted from Sep. 1944 to May 1945.

During this time, our crew lost 13 engines, failed to make it back to base 3 times. Had numerous narrow escapes that we knew about. Spent 2 weeks on the Isle of Capri Rest Camp. Had one man wounded. Two men bailed out. Numerous engine fires. I flew 6 Lead Navigator positions (sometimes with other crews). I flew a total of 31 missions.

Our ace First Pilot, Jack Nichols, miraculously flew us out of unknown but numerous dangerous situations. Finally, we flew our war weary bird back to the U.S. after the war June 6, 1945. Discharged Nov. 11, 1945.

Decorations: Air Medal with a 4 Oak Leaf clusters, European-African-Asian theatre ribbons with 4 Battle Stars, Good Conduct Medal, WWII Victory Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, Armed Forces Reserve Medal.

JOHN F. BERRY

Enlisted as an Aviation Cadet December 1943, active duty January 1944. Basic Training and Cadet Classification at Keesler Field, Biloxi, MS. To Harlingen Aerial Gunnery School in March 1944 and received Gunnery Wings in May 1944. In June '44, at Hammer Field, CA, I was assigned as a Waist Gunner on Lt. Brennekes' crew. Took our combat crew training at Walla Walla, WA and reported to Hamilton Air Field, CA where we received our new B-24 (Lady Katharine). (We flew 80% of our missions in her.) Flew to the East Coast, passing over my home town, Utica, NY, then to Gander, NF, the Azores, Marrakesh, Tunis and to Gioia, Italy.



John F. (Jack) Berry

In September 1944, were assigned to the 736th Sqd. Flew first combat mission on 23 September '44, a "milk run". My fourth mission to Blechhammer, Germany, convinced me that I would never return home but I completed my tour of duty April 20, 1945. We left San Giovanni for Naples and took a 21 day cruise on a Liberty Ship, in convoy, arriving at Camp Patrick Henry, VA in June 1945.

Received my discharge on August 6, 1945 and returned to Utica where I married Betty on 22 June 1946. My family consists of a son, Brian, and a daughter, Susan. Have one grandson and three granddaughters (including twin girls).

Retired from Bendix Aviation in December 1984 and have enjoyed the camaraderie of the 454th reunion. Betty and I have attended all except Colorado and are looking forward to many more.

EMMETT EVERETT BEYERS

The Summer of 1942, Uncle Sam collected us into his loving arms and gave us all a new vocation. I was lucky enough to land in the Air Force.



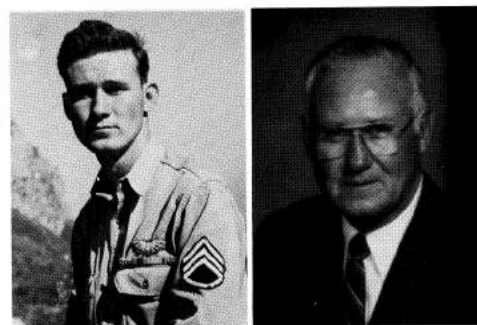
Emmett Everett Beyers

My first port-of-call was Wichita Falls, TX in A.M. School. From there, on to A.T.C., which was good duty. Good things don't last forever, so off to Gunnery School at Fort Meyers, FL. I could see Uncle had plans for me right there! We then moved to Salt Lake City, UT, where we formed into crews. We migrated South East to McCook, NB, where we were among the first crews to form the 454th Bomb Group. Time flew so fast and, before we knew it, we were given extended vacations in sunny Italy at San Giovanni.

I would like to say in all sincerity, the men I flew with are the finest that God had the privilege to make. My one regret is that we had to wait 45 years to bring a slumbering comradeship to being again.

DONALD L. BIEBER

Enlisted US Army Air Corps, 20 Nov 1940 — Assigned to original cadre, 738th Sq, 454th Bomb Gp (H), Jul 1943, Davis-Monthan Fld, AZ. OTU Bases: McCook AAB, NE; Charleston AAB, SC. Departed USA, 14 Dec 1943 on USAT John T. Lawson. Transferred to USAT Zebulon Pike, Lake Bizerte, Tunisia. Debarked, Pozzuoli, Italy, 13 Jan 1944. 454th assigned to San Giovanni AFld, Cerignola, Italy and 304th Bomb Wg, 15th AF. Duties: Adm NCO and Aerial Photographer w/rank of S/Sgt. First mission, 15 Mar 1944, Cassino, Italy. Began preparing 454th's Camera Formation, Jun 1944. On 7 Jul 1944, wounded by fighter attack after leaving target at Dubnica, Czechoslovakia. Mission #51 was to Friederichshafen, Germany. Left Italy, 13 Sep 1944; arrived New York, 26 Sep 1944.



Donald L. Bieber

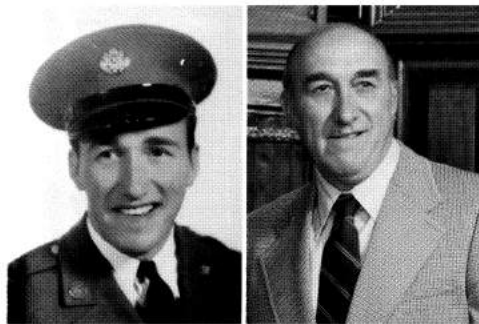
Sent to Convalescent Hospital. Reassigned to duty, Hq Classification Sec, Cen AAF Instr Sch, Waco AAFld, TX, Apr 1945. Discharged Army Air Forces, 30 May 1945, as S/Sgt.

Decorations: Purple Heart; Air Medal, 4 clusters; Presidential Unit Citation, 1 cluster; Good Conduct Medal; American Defense Service Medal; EAME CPN Medal, 7 Battle Stars; WW II Victory Medal.

Commissioned 2d Lt, 1949. Retired USA-FR, 1968. Married 46 years. Wife: Esther, 1 son. Petroleum Geologist, 35 years — Retired. Presently reside, Aurora, CO.

FRANCIS W. BIEKER T/SGT

Born 8/11/18 in St. John, IN. Active Service — 9/21/41. Basic Training — Fort Francis E. Warren, Cheyenne, WY. Transferred to 863 Ord. Co. H.A.M., Fort Benning, GA.



Francis W. Bieker T/Sgt

Enlisted as an Aviation Cadet on March 1943. Graduated from Airplane Mechanics School, Keesler Field, MS, Nov. '43; attended Aerial Gunnery School Tyndall Field, FL, assigned to Lt Francis Myers' crew at Westover Field, MA, Feb 1944. Crew was assigned to the 736th Squadron upon arriving at Bari, Italy, in July 1944. Lt Myers was recognized for his leadership ability and many of the 35 missions completed with Capt Myers were served in the Squadron Lead Position.

Decorations and Citations: Distinguished Unit Citation, EAME Theatre Ribbon w/5 Bronze Stars, American Defense Service Medal, Good Conduct Ribbon, Air Medal w/3 Oak Leaf Clusters. Discharged 6/21/45 — Camp Atterbury, IN.

Started F.W. Bieker Construction Corp., General Contractor March 1956. Firm is presently doing \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000 commercial and residential projects and is managed by our son, Robert.

Started Crown Rental, Inc. in 1962. A tool and party rental store with self-service storage units. Presently managed by our sons, Richard and Roger.

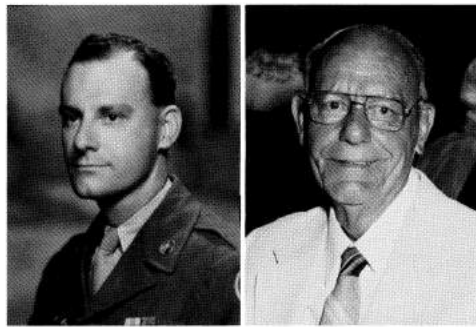
Retired in Sep 1983, spending Jan/Mar yearly in Scottsdale, AZ with the Chicago Cubs, Spring Training, being a "Die Hard" Cub fan.

JOSEPH T. BIGLEBEN

Born Sep. 21, 1913 in Greenville, MS. Moved to Houston, TX in 1916 and still reside there.

Enlisted in Army Air Force on Oct. 5, 1942 at Ellington Field, TX. Had Basic Training at Fort Sam Houston, TX. Shipped to Keesler Field, MS Jan. 28, 1943 and started Airplane and Engine Mechanic School Feb. 4, 1943.

Shipped to Tuscon, AZ in June-July 1943. On to McCook, NB in Sep. and then to Charleston, SC in Oct. after a 10 day leave to



Joseph T. Bigleben

visit my mother in Houston. Left Charleston Dec. 8 for Camp Patrick Henry, VA and on to Norfolk and the S.S. John Lawson for our trip to "sunny" Italy.

Arrived Bizerte, North Africa Jan. 5, 1944 and changed to the S.S. Zebulon Pike. Arrived at Naples Jan. 14, 1944. Went to Bagnoli Jan. 15 and on to Cerignola, arriving there on Jan. 23, 1944.

Worked on flight line as an Airplane and Engine Mechanic in the 739th Squadron.

Discharged as a Sgt. on Sep. 10, 1945 at Fort Sam Houston, TX.

Retired from York Corp on Dec. 15, 1978 after 42 years as Service Engineer in the air conditioning and refrigeration industry.

I have pleasant memories of my service with the 739th in Italy and of the many friends made there. I particularly enjoyed my R and R in Rome, the tour of St. Peters and meeting Pope John XII.

WAYNE E. BIGRIGG

Entered service in February 1942 and completed Infantry Basic Training before transferring to Army Air Corps in September. Graduated from Navigation School in Monroe, Louisiana, in September 1943, Class 43-12. Reported to Clovis, New Mexico, where I became a member of Boren Green's crew and completed Phase Training in South Carolina in December. Flew to Italy via South American and Africa, making the Atlantic crossing on New Year's night. Completed my missions on 2 July 1944, with a trip to Budapest and arrived in Ohio for Labor Day. Served as Instructor at Charleston and Homestead Fields during the next year and left the Army Air Corps in October 1945, after a few weeks at St. Joseph, Missouri.



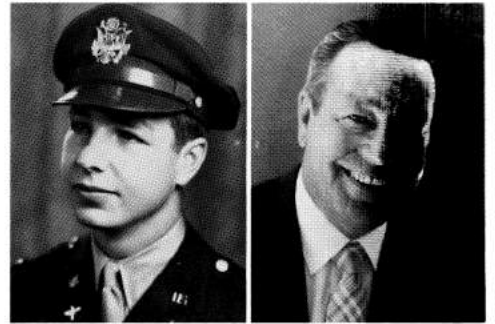
Wayne E. Bigrigg

My wife, Marilyn, and I reside in Columbus, Ohio, where I've been since WWII. We have a son, Craig, and a daughter, Susan, along with three grandsons living here. The older daughter, Sandra, and two grandsons live in New Orleans, where she has resided for 20 years. I completed my education in 1950 and worked the next 35 years with Internal Reve-

nue and Department of Defense before retiring in 1985.

STANLEY R. BILLICK

Inducted into Army Air Corps March, 1943. Preflight, Santa Ana, CA; Aerial gunnery, Las Vegas, N. Mex.; graduated Bombardier Class WC 44-6, Carlsbad Army Air Field, New Mex., 29 April 1944; B-24 crew training, Pueblo, Colorado; flew to Italy via Gander, the Azores, Marrakech and Tunis. Assigned to 738th Squadron, 454th Bomb Group, near Cerignola, with original crew as follows: Paul Pitts — Pilot, Fred Bimel — Co-Pilot, Walter Ozimkowski — Navigator, Joe Demboske — Engineer, Dave Mariani — Radio Opr., S.L. McElroy — Asst. Eng., Harry Kraftchick — Armament, Robert Hammond — Ball Gunner, Roland Webster — Tail Gunner.



Capt. Stanley Billick

After 15 sorties became 738th Squadron Bombardier and continued in that capacity through 25 sorties and V-E Day. Flew as Lead Bombardier with Squadron Commander Ligon Smith.

Decorations: Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters.

Separated October, 1945; married to the former Shirley Armour since 1946; two children. Practiced law in Chicago for 25 years. Elected Mayor of Naples, FL in 1982, re-elected and served a second term 1984-86. Continue to reside in Naples.

WILLARD S. BLANCHARD, JR.

Born Dec. 7, 1923 in Norfolk, VA. Enlisted Dec. 2, 1942. Trained at Maxwell Field, AL (Preflight), Orangeburg, SC (Primary), Sumter, SC (Basic), and Seymour, IN (Advanced).

Joined my crew at Charleston, SC for B-24 crew training. Flew 35 missions with the 738th Sqdn, 454th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force (30 as Co-Pilot and last 5 as Pilot).

I was one of the three men in a 738th Sqdn jeep who greeted Col. "Pappy" Gunn when he arrived back on the 454th BG runway as a "passenger" in an ME-109 flown by a Hungarian "Ace" with 25 kills to his credit.

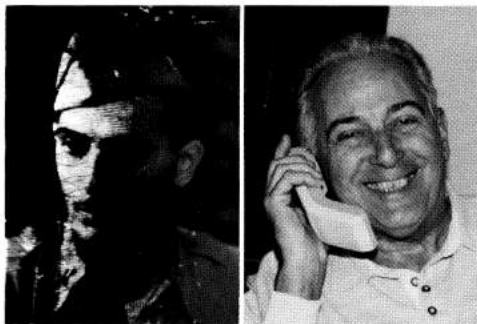
I was discharged in July 1945 as a 1st Lieutenant.

With 6 other men, I hold a 17-claim patent on the NASA MERCURY CAPSULE. Retired from a career as an Aerodynamicist with NASA.

Actively consulting and flying R/C model aircraft.

ASHER BORKAN

Asher Borkan born Oct. 23, 1919. In Oct. 1942 I enlisted in the Air Corps. as an Aircraft Mechanic. Later, I transferred to Aviation Cadet pilot training. After being eliminated from pilot training, I was informed that Bom-



Asher Borkan

bardier were needed. After training as a Bombardier, I graduated from Midland, Texas in Jan. 1944. I received further training in Massachusetts and Georgia and then proceeded overseas, arriving in Italy May 1944. We flew B-24 combat missions in the Balkans, Northern Appenines, Southern France and Central Europe.

During my tour of duty, I functioned as Squadron, Group, Wing and Air Force Lead Bombardier with promotions to 1st Lt. and Captain.

On Friday the 13th, we bombed Munich and, under air attack, lost one engine. We dropped out of formation, flew south and, fuel low, landed on the Isle of Viz, off the west coast of Yugoslavia. We refueled, took off and returned to base in Italy. Later, our ground crew found an unexploded 20 mm cannon shell in our right wing.

I was discharged in Nov. 1945. I have since worked regularly, most recently as Vice President, Corporate Purchasing and retired on Nov. 1989 and am a Purchasing Consultant and a Rotarian.

CYRIL M. BOSAK

Enlisted Air Corps Feb 1942. Assigned Duncan Field, San Antonio, TX. Entered Flying Cadet Training, Kelly Field, TX. Flew at Corsicanna, reassigned to Bombardier training at Midland, TX. Graduated Class 43-11 as 2nd Lt Bombardier.



Cyril M. Bosak

Assigned 454th Bombardment Group, 738th Squadron, Louis Kisylia B-24 crew at Tucson, AZ. Picked up "Dorothy K", our B-24, at Mitchel Field, NY after brief stay at Charleston, SC. Flew to San Giovanni Airfield, Cerignola, Italy via S. America and Africa as part of the original 454th Group, arriving Jan 1944.

Credited with 37 missions as Bombardier. Most notable, three over Ploesti in May 1944, Bad Voslau, Vienna, and two over Monte Cassino in one day. Was appointed, as a side job, putting together an Officers Club at the so-called Rubber Plantation in San Giovanni.

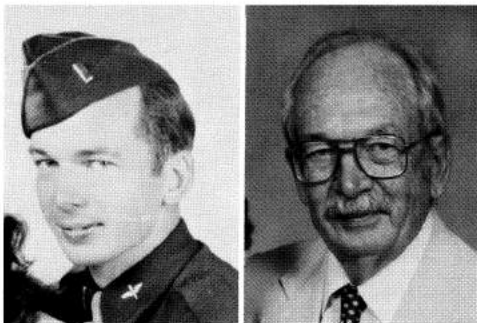
Our crew awarded a furlough to U.S. in June 1944, returned Sep and no longer needed for combat. Assigned to Midland as Sperry C-1 Auto Pilot Instructor for new B-24 pilots. Married home town sweetie, Olga Bernatovech, Feb 1945.

Served in Decatur, AL and Lockburne, Columbus, OH. Had side job as Housing Officer. Offered transfer in grade (1st Lt) but opted to get discharge, Ft Dix, NJ, Oct 45.

Reentered insurance business in Old Forge, PA (near Scranton). Retired 52 years later. Active in civic affairs. Had Little League Field named in my honor. Raised two daughters — Sylvia — Washington, DC, and Carol Williams — Flemington, NJ, with three grandsons. Served on the Board of Directors and as Memorial Chairman with our 454th Group Association.

RALPH P. BRANSTETTER

Ralph (Professional Electrical Engineer) and June (Professional Nurse) Branstetter, both born in Louisiana, Missouri. Ralph entered the Aviation Cadet (Engineering) Program at Chanute Field, IL in November 1942, continued at Yale University, graduating as a Second Lieutenant in April 1943. Assigned to the 392nd Bombardment Group at Alamogordo, NM for a short period before transfer to the 39th Bombardment Group at Tucson, AZ. Reassigned to cadre of the 454th Bombardment Group, 739th Squadron, as Engineering Officer and remained in that position until June of 1945. Reassigned as Group S-4 Officer and charged with overseeing movement of the group to Naples for return to the States. Received all campaign medals awarded to Group Plus Bronze Star Medal. Rejoined the remnant of the 454th at Sioux Falls, SD. Was then assigned to the 232nd AAF BU at Dalhart, TX, a B-29 base, and then moved to Grand Island, NE with the 242nd AAF BU. Mustered out December, 1946 as a Major and continued in Reserves until resigning in 1967 as a Lt. Col. Family includes son Tim, daughters Jane, Christy and Jacquelyn and grandchildren — including six girls and two boys. June and Ralph have been involved in the activities of the 454th Bombardment Group Association since its beginning, chairing the Colorado Committee which hosted the first reunion of the Association in October of 1984.



Ralph P. Branstetter

LEON O. BURKE

Born 9/27/22 Norwood, Missouri. Pilot: Ellington Fld, TX. B-24 Transition: Clovis, N.M. Joined 738th Sqdn: McCook, Neb. Trained: Charleston, S.C. Flew B-24 (#4129304) "Warrior Maiden" to N. Africa via Brazil with Sqdn. C.O. "Pat" Grimes. Joined by Flight Surgeon James Walker in



Leon O. Burke

Brazil. Crew Commander: Flew 50-51 missions usually as Sqdn. Deputy Leader. Had last complete original crew until Gunner "Tex" Luttrell sustained severe flak injury on 33rd mission. "Borrowed" Bombardier, Clyde Campbell, mortally wounded by flak on my 49th: (landed with left inboard feathered, left tire flat and hydraulic shot.) Last Mission: Ploesti again. USA on my 22nd birthday; By God's grace!

Decorations: D.F.C.; Air Medal, 4 OLC; E.T.O., 6 Stars; Presidential Distinguished Unit Citation, 1 OLC. Instrument School. Instructed USA, Brazilian and Chinese in B-24.

Most Vital Statistic: Married Alyene Brown 11/18/45; 1 son, 2 daughters. University of Missouri: A.B.; B.S. in Medicine. Southwestern Medical School of U. of TX: M.D. 1953. Plastic Surgery Residency: Dallas, TX 1956-58. Certified: American Board of Plastic Surgery; 1961. Private Practice: Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery; Sacramento, CA, 1958 to present. Assistant Clinical Professor UCDSMC. Christian Medical Society: past delegate and trustee. Treasured beyond expression are those bonds with the valiant comrades of the 454th.

VERLIN T. BURNETT

Born 1924 in Philadelphia, PA. Enlisted in the Army Signal Corps in August 1942. Basic Training in Miami, FL for six weeks, then off to Gunnery School at Tyndall Field FL. Graduated on 17 November 1942 and promoted to Sergeant. Assigned to Boise, ID and B-17s. Reassigned to Scott Field, IL Radio Operators School. Sent to Clovis, NM for B-24 transition flying. Was assigned to 454th Bomb Group at McCook, NB. Assigned to Crew 136, 737th Squadron. Flew to Charleston AAB, where we received our new Ford B-24 right off the assembly line. I was soon voted smallest to succeed in the Ball Turret, where I layed for the full 50 missions. We left Charleston for the over-water flight Dec 1943, arriving at Cerignola, Italy on Jan 26, 1944. Our first combat mission was on Feb 8, 1944 and our last and 50th mission was Aug 22, 1944. 10 of those missions were to Rumania, i.e., Bucha-



Verlin T. Burnett

rest and Ploesti. We were in formation there when Lt Col Gunn went down. On April 2, 1944, while bombing at Steyr, Austria, I shot down (actually it blew up) my confirmed kill of an ME 109. I was returned state-side as a Prisoner of War guard aboard the Santa Rosa, a Caribbean cruise liner. Was discharged Oct 3, 1945.

JOHN CALI

Enlisted at age 18, began Basic Training at New Cumberland, PA, Sept. 11, 1943. Received Aerial Gunnery Instructions at Miami Beach, FL; Lowery Field, Denver, CO; and Harlingen Army Air Field, Harlingen, TX. May 30, 1944 at March Field, CA completed type III flight training prescribed for aerial gunners. Departed the USA August 23, 1944. Landed in Naples, Italy and based in Cerignola with the 454th Bomb Gr, 736th Bomb Sqd. Engaged in 35 combat missions in Mediterranean Theatre air battles.



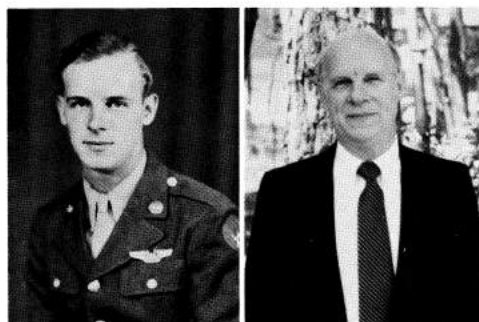
John Cali

Awarded the following medals: 2 Air Medals, Good Conduct Medal, EAME Theatre w/7 Bronze Battle Stars, AVN Badge Aerial Gunner, Overseas Service Bars. Highest rank — T/Sgt.

Memorable Experience: while on a 3 day leave, I went to visit my brother Ernest, stationed in Florence, Italy. While returning to base in Naples, I met a friend and didn't return to base until 1 day later than scheduled. Thank God, because that morning the crew left on a mission to Germany and was shot down, with only 3 survivors. Returned to USA May 15, 1945, and discharged Oct. 20, 1945. Married 34 years to Mae: 3 children, Mildred, Mary Ann, and James. Self-employed Ladies Apparel Contractor — retired 1988. Presently residing in Pen Argyl, PA.

THEODORE H. CAMPBELL, JR.

I enlisted in Spartanburg, S.C., in June of 1943 and was called to active duty in January of 1944. After gunnery school in Laredo, Texas, I was assigned to a crew in Casper, Wyoming. I was transferred overseas in October



Theodore H. Campbell, Jr.

of 1944 and joined the 739th Squadron as a Ball Turret Gunner.

One of my most memorable missions was to Linz, Austria on December 15, 1944. Near the target, superchargers on three engines went out and we began to lose altitude. We dropped out of formation and salvoed our bombs. On the way back we got lost and were running low on gas so we threw the waist guns, ammunition, flak suits, and everything else we could get our hands on overboard. With only about 20 gallons of gas in each tank, we were told to prepare to bail out. Several minutes later our Engineer was able to transfer some gas to the main tanks. We were then able to return to our field two hours after the Squadron had returned.

I returned to the States in June of 1945 and graduated from Presbyterian College in 1949. Retired from C&S Bank in 1988. I was married in 1957 to Nancy and have two children — Ted and Pat. Currently reside in Marietta, Ga.

JOHN W. CARPENTER, JR.

Feb. 43 Aviation Cadet Candidate — Miami Beach and Knoxville, Tenn. (U.T.)



John W. Carpenter, Jr.

June 43 Aviation Cadet — Maxwell Field, Ala.

Aug. 43 Primary — Lodwick Field, Lakeland, Fla. PT 17's

Oct. 43 Basic — Cochran Field, Macon, Ga. BT 13's

Dec. 43 Advanced — Moody Field, Valdosta, Ga. AT 10's

8 Feb. 44 Graduated — Class 44-B — 2nd Lt. — Pilot

Feb. 44 B-17 Co-Pilot Training, Tyndall Field, Panama City, Fla.

Jun. 44 B-24 Co-Pilot Crew/Training, Westover Field, Mass.

Aug. 44 Our crew (Pilot 1st Lt. Robt. G. Darcy, Bomb. 2nd Lt. Vincent S. Martino, Nav. 2nd Lt. James S. McLean and Cpls. Sander-son, Calhoun, Crissman, Mashburn, Morrow and Carnathan) flew B-24 from Mitchel Field, N.Y. via Gander, N.F., Azores, Marrakesh, Tunis to Gioia (replacement depot) Italy — thence to the 454th at Cerignola and assigned to the 739th Sq. under command of Maj. Swanson. Following quite a few missions, Darcy made Squadron Operations Officer and I became a first pilot with a crew made up of survivors of several other crews. On 27 Dec. 1944, (target Marshalling Yards, Bruck, Austria) took some shrapnel and lost two engines on the second go at the target. Entire crew abandoned plane via parachutes safely somewhere between Bruck and Yugoslavia. Captured by Germans, I was taken to Frankfurt on Main for solitary and interrogation — thence to Stalag Luft 1, Barth, Germany for the duration. Atom Bomb dropped and

war ended while on 90 day R&R — Discharge October 1945.

GORDON L. CASE

I enlisted in the Army Air Corps at Chanute Field, Illinois, August 13, 1940. On completion of Aircraft Mechanics School, I was sent to Maxwell Field, AL in March of 1941. In July of 1941, I was sent to Turner Field, Albany, GA, where I worked on many different kinds of aircraft. January 1, 1944, I was sent to Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, Panama City, FL. Upon graduation, I was sent to Westover Field, MA and put on Frank Hofstatter's crew. We completed training and were sent to Camp Patrick Henry, VA and finally embarked on a Liberty Ship at Norfolk, VA and joined a huge convoy bound for Bari, Italy. We were then sent to San Giovanni Air Base, Cerignola, Italy, and joined the 454th Bomb Grp, 737th Sqdn. I flew 32 combat missions with our crew and, when the War ended in April of 1945, we waited until June and flew a B-24 back to Bradley-Field, CT, then home for leave and was sent to Sioux Falls Air Base, SD. The War ended in August and I was discharged at Camp McCoy, WI Sep 23, 1945.



T/Sgt Gordon L. Case

PAUL S. CASH

Paul Spencer Cash 0-825786 born Winston-Salem, NC November 8, 1923. Enlisted in Army Air Corps December 2, 1942 as an Aviation Cadet. Preflight Maxwell Field, Alabama; Primary Helena, Arkansas; Basic Walnut Ridge, Arkansas; Advanced Twin Engine Stuttgart, Arkansas; Commissioned 2nd Lt. March 12, 1944. First Pilot B-24 Transition Maxwell Field, Alabama. RTU Chatham Field, Georgia. Flew a new B-24 as A/C commander with crew from Mitchel Field, N.Y. reporting to 454th/738th September 3, 1944. Crash landed in Yugoslavia October 14, 1944 after mission to Odertal. Evadee. Crash landed in Yugoslavia January 20, 1945 after mission to Linz., Austria, Escapee. Lost two crew members. Hospitalized for injuries and



Paul S. Cash

returned to US April 3, 1945. Assigned to ATC in Memphis with Fourth Ferrying Group.

Decorations: DFC with one cluster, Air medal with clusters, Purple Heart along with other theater medals. Rank Captain. Currently maintain commercial ASMEL — Instrument license. In general insurance business since service. Married Mildred Garrison June 22, 1945 in Post Chapel at Memphis AAF base and reside at 227 Riverside Drive, Morganton, North Carolina 28655. Three grown children Libby, Susan, Spencer. Grandson James Farquharson in USAF, Firearms Instructor at Carswell Air Base, Fort Worth.

JOSEPH F. CHALKER

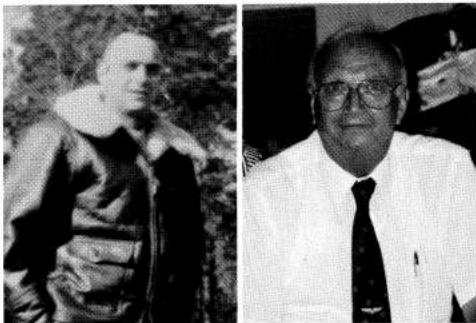
Entered service 5 April 1943 at Ft. Niagara, NY; Basic Training (Coast Artillery Anti-Aircraft) at Ft. Eustis, VA; transferred to US Army Air Corps at Langley Field, VA; Air Corps Basic Training at Greensboro, NC; College Training Detachment at Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA; Bombardier-Navigator Pre-Flight at Santa Ana Army Air Base, Santa Ana, CA; 29 March 1944 — graduated Army Air Force Flexible Gunnery School, Las Vegas Army Air Field, Las Vegas, NV; 12 August 1944 — graduated Advanced Bombardier School, (F/O), Carlisle Army Air Field, Carlisle, PA; 25 August 1944 — assigned to crew #7509, Casper Army Air Field, Casper, WY; December 1944 — arrived at 454th Bomb Group (H), 738th Squadron, San Giovanni Air Field, Cerignola, Italy; 16 April 1945 — Commissioned 2nd Lieutenant; June 1945 — returned to continental US; served as Assistant Special Services Officer, Walker Army Air Field, Victoria, KS; separated from service at Rome Army Air Field, Rome, NY — 13 November 1945; stayed in the AF Reserve and retired as Major 8 December 1984. Recalled during the Korean conflict and was retrained as a Radar Bombardier/Navigator. Served as an Instructor at Sheppard AFB, Wichita Falls, TX. Have B.S. and M.S. in Music Education from Ithaca College, Ithaca, NY. Retired from teaching in public schools of Carroll County (String Specialist), MD in 1983. Married Coetta E. Bream, June 18, 1949 (met at Gettysburg) and have one son, Stephen, and one daughter, Nancy. Also six grandchildren — three each! Very active in music, church, and Masonic organizations.



Joseph F. Chalker

WILLIAM G. CHILDERS

I left Clemson College (now University) in the middle of my Junior year (1944) to enter the Air Force. After Basic Training at Keesler Field, MS, I took top turret gunnery training at Tyndal Field, FL. From there, I went to Westover Field, MA and was assigned, along with



William G. Childers

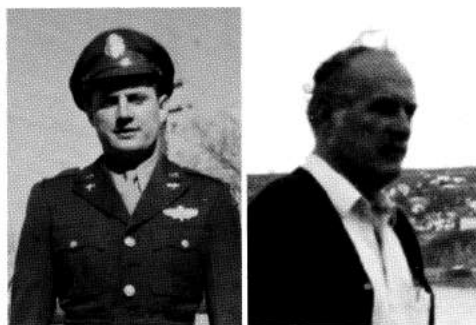
others, to Lt. Robert C. Galletly's crew. We went from there to Charleston, SC for overseas flight crew training, and left there on Dec. 26, 1944 for Mitchel Field, NY and picked up a new B-24 to fly overseas. We left Bangor, ME on Jan. 18, 1945 for Italy. There, we joined the 736th Squadron of the 454th Bomb Group at Cerignola. From there we flew combat missions over Northern Italy, Austria, Germany and Czechoslovakia. Like everyone else, we encountered a tremendous amount of flak, but I feel we were extremely lucky, in that we only had one casualty from flak. Our Navigator (Lt. Robert L. Carlson) got cut across the back of the neck with a piece of flak. I remember we counted 72 holes in the plane when we landed after my first mission which was Linz, Austria.

After being discharged on Jan. 26, 1946, I returned to Clemson where I earned my B.A. Degree in 1948, and then I got my Masters Degree from University of SC in 1951.

I followed a 39 year career in education (teaching and administration), retiring in 1985.

JOHN P. COLL

I served with the 454th Group, 737th Squadron, from May 1944 to November 1944 as a Bombardier.



John P. Coll

Our plane was "The Joker". Pitts was the Pilot. During my tour, I flew with other pilots. They were Col. Mears, Major Graham, and Eugene Goosen.

Our crew was very fortunate, as we received wounds but no fatalities.

In my estimation, all targets were bad when the flak and the fighters were there.

My only regret is that I have no pictures of my time in Italy. They disappeared from my diary when returning to the States.

JOSEPH E. COLSON

Joseph E. Colson joined the USAAF in Seattle in 1942 and trained at West Coast bases. Learned the B-24 at Tudson, AZ.



Joseph E. Colson

Rotated "home," after flying 35 missions, in April, 1945 and was assigned to the Air Transport Command at Long Beach, CA. Flew cargo in C-54's and ferried a number of B-17's from factory to air fields throughout the U.S. until Dec. 1945 when he left the service.

DONALD L. COOK

Spent much of last summer revisiting old air bases. Not much left of Kingman but Tucson is bigger than ever and the Pima Air Museum was of great interest.



Donald L. Cook

I recalled that long train ride from Tucson to Charleston, then the long haul to Cerignola via South America.

We took an Adriatic bath on Mission #5 and, shortly after that, I was grounded, transferred to the 99th, and came back with the 308th Fighter Grp. Stayed in the Service until 1953 — 504th (B-29s) in Roswell, 72nd Recon in Alaska, and on C-87s out of Kelly AFB in San Antonio.

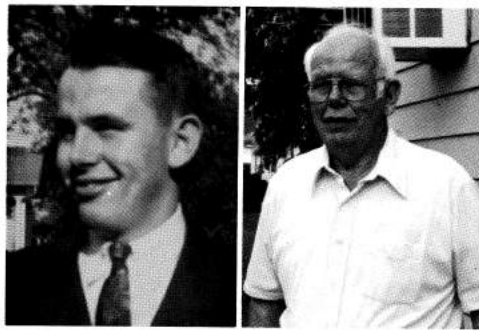
Lately, I have made good contacts and after all this time, I found and talked with my Pilot, Cliff Wright, and Waist Gunner, Frank Cranford. There is one more (Charles Palmer) and I haven't found him. All the original crew is gone now except those listed and, after all this time, it's good to be in the act.

The 454th was a fine Group and being in the 738th Sqdn still makes it all a part of me, Thanks guys! At least we had longer range and a larger payload!

All the above happened after my article in the Spring Issue #44 of "Briefing". A neat way to keep in touch.

ROBERT E. COOPER

One of a family of ten children with four brothers in service and three in Europe at the same time — one was killed. Was drafted into the Infantry and volunteered for Air Force Cadet training and graduated in Class 44B. Was sent to Ft. Worth, TX for B-24 training and then to Riverside, CA where I was



Robert E. Cooper

assigned as First Pilot on a crew of nine of the best men the Army had.

Shipped to Italy in Sep of '44. Flew 35 missions and was the luckiest Pilot in the 15th AF! In 35 missions, got seven flak holes, lost one engine to flak and another one for other reasons and landed a B-24 with two engines out on the same side! Returned to the States in March of '45, then to ATC and discharged in Nov of '45.

Returned to Piqua, OH, where I bought and ran my own service station from which I retired in '84. My wife and I had five children — all on their own now — two served in the Air Force and one in the Marines.

GLENN R. COOTER

Enlisted in Air Force April, 1942. Reported to Santa Ana, CA July, 1942. Was sent to Albuquerque, New Mexico, graduated January, 1943 as a 2nd Lieutenant/Bombardier. Assigned to 381st B-17 Bomb Group for overseas training but due to pilot's illness, assignment to England was cancelled.



Glenn R. Cooter

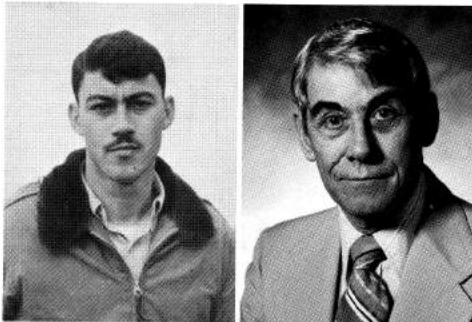
Transferred to Alamogordo, N.M. then to Davis Monthan, Tucson AZ as Squadron Bombardier. On a training mission to Orlando, FL, our plane crashed. Two men were killed and John Trapani and I were two of the 3 men injured. Helped free 3 of the men trapped in plane and for this received the Soldier's Medal.

Assigned to McCook, Nebraska and then Charleston, SC. In Charleston, Jay Hillis replaced me as Squadron Bombardier because he had more training with the Sperry Bomb sight. Left for overseas from Mitchel Field, NY via South America and Africa to Italy with John Smith and his crew. Flew 4 missions, was transferred to Tisdale's crew as Lead Bombardier. Flew 50 missions, returned home September, 1944. Was assigned to Midland, Texas, served as Post Exchange Officer for remainder of war. Discharged in October, 1945. Retired from Air Force Reserves in 1952 as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Occupation: Insurance Broker. Wife's name: Eleanor and we live in San Diego California. Two children: Patrice and John.

CHARLES F. CROOKSHANKS

Enlisted in Air Corps — 15 June 1942 — Chief Projectionist — Sioux City Air Base, Iowa — Pre-cadet training — Texas A&M College, TX — "Wash-out" — San Antonio, TX — Armor School — Buckley Field, Co — Gunnery School — Tyndall Field, FL — Crew assignment and training — Westover Field, Mass — Pilot — 1st/Lt Robert Dunlap* — Co-pilot — 2nd/Lt Joseph Hinerman* — Navigator — 2nd/Lt L.J. Wogenhauser** — Bombardier-2nd/Lt B.J. Kreuger** — Engineer T/Sgt Alfred Neugebauer* — Radio Operator T/Sgt. — Harry T. Baselson* — Nose Gunner — S/Sgt Paul Platko — Top Turret Gunner — S/Sgt Isreal Walter — Ball Turret Gunner — S/Sgt Charles F. Crookshanks — Tail Gunner — S/Sgt Richard A. Hibbert — * — Deceased — ** Killed in action — Picked up new B-24 at Mitchel Field, NY and left USA — 6 Aug. 1944 — Arrived 454th Bomb Group — 16 Aug 1944 — Flew 30 missions with last on 23 March 1945 to San Valerine Tank Works, Austria where aircraft was riddled from flak and made crash landing in Pecs, Hungary — Traveled from Hungary thru Romania to Odessa, Russia — Took English Liberty Ship back to Italy and arrived back to the Group on 29 April 1945 — Left Italy 11 June in B-24 and arrived USA 15 June 1945 — Discharged — 12 Sept 1945 — Recalled during Korean Conflict on 27 Jan 1951 — Served 6 months TDY to Kadena AFB, Okinawa from MacDill AFB, FL — Discharged — 16 June 1952. Married Air Force Nurse while stationed at MacDill — 6 children — Graduated from Eastern School of Photography, Boston, Mass. Employed by Mobay Chemical Corp as Industrial Photographer — Retired July 1988



Charles F. Crookshanks

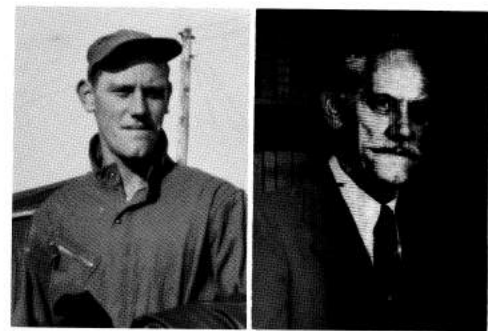
Robert Dunlap was promoted to Major in March 1945

MALCOLM B. CURRY

Staff Sgt. Malcolm B. Curry, Nose and Waist Gunner of the 738 Bomb Squadron, 454th Bomb Group. Entered service October 19, 1942 from Clarksburg, West Virginia. Took Basic Training at Atlantic City, New Jersey.

Attended various schools during term of service: A.M. School, Seymour Johnson Field, Goldsboro, North Carolina, April, 1943; Curtis-Wright Aero School, Patterson, New Jersey, May, 1943; and Gunnery School, Wendover, Utah.

Joined Gerald Bradbury crew at McCook, Nebraska. Departed overseas December 23,



Malcolm B. Curry

1943 — arrived January 26, 1944, destination Italy.

Completed 50 missions: Southern France, Rome-Arno, Northern France, Air Combat Balkans, Air Offensive Europe, Naples-Foggia.

Decorations: DFC, Air Medal w/4 Clusters, Good Conduct Medal.

Returned to States September 26, 1944. Instructor A.M. School, Keesler Field, Mississippi. Discharged September 5, 1945.

Retired International Harvester. Presently reside in Shadyside, Ohio.

HOWARD A. CURTIS

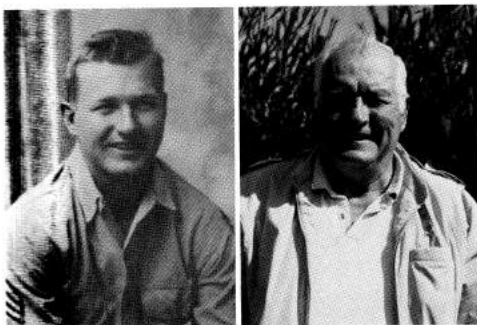
Born 6 October 1920 in Louisville, Kentucky. My military life began in June 1940 at Fort Knox, Kentucky — Basic Training Infantry — became a Military Policeman, later Chemical Warfare Instructor, N.C.O. Gained entrance to and attended Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, FL. Combat Aircrew Training was completed at Mountain Home, Idaho as a member of Dan Haggerty's crew. We were assigned an aircraft at Langley A.A.B. to ferry to Italy. After many stop-overs and delays, we arrived at San Giovanni and we became members of the 454th B. Gp. (H) — 737th Sqdn. The crew flew 27 or 28 missions and received five battle stars. We had the honor of flying "Dinah-Mite" on its' hundredth mission. I met many good and brave men when I was with the organization — and think about them often. Everyday had its' memorable experiences, good and bad. I remained in service after a short break and retired after thirty-three years as a Senior Master Sergeant U.S.A.F. I did extensive traveling in service and, as long as my health holds, I am devoting my time to my family, playing some golf, and relaxing.



Howard A. Curtis

ROY A. DAHL

Born in Duluth, MN, in 1921. Inducted into the Army at Fort Snelling, MN, in July 1942. Without Basic Training, was sent to the 18th Replacement Wing in Salt Lake City. Was



Roy A. Dahl

selected for the 2nd Air Corps Weather Forecasting School at the Univ. of Utah. In March 1943, was assigned to the 34th Bomb Gp in Blythe, CA. In July 1943, was transferred to the 454th Bomb Gp in McCook, NB.

My work consisted of preparations of mission briefings on a steady midnight shift. Also prepared the Base weather forecast each morning and performed routine duties at the Base weather station. My rank was Sergeant and I worked under Capt. Kenneth Grasse who was the best "boss" I have ever had. I was discharged in Sept. 1945 in Fort McCoy, WI.

Presently, I am enjoying a retirement, starting 14 years ago, after 30 years of government service. A 20 acre tree farm on the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee keeps me very busy and gives me much pleasure.

Much-deserved praise of the B-24s and their crews is now emerging after being in the shadow of the not-as-effective B-17s.

JOHN D. DEBBINK

John D. Debbink, 1st Lt. 0-825119. Born April 24, 1924 in Milwaukee, WI. In September, 1942, I raised my right hand, became an Aviation Cadet, and, a few dozen memorable experiences and two years later, found myself the A.C. of a brand new "J" with a super crew flying the famous Gander, Azores, Marrakesh, Tunis route to join the 736th Squadron of the 454th. Our 35 missions were pretty typical except that we did fly several of those single-ship night missions which someone figured was a way to keep the night shift workers of Vienna and Munich in the bomb shelters. My crew was great, several older and wiser than me, and each one could be counted on 100%. On my 21st birthday, Major Eaton signed the orders which sent us home intact.



John D. Debbink

Looking back, I never gave enough credit, or thanks, to all the support personnel — mechanics, maintenance, armament, communications, engineering, medical and all the rest who did their jobs well so that we who

flew could do ours. (And we got to go home when ours was ended.)

I am recently retired after 40 years with General Motors, lastly responsible for the non-automotive products — locomotives, diesel engines, heavy truck and tank transmissions, military vehicles and aircraft engines. Full circle, from a 220 H.P. radial in a PT-17 to 7000 H.P. gas turbine engines — and it all began with a raised right hand.

EVAN M. DEFABIO

Born in Morgantown, WV Oct. 12, 1922. Enlisted in the Air Corps Nov. 1942. After initial training, was assigned to Lt. Leonard D. Swietzer's crew in the 736th Squadron. Flew our first mission on Feb. 7, 1944. Our crew flew on all the initial Balkan capitols, and we had our share of missions to Ploesti!



Evan M. Defabio

Memorable experience was 7 July mission to the Oder River Oil Refinery. We had to feather #3 and #4 was windmilling. We dropped to 5500' and flew to Lake Ballatin, were jumped by an ME 109 and I shot the plane down. Sgt. Savino shot down a Stuka fighter. It was unanimous that all would stay with the plane, landed on Vis Island. A stripped B-24 plane was available. We had to transfer our nose wheel. We did this with the help of 20 Yugoslavian soldiers standing in the tail section of the B-24 to tilt the plane so transfer could be made. *WE LEFT ON THIS MISSION, LITTLE THINKING WE WOULD BE RETURNING IN A DIFFERENT B-24.*

Another memorable experience was a wheels down landing at our airfield with nose and right tire flat by flak, using parachutes to slow our speed, without injury to crew. We were extremely lucky in that none of our crew was ever injured. We were good buddies to the end and enjoyed good fellowship, especially our R and R spent on the Isle of Capri.

Our last mission was 15 Aug. 1944, southern invasion — France.

Discharged 5 Sep. 1945 with the Air Medal and 5 Oak Leaf Clusters.

I spent 40 years as a Chevrolet, Cadillac, Mercedes salesman and am now enjoying retirement.

THOMAS B. DEMAREE

I joined the 454th Bomb Group, 736th Squadron, in Tucson, Arizona, where we formed our crew under Lt. Alan Larsen, who was destined to be killed in action after we got into combat. The remainder of our crew were Bob Milholland, Co-pilot, Paul James, Navigator, Ed Bacsik, Bombardier, Joe Mack and Jerry Sims (wounded in action), Harry Harthun, Radio Operator, Shorty Sullivan, Ball Turret Gunner, Kenneth Trumps (deceased), Nose Gunner, and I was the Tail Gunner.



Thomas B. Demaree

We went on to Charleston, South Carolina, and then overseas as one of the Group's original crews. We named our plane the Virgin Sturgeon.

On April 15, 1944, I was wounded in action over Bucharest, Rumania, and was in the hospital until August. I returned to our squadron, was grounded and worked in Squadron Intelligence until the war ended. I was given orders to go back to the States the day after Germany surrendered. I remember many of the Air Crews and Ground Personnel after all these years at our reunions. I was awarded the Purple Heart, Air Medal and Oak Leaf Cluster.

My wife, Virginia, and I are blessed with two children and five grandchildren.

JOHN W. DEVINE

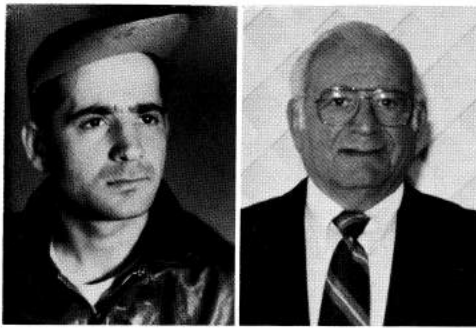
I took the Aviation Cadet exam and was sworn in, in Sept 1942. I was ordered to active duty in Jan 1943. Basic military training and flying schedule followed. I went to Ft. Worth, Texas for B-24 transition then on to Lincoln, Neb. picked up my crew and on to Pueblo, Colorado for RTU. Then to Topeka, Kansas. Got a new B-24 and on to Gioia, Italy where I was assigned to the 454th Bomb Gp 739th Squadron in Jan. 1945. I had completed 16 missions when the war in Europe ended. Back in the U.S. I was separated in Nov. 1945 but I stayed in the reserve. I was recalled in Oct. 1950 and I remained in the USAF until retirement in Nov. 1967. I flew a tour in Vietnam from Nov. 1965 until Nov. 1966. I had 144 night missions in the old C-47 equipped with three mini-guns. We were commonly known as "Puff the Magic Dragon."



John W. Devine

ALBERT J. DiNAPOLI

Enlisted December 1941. Entered A/C Pilot program, Class 43E. Met disaster in Basic (night flying). Ordered to a stand by pool for liaison pilot training, after tiring of long wait, applied for gunnery and armorers schools. Took phase training at Pocatello,



Albert J. DiNapoli

Idaho and Muroc, California. En-route to Tunis via South America, lost our brand new B-24 on take-off from Belem, Brazil. Continued trip, courtesy of MAIS, riding on a load of tank treads. Eventually arrived in Bari but, without plane, had trouble finding a home. Finally assigned to 737th, April 1944. Flew 51 missions with many crews in various replacement gunnery positions also as bomb strike photographer. Rotated to States August 1944. Assigned to Gunnery Instructors School. Discharged at Westover Field, Massachusetts, September 1945.

Spent equivalent of 20 years in NYC Fire Department. Hired on with Columbia Pictures, 1962, special effects department. Meanwhile earned Pilots License, fixed wing, rotorcraft and glider. Married twice with two daughters, three granddaughters. My one son is severely Autistic. Retired and moved to Florida in 1973, since then my wife, Anne, and I have been busy founding Autism support groups. We're also actively engaged developing and managing programs for handicapped individuals.

HECTOR A. DiTOMASSO

Entered Service 1942 — Fort Devens, MA; Basic Training — Atlantic City, NJ; Lowry AAB, Denver, CO — Power Turrets and Computing Gun Sights; Salt Lake City AAB, UT — Medical Exams, Reclassifications; Davis-Monthan AAB, Tucson, AZ — Hands On Training — Liberators, Power Turrets, Gunnery Instructions, Computing Gun Sights. As records show, 454th came into being there. Capt. Marker, Sgt. Thompson, and I were among the first personnel of the 738th. McCook AABM, McCook, NE — four squadron build-up. (One B-24 per Squadron). 454th was the first Group to train here. Capt. Marker, Sgt. Thompson and I were among first of 738th personnel to arrive here.



Hector A. DiTomasso

Charleston AAB — Group build-up. I joined Joe Colson's crew in a Liberator later christened 'Hairless Joe'. Memorable trip across South America, Africa, to Europe and the olive groves at San Giovanni, Italy. One

engine out over the North Sahara Desert prompted Joe to set us down in an isolated emergency stop called Tindouf, where we mingled a few days with soldiers of the French Foreign Legion fort nearby. On our last leg, crossing the Mediterranean Sea, when an American fighter plane, heading toward our formation, was mistaken for the enemy and fired upon by one of the crews, we knew that we had ARRIVED!

REV. JOHN DUGGAN

This photo is of Father John Duggan. He was Chaplain to our Group from early 1945 to the end of our stay in Italy. He remained in service and retired as a General. He returned to his parish, St. Mary's of the Cataract in Niagara Falls, N.Y. He has since passed away.



Father John Duggan — Group Chaplain

R. SANFORD DURRETTE

My route to "San Giovanni": Greensboro, N.C.; Basic; University of Pittsburgh, Pa., C.T.D.; Laredo, Texas, Gunnery School; Casper, Wyoming; Lincoln, Nebraska; Topeka, Kansas; Camp Patrick Henry, Norfolk, Va.; Bari, Italy and a night ride to Cerignola.



R. Sanford Durrette

There are several things foremost in my thoughts about Army Air Force service:

First, the dedication, teamwork and abilities of the crew with which I flew.

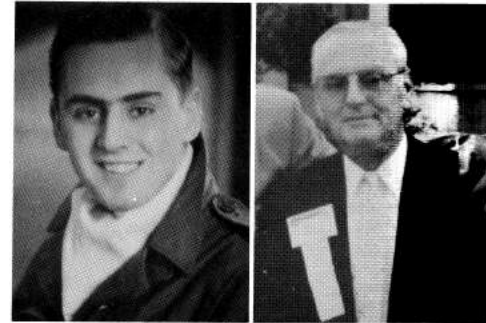
Next, the geographical makeup of our crew — Indiana, Michigan, Texas, New York, Oklahoma, Washington, Idaho, Delaware and Virginia.

The fact that the troop train taking us to Norfolk, Va. for overseas deployment stopped for about three hours in Richmond, Va. (about two miles from my home) and I couldn't get off the train.

Last and least is that I was not old enough to buy a beer when I was discharged at Randolph Field in October, 1945.

HERB E. ELDRIDGE, JR.

Born July 23, 1925 in New London, Conn. Enlisted as an Aviation Cadet on Oct. 6, 1943. Program reduced due to Battle of the Bulge and reassigned to Armorers School at Lowry Field, Denver, Colorado, and then to Flexible Gunnery at Las Vegas, Nev. From there, sent to Lincoln, Neb. and assigned to Armorer Gunner on Lt. John K. Wolff's crew. Sent to Casper, Wyoming in summer of 1944 for combat crew training. Departed Oct. 1, 1944 from Hampton Roads, VA for the European Theatre on the Liberty ship Felix Grundy. After 25 days and a submarine attack which cost us four ammunition ships, we arrived at Bari, Italy. Subsequently assigned to 737th Sqd of the 454th Bomb Group at San Giovanni Airfield. Arrived back in the States the end of June 1945. Discharged at Chanute Air Force Base, IL on Nov. 8, 1945 with rank of Staff Sergeant.



Herb E. Eldridge, Jr.

Decorations: Purple Heart, Air Medal w/Oak Leaf Cluster and various theater ribbons (EAME w/4 Bronze Stars).

Married to Ethel for 44 yrs, with two sons, Herbert, III, and Richard and two grandsons Andrew and David. Reside in Waterford, CT and retired from Pfizer, Inc after 40 yrs as a Supervisory Laboratory Technician.

LLOYD M. ENGLISH JR.

I enlisted in Sept. 1942, and courtesy of the old Liberty ships, left for San Giovanni and the 454th in December, 1943, to serve as an aircraft mechanic and refueling operator. I reenlisted in 1945 and was assigned to an active Air Reserve Unit in Pittsburgh, Pa., then to Smyrna, Tenn., with a squadron of C-119's. Spent 22 months in Japan during the Korean Conflict. Reassigned to Edwards AFB, Calif., where I worked with a number of test aircraft, and had the privilege of working on the test program for the parachute recovery system for the Mercury astronauts. After a tour of duty in Izmir, Turkey, I retired in 1963 as a Chief Master Sgt.



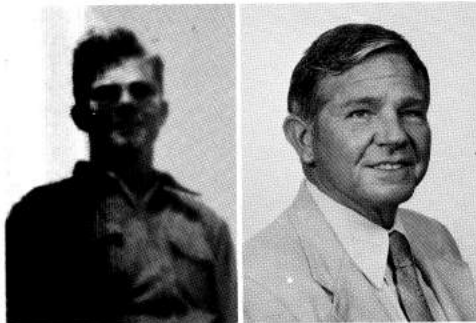
Lloyd M. English, Jr.

During those twenty years, I had earned the Soldier's Medal (presented to me by Brig. Gen. Fay Uphregrave at San Giovanni), the Air Force Commendation Medal, the Army Commendation Medal, and four Presidential Unit Citations.

Married in 1946, Doris and I have two sons and four grandchildren. Since retirement, we've lived in Duke Center, Pa., where I've been active with Boy Scouts, Lions Club, and the school board at both local and state levels. Gardening and raising flowers have been a special hobby.

THOMAS E. EVANS

Entered Aviation Cadet Program September 1943 Langley Field, Virginia. Among first group air cadets (30,000 of us) declared "surplus" December 1943. Armament, gunnery and overseas training at Lowry, Tyndall, and Westover Air Bases. Boarded Liberty Ship "S.S. John Milledge" Newport News, Virginia 31 October 1944. After ship broke down twice, in three different convoys, one major Atlantic storm, two merchant marine casualties, one burial at sea, etc, arrived 454th Bomb Group 30 December 1944. Assigned 736th Squadron, tail gunner Lt. McCabe Crew. Awarded Air Medal/Clusters. Participated last 15th Air Corps mission 25 April 1945 (witnessed shootdown of Lt. FAXON Crew). Graduated Duke University 1949. Operations Officer Central Intelligence Agency 28 years (1950-1978); eight foreign assignments Europe (Athens and Paris), Far East and Africa and temporary assignments several other countries. Moved Bethesda, Maryland to Pompano Beach, Florida 1978; entered real estate specializing ocean condos and townhouses. Married Jo Ann Roberts 1955, two sons (Joseph and Thomas) and daughter (Janna Marie). Good family, good health, good memories, former crew members who are still my friends, a good life, a loving God — fortunate man indeed!

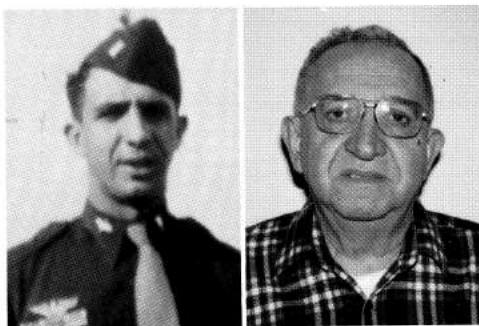


Thomas E. Evans

GEORGE L. FERNANDEZ

Graduated from Big Spring Bombardier School Aug 4, 1943. After brief tour at Tucson, joined 736th Sqd at Charleston. Departed Dec 9 for Tunisia via South America. Moved to Italy in Jan 1944. Shot down on 41st mission, 7 July '44, to Kosel, Germany, by enemy fighters, bailed out and was taken to a hospital in Trencin, Slovakia, ending up in a prison camp near Battalion.

During a mass escape on Sep 1, with my Radio Operator, Bob Hede, and a Gunner from the 737th, Ernest Coleman, we eluded capture and made it to a Partisan camp in the mountains. The camp was attacked by Germans and we again split up into small groups to make our escape. Made it to a village cal-



George L. Fernandez

led Kranje where people put us up in their homes. About a week later, the Germans arrived unexpectedly and, by posing as farm hands, we headed out to the fields, hiding at a farm a couple miles out. Later, a Partisan soldier led us to a camp near Brezova and departed on Oct 1 on a forced march of 250 miles to Banska Bystrica. Resistance collapsed here on Oct 25 and we retreated to the mountains where we were subsequently recaptured by German Infantry. We were eventually turned over to the Luftwaffe and ended up in Stalag Luft #1, East Germany. Liberated by the Russian Army on May 1, who wanted us to march to Russia, we eventually were transported out on B-17s from England.

FRANK A. FERRAIOLI

Entered Service, Sept. 1943, age 18, volunteered for Army Air Corps. Received Basic Training at B.T.C. #10, Greensboro, N.C.



Frank A. Ferraioli

February 1944, went to Gunnery School, Tyndall Field, Fla. graduated class 44-8.

Transferred to Westover Field, MA. April 1944, assigned to crew #789 commanded by Lt. Adrian Willfinger.

July 1944 crew sent to Langley Field, VA. for "Mickey" training.

October 1944, transported a B-24 to Italy, via Azores, Africa and Gioia, Italy, where we left the B-24.

We were assigned to the 454th Bomb. Group, 739 Bomb. Sqd. at San Giovanni Airfield, Cerignola, Italy.

Flew first combat mission aboard "Miss America '44," Nov. 1, 1944 to Graz, Austria, the first of 30 missions.

Captain Willfinger's crew trained as Pathfinders, and on most missions we were Lead or Deputy Lead ship for the group.

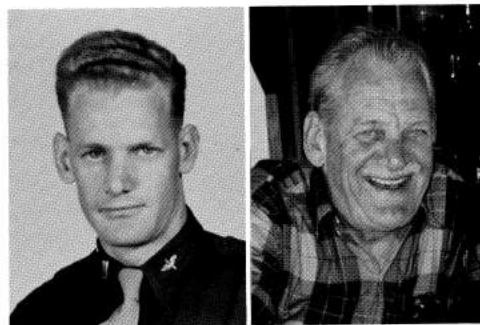
All our crew survived the war, and we flew back to the U.S. in a battle scarred B-24 named "T.S. Chaplin."

Discharged November 1945, and married October 1955.

Started a Landscaping business, that I still operate.

MERLE N. FISTER

Tried to enlist in the Army Air Force in 1942 in Los Angeles — didn't make it. Tried the Navy Aviation Cadet Program — flunked the physical. Tried the Navy, changed my mind and enlisted in the Army Air Corps. Applied for Aerial Gunners School and, during the physical, was encouraged to try the Aviation Cadet program. Graduated as Pilot January 1944 and assigned to Art Williams' crew as second pilot. Arrived in Cerignola May 29, 1944 and flew 52 missions in 3 months — five times over Ploesti. No casualties but our plane was always full of holes. Lost an engine over Ploesti, hydraulic system shot out, nose wheel shot out and plane full of holes. Not wanting to clog the runway, we waited until all others had landed. Had difficulty getting the main gear down but the Engineer, Art Pedersen, finally got it down and locked. Got the nose wheel down but it wouldn't lock. Gas was extremely low and just as the Pilot, Art Williams, was about to hit the bail-out button, the crew shouted "Nose wheel down and locked!" Lost two engines as we were leveling out and lost the other on roll out!



Merle N. Fister

Applied for transfer to 1st Fighter Wing, 15th Air Force. Was grounded for 30 days and decided to return stateside, arriving in October 1944. Stayed in the AF for 28 years and retired as a Colonel in 1970.

THEO E. FORSYTH

Inducted Nov. 1943; assigned to the Air Corps; Basic Training Gulfport, Miss.; Gunnery School Tyndall Field, Fla. Crew assembled and trained at Westover Field, Mass. Then flew replacement aircraft to Italy. Crew members: Ira Abravaya, Pilot; P.L. Schultz, Co-Pilot; R.C. Hennesey, Navigator; J.J. Pribula, Bombardier; R.H. Baker, Engineer; J.P. O'Hara, Radio Operator; J.R. Geise, Ball Gunner; C.H. Whitehead, Top Turret; J.C. Breaux, Nose Gunner; Myself as the Tail Gunner. First mission Aug. 27, 1944 — Oil Refinery Blechammer, Austria. On the fourth mission, we lost two engines and forced to land at Pescara RAF Base in Northern Italy.



Theo E. Forsyth

Most hectic mission was when the plane, severely damaged by flak, fell 5000 ft. with the controls shot out. The Pilot and Co-Pilot gained control of the plane using engines and auto-pilot. Control cables were tied together with bomb fuse wire for landing. The Ball Gunner was killed while flying with another crew. The Pilot was killed shortly after the War flying commercial aircraft in Peru.

Decorations: The crew accumulated 2 Silver Stars, 5 DFC's, 10 Air Medals with many clusters.

I was discharged Oct. 1945, worked for Mobil in oil exploration for 39 years and retired in June 1985. Married hometown sweetheart before going overseas. We have two children.

GRANT A. FRIZZELL

Born March 9, 1925 in Waltham, MA of Canadian parents, I returned to Canada where I received my education and became a Corporal in the Royal Canadian Army Cadets. Having dual citizenship, I returned to MA in 1943 and was inducted into the AAF. Assigned to Greensboro, NC for Basic Training, I was then posted to Aerial Gunnery School, Harlingen, TX. In April 1944, I was posted to Westover Field, MA as a replacement Aerial Gunner, and then on to Chatham Field, GA for B-24 air crew training. In August 1944, I was assigned to 1st Lt. W.M. Asbury's crew at Langley Field, VA. We departed for Europe October 21, 1944, arriving at San Giovanni Air Field, Italy, November 15, 1944. Assigned to the 736th Squadron, we participated in over 20 sorties, including Air Campaigns of the Balkans, Rhineland, Po Valley, North Appenines and Central Europe. My crew sustained no casualties until just 3 weeks prior to the end of European combat, when our tent burned in the night, leaving one dead and one severely burned.



Grant A. Frizzell

Decorations: I was awarded an Air Medal with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster, Good Conduct Medal, Europe/Africa/Mid-East Theatre Campaign with 5 battle stars, and an American Theatre Campaign Ribbon.

Our crew returned to the States July 12, 1945, via B-24G Serial No. 4278472. Having attained the rank of Staff Sergeant, I was discharged November 30, 1945, then returned to Moncton, New Brunswick, Canada, founded a heavy construction company, married, and this year, celebrated my 42nd wedding anniversary with 3 children and 4 grandchildren.

WILLIAM A. FULLERTON

I entered military service at Camp Upton, NY in July 1942. I was an Aircraft Engine Mechanic with the 98th Service Squadron in Pueblo, CO after training at the St. Louis



William A. Fullerton

School of Aeronautics at Lambert Field, MO. While at Pueblo, I applied for Aviation Cadet training and was accepted. I received my Navigator wings at San Marcos, Texas in April 1944. I joined Jack Williamson's crew at Casper, WY and we went by train and boat to England in August 1944 as a replacement crew.

After two weeks in England, we were flown to Italy via Casablanca. Our crew was assigned to the 739th Squadron on September 17, 1944. We flew 33 missions together before being shot down in March of 1945. However, we all made it back to Allied Control via Bucharest and Odessa as the war in Europe ended.

I will always remember the day we left San Giovanni for home. We took off in our plane with several other planes from our Group, and, after rendezvousing, we dove and buzzed the tower at tree-top level in perfect formation. It was a farewell salute to all those who had made the 454th's mission a success.

FRANCIS W. FURLONG

Francis W. Furlong entered service 1-2-43 in Atlantic City, N.J. — then to CTD at Norwich University in Vermont. Completed training at Pan Am Navigation School, Coral Gables, Florida. Navigation training was flown in Pan Am Flying Boats. Those planes were of early Pan Am vintage. They looked as if held together by bailing wire and "I" beams. I went from Florida to Westover Field and assigned to Lt. McCabe's crew. Crossed the ocean aboard Liberty Ship John Milledge in 54 days with 3 stops for repairs.



Francis W. Furlong

Arrived at Cerignola, Italy 1-1-44. Flew 1st mission 1-31-44 to Vienna oil refinery.

Presently residing in Buffalo, N.Y. where I retired as a Battalion Chief from the Buffalo Fire Department.

DESMOND A. GALLAGHER

Desmond A. Gallagher — My military service began when I enlisted as an Aviation

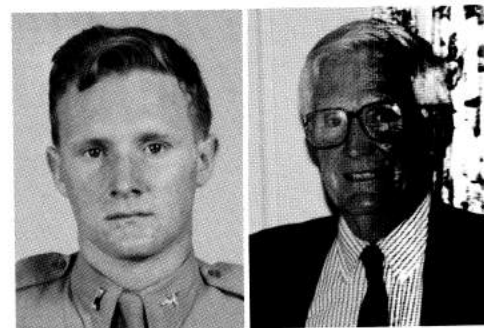


Desmond A. Gallagher

Cadet in Mitchel Field, New York in 1942. I received my Pilot training at San Antonio and at Parks Air College, Missouri, but washed out and went to Gunnery School. While in transition flying as a crew, from time to time, my pilot, Norman Stoker (the best!), would let me sit in the catbird seat in order to familiarize myself with the aircraft so that in case of emergency during missions, I could assist in flying the plane. What a thrill that B24 was for me! I remember it clearly still today!! Luckily, during all our missions, such an emergency never arose and the entire crew returned home safe and sound, thanks to the expertise and skills of the pilot and co-pilot. Since 1945, I have had a full and happy life in Long Island, New York and have much to be thankful for!!

ROBERT C. GALLETTY

In 1942, I thought turning eighteen was a tough break. Once I made the decision and pursued Pilot training, I fully changed my mind. I wouldn't give up the experiences of 1942 through 1945 for anything!



Robert C. Galletly

Constantly, I have flash backs and remembrances — my crew — burning 100 octane in our make-shift heaters to keep the tent warm — Club 800 — limping home from Vienna with wounded aboard — Rest Camp at Capri — flying across the Atlantic twice — USO in Cerignola — the beach at Barletta — and, of course, all the men of the 736th.

As the ballad went in those days — "You must remember this, the flak don't always miss" — my good fortune — it missed me.

STANLEY J. GAWELKO

Born Saginaw, MI, November 23, 1924. Enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in Communications at Scott Field, IL in April 1942 and commissioned as 2nd Lt. in August 1942. Reported to 44th Bomb Group at Will Rogers Field, OK and deployed to England in September 1942. Was a Squadron Communications Officer and Assistant Group Communications Officer. Reassigned to the initial cadre



Stanley J. Gawelko

of 454th Bomb Grp at Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, AZ. Duty as Grp Communications Officer. Trained at School of Applied Tactics, Pinecastle AAF, Orlando, FL and deployed with cadre to McCook AAF, NE for final overseas preparation. Final training at Charleston AAF in September 1943. Went by air with Lt. Peters' crew via South America to Africa to San Giovanni Air Field, Italy. Stayed with 454th until May 10, 1945.

Reassigned to Muroc AAB, CA as a Communications Coordinator. After V-J Day, Muroc redesignated as a Flight Test Center (Edwards AFB). Assigned in 1947 as Master Plan and New Construction Coordinator with Hq USAF and AMC. Student at AF Institute of Technology Engineering Science Aug. '48 to June '50; Sq Comm Off at SAC, Omaha, NE Aug. '50 to Feb. '52; Korea '53-'54; Hq USAF, Procurement and Production, Electronics Division, '55-'57; Electronics Systems Center, Hanscom AFB, MA '58-'61; Thule, GD, Ballistics Missile Early Warning System — Final Installation and Acceptance '61-'62; Director of Secure Communications, Development and Acquisition, Electronics Systems Division, Hanscom AFB, MA '62-'63; retired from AF 31 Oct. '65 as Colonel.

Subsequent employment as Project Manager and Contracts with several communications/electronics firms to 1987. Retired and presently reside in Vienna, VA.

SYLVIO M. GENTILI

Born March 5, 1925 in Bradford, PA. Inducted June 1943. Radio Operator — Gunner. Trained at Scott Field — Radio — and Yuma Gunnery Schools. Crew training at Westover Field. Assigned to Jack Nickols' crew, 736th Squadron. Wounded on first mission — Purple Heart. On fifth mission, direct hit on two engines forced landing at British air field — was on 454th first night mission solo to Munich. An attack by German fighters forced evasive action and two troubled engines threw plane into spiral. Bail-out orders were issued — two crew members bailed out from waist — Maurice Reynolds was trapped in his turret and I had to pry door open with my bare hands. Helped him out and



Sylvio M. Gentili

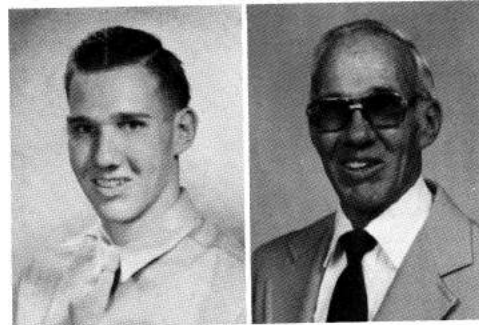
rushed to bomb-bay for bail-out — no time to retrieve gloves. Was sitting on catwalk with near frozen hands and had clasped parachute ring, placed head down to knees and ready to go — God was listening to my prayers — when strong hand of Charles Berman, Navigator, grabbed my shoulder and said "Wait, they are pulling plane back into control." Made emergency landing at British fighter base in Rimini. Completed 32 combat missions, then headed West for B-29 training when war ended. Discharged Nov. 1945 as T/SGT.

To St. Bonaventure University for Bachelor Degree. Recalled June 1950 for Korean War. Served in combat as Infantry Officer in 7th Cavalry. Discharged Feb. 1952 as 1st Lieutenant and resumed civilian career. Married Patricia Healy, raised six lovely children and retired after 30 years in the textile industry.

Decorations: European-African-Middle Eastern Ribbon with bronze stars for Northern Apennines, Central Europe, Po Valley, Rhineland, Air Combat Balkans; Good Conduct Medal, Purple Heart, Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters.

GLENN E. GLASS

Member of 739th Squadron from Nov. 1944 thru May 1945. Of the time spent in the 454th BG, the mission to bomb a bridge in the highly fortified Brenner Pass recurs most often. Our crew was assembled from broken-up crews and our B-24 must have been salvaged! Off we went across the Adriatic Sea. We had barely gotten into formation when we started lagging behind and neither of my guns would test fire. As if our day wasn't going badly enough, a vibration beset our aircraft. The pilot calmly said, "Let's drop a couple." We did and lo and behold our vibration ceased! Those two 1000 lb. bombs caused much consternation among a fishing fleet just off the coast of Venice! Here we were crossing the Po Valley in enemy territory — no formation in sight — with the snow covered Alps looming ahead. We had just reached the foot hills, when a battered 454th aircraft came winging out of the Alps with feathered props, flak holes, and gas streaming off their wings. With scarcely a word, we dropped our remaining bombs on a snowy hillside and tagged along home.

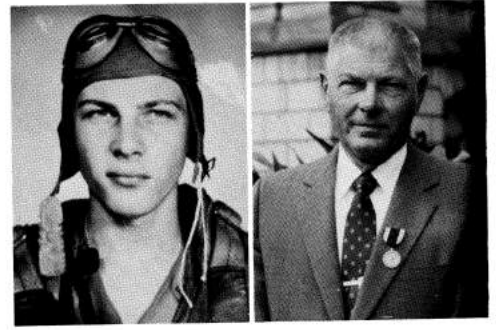


Glenn E. Glass

Since 1945, I have served 1 yr. in the Korean War. Still working as a carpenter and contractor. Married to Pearl, have 3 children and 8 grandchildren.

ALEXANDER GORASHKO

Alexander Gorashko, Tail-Gunner. In March of 1943, at the age of 18, I was drafted into the Army and requested to become a



Alexander Gorashko

Radio Operator/Gunner in the Air Corps. After Basic Training in Atlantic City, it was Radio School at Scott Field, Ill. and Gunnery School at Harlingen, Texas. Our air crew (Lt. Warfel) flight trained at Davis Monthan. We joined the 736th Squadron near the end of June of 1944. The ground crews were superb and the cooks did wonders with those C rations. On August the 22nd, on my 14th mission, we were shot down by fighters in Hungary coming back from Blechhammer. Two survived, myself and a Waist Gunner. We were captured and incarcerated in the Budapest Prison, then, shipped to a prison camp "Stalag-Luft 4" in northern Germany. We participated in the infamous "Black March," the evacuation of the camp on foot in February of 1945 as the Russian Army approached. For weeks it was walking and sleeping in barns at night. The cold and the lice we picked up were terrible. We were moved farther west in boxcars, 50 men to a car with no water or toilet facilities. There was only room to sit. Sitting in a locked boxcar during an air raid was especially unnerving. Our journey ended at another camp, Falling-botel. Shortly later, the advancing American Army forced the evacuation of the camp and now we were walking northeast. The weather was now warmer, but, a new danger came up, the problem of being strafed by our own fighters who were apparently shooting at targets of opportunity. We were liberated by the Americans and the British near Hamburg on May the 2nd of 1945. In 1984, I retired from the telephone company with 41 years of service.

ROBERT H. GRAYBILL

Born in Hanover, PA 1925. I was drafted into the Infantry June 1943. They asked for volunteers to take a train ride. Five of us held up our hands and we were transferred to the U.S. Army Air Corps when we arrived in Biloxi, MS. I attended Engineering School and the Gunnery School. I joined the Leo Venable crew in Topeka, KS in 1944 as Engineer-Gunner. I went to Cerignola, Italy via boat (29 days). We were assigned to the 454th Bomb Group and the 739th Bomb



Robert H. Graybill

Squadron. Seven of the crew finished 35 missions. I had only 33 missions because of frost bitten ears. We were shot down over Zagreb, Yugoslavia but crash-landed on the Island of Vis along the coast of Yugoslavia. We were returned to our base in Cerignola 3 days later.

Discharged as a S/Sgt from Andrews Air Base 1945.

Decorations: Army Air Corps Member Badge, Pistol Marksman Decoration, Victory Medal, American Theater Medal, European-African-Middle-Eastern Campaign Medal with One Silver Battle Star, Air Medal with two bronze battle clusters and the Good Conduct Medal.

The entire crew came home. I am now (at 66 yrs.) a Sales Consultant for three trucking companies.

EDWIN H. GREEN

Edwin H. Green was drafted in Sept. 1941. Applied for Pilot Training after Pearl Harbor and graduated in Class 43E at Lubbock, TX. After transition training at Clovis, NM, joined the 454th at McCook, NB. We finished our stateside training at Charleston, SC, where our Navigator was married and our Co-Pilot met his future bride. We flew B-24H #41-28656 to Italy via SA and Africa. After completing combat tour, returned to Charleston as Instructor Pilot until VE Day. Brief tours of duty with Ferry Command, Air Evac, and ATC. Separated and joined Reserve Group in Louisville, KY. Recalled during Korean War. Served briefly with Parachute Test Group, then transferred to MATS, where I finished my 20 years of active duty with tours in Hawaii, W. Palm Beach, Mobile, Charleston (8 yrs.), and Guam. When I left Guam in 1966 for retirement, the 454th was bombing Vietnam from Anderson AFB.

Worked 14 years for Greenline Corp. in Charlotte, NC as Pilot and Director. Retired at end of 1980 and currently residing in Charlotte.

FRANKLIN R. GREENSPAN

Franklin R. Greenspan enlisted as Aviation Cadet Oct. 1942. Called to active duty Jan. 1943. Received flight training Maxwell Field, AL and Helena, AR, graduating in Class 44-D at Stewart Field, NY Apr. 1944. Assigned to 454th Bomb Group Jan. 1945. Flew 11 combat missions before returning to CONUS July 1945. After separation from active service 1945, attended New York University, graduating in 1948 with BS degree in Business. In 1950 re-entered active service in USAF, receiving a regular commission as career officer. Although Air Force assignments varied, flying C-119's and C-124's, as well as being jet qualified, Frank was primarily an administrative officer, having received MBA degree in 1954 from Indiana University. Was



Franklin R. Greenspan

stationed in TURKEY, JAPAN and various CONUS bases, serving in ATC as Wing Management Analysis Officer and HQ MAC as Contract Airlift Administrator.

Among decorations was: Meritorious Service Medal.

Following retirement from USAF in 1969 as Lt. Col., joined Valley National Bank, Phoenix, AZ, retiring again in 1984 as Vice-President. Frank died Mar. 26, 1990 at age 65 of a heart attack. Is survived by his wife of 36 years, Barbara, 2 daughters, Debra and Leslie, 1 grandchild and a brother. Frank took great pride in his Air Force career and cherished friendships made during those years of service.

CORWIN C. "PAT" GRIMES

I was born December 22, 1917, in Port Allegany, PA. After graduation from Allegany, NY High School in 1935, I became a driller and head rig builder in the Pennsylvania Oil Field. Departed for the University of Oklahoma in January, 1938 to become a Petroleum Engineer. Played football (walk-on end) three years and was on the debate team for two years.



Corwin C. "Pat" Grimes

I entered the Aviation Cadets in April, 1941, graduating as a Second Lieutenant Pilot on December 12, 1941. I flew Anti-Submarine Patrol along the East Coast and Trinidad from December, 1941 thru July, 1943. I joined the 738th Squadron as Commander in November, 1943 and released command in March, 1945. Had the distinction of leading the 15th Air Force on the first high altitude mission over the Ploesti Oil Fields.

I had the additional duty of Head Instrument Instructor at all bases after attending the Air Force Instrument Instructor School in Bryan, TX in August, 1943.

I was Director of Materiel at different bases in the States, France and Germany until I became the C.O. of the 8th Field Maintenance Squadron, Korea, in March, 1953. I checked out and flew missions in the F-86 Sabre Jet during this tour (extra duty, of course).

I received the following Air Force decorations: the D.F.C., with two Oak Leaf Clusters, the Air Medal with six Oak Leaf Clusters, the French Croix de Guerre with Palm, the Air Force Commendation Medal, three Presidential Unit Citations, and six Campaign Ribbons.

I retired from the Air Force in July, 1961 and joined the National Transportation Safety Board investigating Major Civilian Aircraft Accidents. I authored their Pamphlet on Aircraft Aquaplaning.

I completely retired in 1978 and have been enjoying golf and traveling with my wife, Mary, ever since.

VIC GRIMES

Vic Grimes graduated from the AAF Pilot Training Program at Stuttgart, Arkansas, in February 1944. After completing crew training at Casper, Wyoming, as an Airplane Commander, he was assigned to the 8th Air Force and later transferred to the 15th Air Force, 454th Bomb Group, 737th Squadron. After completing 35 missions, he returned stateside in March, 1945, and was assigned to Military Air Transport.



Vic Grimes

Decorations: Vic was awarded the Air Medal with three clusters, the Purple Heart and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He is now retired and with his wife June, resides in Temple, Texas.

JAMES A. GUNN, III

Born May 28, 1912 in Kelseyville, California. Enlisted as a flying cadet in January 1939. Went through Pilot Training at Randolph and Kelly fields, graduating in November 1939.



James A. Gunn, III

First assignments were in Panama, Guatemala, and Peru, 1940-1942, where our primary mission was submarine and Japanese Task Force patrol.

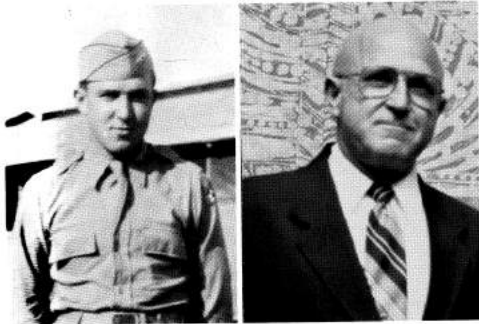
Served as Deputy Commander of the 454th Bombardment Group at Cerignola, Italy January-July 1944, and acting Group Commander July-August 1944.

My most memorable experience was a ride in the belly of an ME-109 from Bucharest to Cerignola, with a Romanian pilot, for the purpose of initiating plans to evacuate the POW's from Romania. Being shot down at Ploesti was pretty exciting, also. Retired from the U.S. Air Force in May 1967 in the grade of Colonel.

Presently a Real Estate Broker in San Antonio, Texas, dealing primarily in ranches and rural land.

ARTHUR F. GUTOWSKI

Enlisted as an Aviation Cadet on Feb. 15, 1943. Graduated from Navigator training at San Marcos, Texas in Sept. 1944. Assigned to B-24 OTU at Charleston, SC and the crew of Lt. Thomas Payne. Picked up a new B-24J at Mitchel Field, LI in Dec. and flew it to Pantanello, Italy. Were trucked up to San Giovanni and the 736th. I flew 3 missions before rejoining my crew for their first mission. We had a late takeoff and were unable to overtake the 454th enroute to Trieste, so tagged onto the 459th. About 40 miles past Klagenfort, unmapped FLAK came up and caught #6 ship at the waist and no one got out that we could see. Debris hit our ship and the co-pilot wheeled us around, I dropped the bomb load on Klagenfort, and we headed home. This was the one and only mission we flew as a crew. Lt. Payne went DNIF a few days later and the crew was split up as replacements. Three of the crew were flying with Charles Faxton on 23 March when their plane was shot down on a mission to St. Valentin Tank Works. Story has it that the Nose Gunner, Charles H. Mitchell, was killed by German civilians. My 21st mission on 25 April to Linz was also the last "combat" mission for the 454th. Was assigned as Navigator for Maj. Stephen Semour and flew a war weary B-24 back to the states, departing 5 July.



LTC Arthur F. Gutowski

Stayed in the Air Force Reserve and continued to fly as a crew member until 1960. Was able to complete my 30 years and retired as a Lt. Col. in 1973. Retired from my civilian career with GE in 1985 with 42 years service.

JOE N. HAGAN

My life began on a farm in rural Missouri, Dec. 1, 1917, and with the Military at Jefferson Barracks, March 1942, as a draftee, having previously been a student at the University of Missouri.



Joe N. Hagan

At Jefferson Barrack, after it was determined I could distinguish the sound of a dash from a dot, I was sent to Scott Field for train-

ing, then to other fields as a Radio Operator. Someone decided I was a potential Radar Mechanic, so I went for training in Electronics and Radar at Chanute Field, Drew Field, and Boca Raton.

My experience with the 454th was limited from Feb. 1945 to Oct. 16, 1945, when I was discharged at Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

After my discharge, I completed the requirements for a degree, worked a few years for the University and then 29 years with the Federal Land Bank, retiring in 1982 to live in Sun City, AZ.

PAUL R. HALLMAN

Paul R. Hallman went into the Air Force in January, 1943. Trained for aerial engineer, Sheppard Field, Texas. Gunnery School, Tyndal Field, Florida. Formed for crews on B-24 in Salt Lake City, Utah. Took 1st, 2nd and 3rd phase training at Gowen Field, Idaho, Lt. James A. Kirtland Crew.



Paul R. Hallman

We picked up our B-24 in Topeka, Kansas, in March of '44; flew to West Palm Beach, Florida; flew the southern route thru South America, Africa, on into Italy to 454th B.G.; was assigned to the 738th Squadron, Capt. Corwin Grimes, C.O.

Our plane was named the St. Louis Belle. We flew our 1st mission on April 21, '44. I was going for my 43rd mission on August 17, '44, Target Ploesti, on a Mickey Plane with Capt. John Porter's crew flying alternate lead to Col. James A. Gunn. We were shot down over target. Lt. Les Matthews, Bombardier, and Lt. R.W. Thompson were both killed by a direct hit of A.A. The rest of us bailed out. I had 2nd and 3rd degree burns on face and hands. I was put in a civilian hospital outside Ploesti along with 5 others. Alfred Peccio and Capt. Kenneth Wineberg, I knew. We were freed by the Russians around the 21st of September and got back to Italy around the last of September. We stayed over a week in the hospital in Bari.

Decorations: Air Medal with two clusters, Purple Heart and POW Medal.

NOAL I. HARPER

I enlisted in the Army Air Corps, Aug. 1942. Was sent to Keesler Field, Mississippi where I completed Aircraft Maintenance Training on the B-24. Later, I was sent to the Douglas Factory School in Santa Monica, CA, then on to Ft. Meyers, FL, where I completed Aerial Gunnery Training. I had a short stay in Salt Lake City and ended up in Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, AZ, where I was assigned to the original cadre of the 738th Sqd. I remained in the 738th until I was discharged in Sept. 1945 and, included in this, was an extended visit to Italy in which many things



Noal I. Harper

happened. Also spent 25 years in Missouri National Guard.

I accepted a career with Southwestern Bell which lasted for 38 years. This took me from Little Rock, AR to Kennett, Dexter, Caruthersville, Sikeston and Kansas City, MO. Along the way, I married Faye Scruggs and we have a son, Ron, who is with Goodyear, and a daughter, Anne, who is the Executive Director of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. She and Mike gave us our first grandson, John, just 3 years ago. After retiring from SWB, I now have a custom picture framing and art shop. I also work part time in management with KCI airport security systems. We have a home on Kentucky Lake but spend most of our time here in K.C.

HARRY A. HARTHUN

I enlisted in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in October of 1942. After Basic Training, I don't remember where, I went thru Radio School at Truax Field, Madison and then Gunnery School at Davis-Monthan Field in 1943. After several other camps, I was assigned (1943) to the 454th Bomb Group, 736th Squadron. We came up thru Africa (Oran) and ended up in Cerignola, Italy. Here, I finished 51 missions.



T/Sgt. Harry A. Harthun

I was the Radio Gunner on Lt. Larson's crew on the "Virgin Sturgeon." Colonel Aynesworth was our Group Commander. Lt. Larson was killed on one mission. We left formation and made an emergency landing on the Isle of Corsica, but he died. I had one close call when the bootie from my infant son, which was tied to my guns, fell on the floor. Afraid to lose it, I bent over to pick it up and, at that moment, a big hole appeared in the side of the plane where I would have been.

Our targets were mostly oil refineries, marshalling yards, ball bearing plants and troop concentrations. When grounded, I was sent to Air Force Rest Camp on the Isle of Capri, then the States, and eventually discharged in 1945.

I am now 70 years old, married to Rosa for 50 years this May 10th, and have two sons — Tom and Rick. I have had a happy life.

ALLEN D. HAY

Ball Turret Gunner, Lt. Edwards' crew, 737th Sqdn. Entered service Jan. 1943, graduated from Armament and Aerial Gunnery School, and sent to Clovis, NM in Aug. 1943. Training continued in October, November and December at Charleston, SC. Flew a new B-24 from Mitchel Field, NY via the southern route to San Giovanni, arriving in Jan. 1944. Combat operations commenced on Feb. 8, 1944 with a raid on an airbase at Orvieto. Next mission was the marshalling yards at Arezzo. A flak burst put several dozen holes in our plane, spilling gasoline and preventing use of our guns or any sparking equipment aboard. Had to lower our landing gear manually. Received a slight wound to my eye. On our eighth and last mission, the target was a factory at Styer, Austria. Three hours into the mission, under fighter attack from FW-190s, we lost power in #3 engine. Several fighters concentrated on us, setting us afire and killing the Navigator, Lt. F. Zygmunt, R.W. Gunner S/Sgt D. Stevenson, and the Tail Gunner S/Sgt M. Buffalino. Was wounded in the left hand and burned on the face and hands, but was able to get back into the plane and bailed out through the camera hatch. Landed in a wooded area and evaded for three days. Was captured by a Croatian Infantry patrol which turned me over to German control and was sent to the Interrogation Center (Dulag Luft). Was sent to Stalag Luft #1 at Barth, Germany and liberated at the end of Apr. 1945. Was discharged from the service and the Air Force Hospital at Macon, GA in Oct. 1945.



S/Sgt Allen D. Hay

Married Catherine Creedon in June 1946, had two children, Allen and Cathy, and now have six grandchildren. Entered the NYC Fire Department on Oct. 7, 1947 and retired as Asst. Chief of Dept. on Oct. 25, 1975. Residing now in Valley Stream, NY.

WILLIAM O. HELTON, JR.

William O. Helton, Jr. (Bill) enlisted in the Army Air Force, Charleston, West Virginia, October 1942. After basic training, A/M and B-17 Specialist Schools, joined the 738th in McCook from Salt Lake Replacement Center. Found B-24's a challenge after B-17 training, but we quickly learned!

Shipped to Italy with the 454th for the duration. While on leave in the States, the war ended in the Pacific. Discharged September 1945, Camp Blanding, Florida.

Re-enlisted March 1947; assigned to the 2585th Air Reserve Training Center, Miami, Florida. Discharged March 1950.



William O. (Bill) Helton, Jr.

Married Carol Mitchell Butler May 1951 in Miami; one stepson, William G. Butler, III. We lived in Miami three years before moving to Richmond, Virginia.

Joined the Air Force Ready Reserve November 1955, 757th Troop Carrier Squadron, 2259th Reserve Flying Center, Richmond International, (CONAC). Discharged 1958.

On occasion I reminisce about the 454th with my friend, Rudy Schmidt, who was a pilot with the 738th. We met by chance in Richmond years ago. My good fortune, as I have lost contact with my buddies over the years.

Retired December 1989 as treasurer of an industrial power transmission corporation and now reside with my wife in Quinton, Virginia.

SYLVAN G. HENDRIX

Entered military service at Ft. Harrison, IN Feb. 1943. Completed Aerial Gunnery School at Laredo, TX, Apr. 1943 and finished B-24 Mechanic School at Keesler Field, MS, Oct. 1943. Assigned as Flight Engineer on Charles W. Ladow's crew at Salt Lake City, UT. Crew flight training began Dec. 1943 thru Jan. 1944 with the 471st Bomb Group at Pueblo, CO. The 471st was transferred to Westover Field, MA for final training Feb. 1944 thru Mar. 1944. Thirty air crews from the 471st were transferred to Mitchel Field, NY for assignment and final staging. Our crew was assigned a B-14H later known as "DRAGON LADY." We flew to Key West, FL, South America, Africa and arrived at San Giovanni Air Field, 737 BS Apr. 1944.



Sylvan G. Hendrix

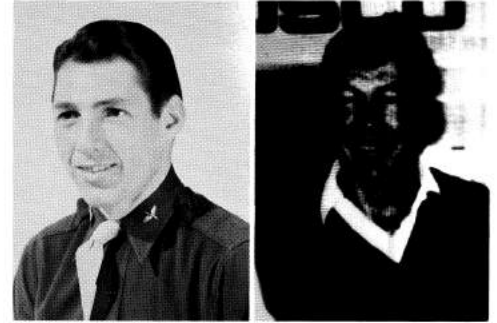
On our 12th mission, May 24th, to Graz, Austria, the Group photographer was flying with us and was wounded and the "Dragon Lady" was badly damaged. On our July 7th mission to Breslau, Germany (Poland), we were flying "The Joker" and it was torn up badly by fighters and flak. At the same time, "Sassy Lassy II" on our right and "Buffalo Gal" on our left, both went down. Each member of our crew completed 50 missions and

returned to the States in Oct. 1944. The remainder of my military service was as an instructor in the B-24 Hydraulic Systems at Keesler Field, MS ending Sept. 1945.

Decorations: DFC, Air Medal w/3 clusters. Presently reside in Lakeland, FL.

WILLIAM HENRY, JR.

Graduated from Flying School, Class 43A, Ellington Field, Texas.



William Henry, Jr.

Joined 454th bomb Gp, 739th Sq, at McCook, Neb. Flew 28 missions and was shot down over Friedrichshaven, Germany, July 20, 1944. Bailed out over Weisingen, Switzerland and was interned there. My Bombardier, Eddie Mathews, and I escaped after 2½ months into France and were returned to Italy in Oct. 1944. Shipped to States and I became a Flight Commander in an instrument school at Love Field, Dallas, Texas, along with Billy Jacobs — who later became my best man at my wedding. Billy was Sq. C.O. of the 736th for a time.

I joined American Airlines in 1951 and flew for them for 30 years, 20 out of Chicago, 7 out of San Diego and 3 out of Los Angeles. I stayed in the Air Force Reserve for 20 years, 5 of them as C.O. of the 437th Troop Carrier Group at O'Hare Field. I retired from American in 1981 and have spent most of my time in tournament golf and raising pine trees on our farm in Arkansas. Ruth and I have 4 children and 6 grandchildren.

THEODORE W. HERRING

Joined Air Force Nov. 2, 1942. Washed out as cadet and went to war as Engineer/Tail Gunner, B-24 aircraft, 454th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force based at Cerignola, Italy. Was assigned to 738th Squadron. Shot down and ditched on second mission, Graz Thalerhof, Austria, March 19, 1944. On release from British Hospital was assigned to "Purple Heart Lodge," then to 739th Squadron, where I flew balance of my missions. On 49th mission, Villach, Austria, November 11, 1944, B-24 exploded, going down before reaching target. Two airmen were blown free



Theodore W. (Lightning) Herring

and other eight killed in action. I was located and rescued by British Commandos and returned to USAF, was hospitalized at U.S. Hospital, Bari, Italy until returned to states. Other than the two mentioned above, my most memorable were my two trips to Ploesti, Roumania, May 5th and 31st, 1944.

Decorations: Received Purple Heart with Oak Leaf Cluster, Air Medal with Silver Oak Leaf Cluster, Presidential Citation, Good Conduct Medal, American Campaign Medal, Euro-Afro-Mid East Campaign Medal with 1 Silver and 1 Bronze Service Stars, WW2 Victory Medal.

On return, married Ruby C. Henry from my hometown. Have daughter and 2 grandchildren — all reside in Newport, Arkansas.

LEON A. HICKMAN

Enlisted US Army Air Corps, September 1942. Called to active duty as an Aviation Student February 1943. Aviation Cadet Pilot training thru Central States Flying Command graduating from Pampa, TX in Class 44-D. B-24 school at Ft. Worth, TX. Became Pilot and A/C Commander, arriving at Cerignola, Italy and the 454th Bombardment Group in November 1944. Our crew flew 30 combat missions and all survived with no casualties. One crew member was a casualty of Italian Partisans in Naples!



Leon A. Hickman

Released from active duty September 1945 and remained in the AF Reserve. Recalled March 1951 for the Korean War, Headquarters SAC. Retired from active duty as 1st Lt., September 1954.

Currently in the Real Estate Land Development Business in Omaha, NE since 1954. Trying to retire but can't find the time to do so!

SAMUEL E. HINES

T/Sgt. Samuel E. Hines was a Radio Operator and Waist Gunner. He graduated from the Army Air Forces Technical Training Command, Scott Field, Illinois on May 22, 1943. He arrived at San Giovanni Air Base, Cerignola, Italy on March 21, 1944. He flew his first mission with the 738th Bomber



T/Sgt Samuel E. Hines

Squadron on the "Queen O Hearts" (ID #074) on March 29, 1944. During his fifty or more missions with the 738th, there were a few close calls. One was a landing on Corsica, with only two engines, which resulted in a M.I.A. telegram to his family. Among other medals, he was awarded the Air Medal "for meritorious achievement in aerial flight while participating in sustained operational activities against the enemy." When he returned home to Richmond, Virginia, he worked at the Hunter Holmes Mcguire VA Medical Center until he retired. He passed away on August 12, 1984. There are many blank spaces in his biography that only he could fill, but we do know that he deeply treasured his memories and friends from the 454th Bombardment Group.

WILLIAM S. HOLMAN

William S. Holman — As one of a group of Electronics Countermeasures Observers, I was assigned to 454th Headquarters in February of 1945, and attached to the 739th. The Radar Shack, under Captain Harold Glick, became my home and I shared a tent with him and Captain Leo Antosz, Group Mickey Navigator. My job was to set up proper frequencies for the barrage jammers in each aircraft and to train Radio Operators to be spot jammers in the ten spot jamming aircraft in the Group.



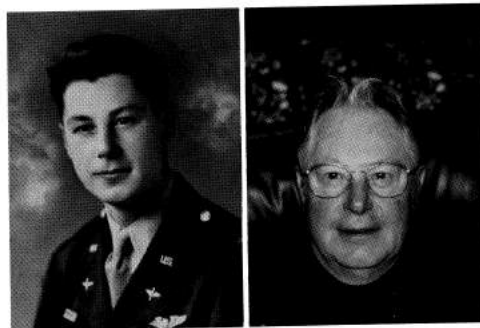
William S. Holman

After first starting out to be a Weather Officer at Washington University in St. Louis, I got a chance to change to Communications Officer training. Three months at Seymour Johnson followed by five months at Yale (marching to Glenn Miller) and I was commissioned. From there, Boca Raton for flight training, then Eglin for tactics. Then overseas to the 454th.

Released in March of 1946, I received a degree in physics at Central College at Fayette, Missouri. In 1949 I re-entered the Air Force in Special Weapons and participated in Operation Greenhouse at Eniwetok. The Air Force sent me back to the University of Illinois for my Master's in Physics, then to Sandia Base where I was privileged to be on the first Air Force Thermonuclear Weapons Assembly Team. Tours at the Air University, and in Technical Intelligence in Wiesbaden followed. My last Air Force assignment was with the Atomic Energy Commission where I managed a project for Apollo 11. Retirement in 1970 preceded eight more years as a civilian with the Department of Energy. Now really retired, my wife Martha and I travel as much as possible.

HOWARD C. HORTON

Howard C. Horton, Pilot, Class 44-G, Altus, Okla. Volunteered for overseas, assigned



Howard C. Horton

co-pilot, B-24 with RTU, Charleston, S.C. Dropped an "L" model off at Gioia, then assigned 738th B.S. early Jan. 1945. Mission of 2 April, Target Krems, Austria, B-24J 44-41009, #66, "Ginny" when south of Trieste, large explosion and fire in bomb bay and entrance to flight deck. With Nos. 1 and 2 in a runaway configuration and possibly control damage, the aircraft spiralled down and cartwheeled when crashing into the Adriatic Sea. Upon impact, forward and rear sections broke off and the crew thrown into the sea. Three gunners and I survived and were rescued by a PBY aircraft. Hospitalized, 60th Station Hospital, Foggia. Post inquiry indicated possible sabotage due to bomb hidden on board. Discharged Sept. 1945. Flying in the reserve when recalled for Korean War, received regular commission.

Assignments: The Base Civil Engineer and other Staff Civil Engineering duties at Numbered A.F. and Major Air Command. Six years Airborne Early Warning duty as Flight Commander, Operations Officer and Chief, Stan./Eval. Team.

Vietnam War: Flew combat Reconnaissance missions as Aircraft Commander, EC-121-R (Super Connie) and YQU-22A (Drone). Retired 1 July 1974.

Education: Architectural, Wentworth Institute, Boston; Industrial Engineering, Univ. of Okla.

Wife, Ruth, 3 Daughters, 6 Grandchildren. Hobbies: Golf, Tennis, Genealogy. Reside Cape Cod.

JAMES W. HOWARD

Never dreamed, when Dad headed me down the corn row in Indiana at the age of 14, I would end up flying down the bomb run all over Europe and bringing the old B-24 No. 9262 back across four continents to the U.S.A. Nor did I realize, when we set her down in Georgia in June of 1945, that my flying career was over. Many hours of training and a lifetime of experiences all behind me before my 22nd birthday!



Lt. James W. Howard

Enjoyed the luxury of a fine, dedicated, crew, and we were fortunate to arrive in San Giovanni in December 1944 when "the worst was over." Assigned to the 738th Squadron and flew 29 missions. My entire crew remained intact throughout that tour with the exception of our Navigator who became Squadron Navigator and no longer flew with us. Memories include the missions to bomb bridges in the Alps where they shot "up at us, down at us, and out at us" and the ill-fated mission to Landau on February 22nd when the entire formation encountered bad weather and became scattered. After recovering, we made a single plane bombing run on the marshalling yards at Klagenfurt and inflicted considerable damage.

Went to engineering school on the G.I. Bill and, after a 35 year career in the aircraft gas turbine business with G.E., retired and, with my new loving wife, collect antique farm machinery and enjoy my life-long hobby of cabinetmaking.

HAROLD D. HUBER

Born Jan. 27, 1921 in Galesburg, IL. Graduated from Williamsfield High School. Enlisted in Army Air Corps on Dec. 5, 1939. Arrived at Hickam Field, HI June 17, 1940. After a 6-months course in aircraft maintenance, was assigned to the 5th Bomb Group, 72nd Sqdn. Survived Japanese attack at Hickam on Dec. 7, 1941, served a total of 18 months in the Central and Southwestern Pacific Theaters of Operation. Served as a Crew Chief on B-18 and B-17 aircraft.



Harold D. Huber

Returned to the Continental United States in May 1943, spent a few months at Biggs Field, TX as Crew Chief in a training group. Ordered to report to McCook, NE in Sept. 1943, assigned to the 454th Group, 739th Sqdn, arriving the day the Group entrained for Charleston, SC.

At Charleston, was assigned as Crew Chief and flew with the Air Group to Cerignola, Italy, arriving in Jan. 1944. The pilot of that B-24 was Lt. Clarence Potter. The 739th Sqdn became a Pathfinder Sqdn in 1944 and I became a Flight Chief.

Discharged July 13, 1945 with Master Sergeant rating.

Awards include: Asiatic Pacific Theater Ribbon with 3 Bronze Battle Stars, American Defense Service Ribbon with 1 Bronze Star, Dist Unit Badge, GO #3604, Hq 15 AF, 1944, Good Conduct Ribbon, EAME Theater Ribbon with 1 Silver and 2 Bronze Battle Stars, 6 Overseas Service Bars, Lapel Button, and World War II Victory Medal.

Retired after 36 years in educational administration and teaching in Illinois and Arkansas. Have wife, one son, and one daughter.

JAMES W. HUTCHISON

Enlisted in '43 at age 26. Basic Training at Miami Beach, FL. Armorer Training at Buckley Field and Lowery Fields #1 and #2, CO. Received Aerial Gunner's wings at Harlingen, TX. Flight Training at Charleston, SC. Picked up new B-24 at Mitchel Field, NY, called her "Organized Confusion." Flew to Morrison Field, FL., Puerto Rico, British Guiana, Brazil, Africa, Morocco, Tunisia and Cerignola, Italy where based with the 736th Bomb Sqd. 454th Bomb Group (H). Assigned to Lt. Felbab's crew, "Ophelia Bumps" #13, as a Ball Gunner. Flew 50 missions from April 2, 1944 to July 6, 1944.



S/Sgt. James W. Hutchison

Decorations: Awarded Air Medal w/4 Oak Leaf Clusters, 2 Unit Citations, European-African Middle Eastern Theatre w/4 Bronze Battle Stars, Good Conduct Medal, American Theatre Ribbon and WWII Victory Medal.

Was discharged on May 16, 1945. Rough missions were Steyr, Austria; Bad Voslau, Austria; and Munich, Germany. Married to Helen for 54 years. Have one daughter, Becky and three grandchildren. I was elected and served as Mayor of Apollo for 4 years 1986-1989. On March 17, 1991 was honored by my church, 1st. Lutheran in Apollo, for serving 17 years as a Lay Minister in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

ROBERT M. INGRAM, JR.

Graduated April 1944 from Moody Field, Valdosta, GA as a Multi-Engine Pilot. Flew 27 missions as a Co-Pilot with the 454th Group — 738th Squadron. After the war, went back to Pittsburgh National Bank where I was employed 44 yrs., the last 25 as a Vice-President.



Robert M. Ingram, Jr.

Did not go to college but have a Graduate Certificate from the American Inst. of Banking and also am a graduate of the Stoner Graduate School of Banking at Rutgers University.

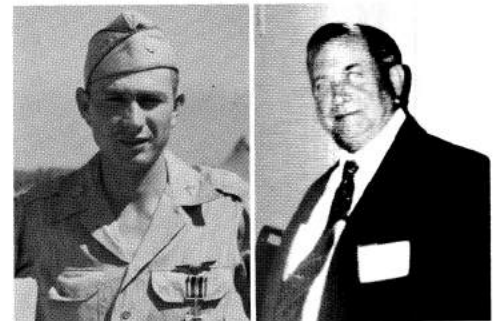
Member of all the Masonic bodies including the Shrine and was twice Master of my Lodge, in 1954 and 1989.

Married to Marjory for 45 years. Daughter Gayle has her Masters Degree in Nursing. Both Bob and Dave are Presbyterian ministers, Bob having two Masters degrees and Dave having a Doctor of Ministry degree.

Have lived in the Pittsburgh area all our lives.

JAMES D. JAMISON

Graduated Texas A&M Infantry, 3 years as C.O. of Cavalry Troop, graduated from Cavalry School 1941. Transferred to Air Corps Feb. '42 and graduated with Class 42-J. Joined 454th Bomb Group as Squadron Commander (736th) and served 6 months as Group Operations Officer.



Major James D. Jamison

Turned down a Regular Air Corps commission as full Colonel to run a Chevrolet dealership for 32 years.

Was leading what would have been a one way mission on a proximity fuse factory in Poland but had 80 mile an hour tail winds both ways. We came off the target and 9 ships still had bombs on board. We looked for and found the Hermann Goering Tank Factory and dropped on it. Every plane on the mission returned to base having destroyed the proximity factory and the tank factory. Was a Group C.O. of 100 B-29s when war ended.

DON JANDERNOA

Don Jandernoa — as a Michigan farm boy dreamed of flying. Enlisted A.F. Cadet Nov. 11, 1942. Graduated 44C Moody Field. Montgomery Field — Gowen Field. From Newport News via 13 ship convoy arriving Taronto, Italy November 26, 1944.



Don Jandernoa

Twenty three missions 736th Squadron 454th B.G. Plane shot up near Vienna January 31, 1945. Lost fuel, bailed out off Yugoslave Isle of Hvar. Ten crew members landed safely on shore. Pilot Don landed in Adriatic and near drowned. Rescued by natives after

one hour. Thawed out with feet in oven of kitchen stove and cognac (externally). Located Vinko Pakusic (rescuer) and brought Vinko and family to U.S. for three great weeks as guests in 1990. Second most memorable flight was Easter Sunday, 1945 when our Group Commander misjudged height and distance and dumped Charlie Box into the clouds as he turned back. We were in #4 position. Talk about prayer! When we left the clouds, planes 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 had peeled off but we nearly clipped #1 from the bottom.

Don has lived on borrowed time for 46 years. Don and Pat, 5 children, 12 grandchildren live in Grand Rapids, MI. Happy and proud to be an American and a 454th B.G. "Survivor."

J.D. GAYLORD (JOHNNY) JOHNSON

Enlisted in the Army Air Corps Dec. 9, 1941. Entered Flying Cadets January 1943 and graduated at Moody Field, Valdosta, GA, Aug. 30, 1943 (43-H). Immediately assigned to Clovis, NM to begin flying the B-24. Assigned to the crew of James R. (Big Dog) Robinette as Co-Pilot. Spent several days on a troop train to Charleston, SC and assignment to the 739th Sqd.



J.D. Gaylord (Johnny) Johnson

Upon completion of training, went to Mitchell Field, NY waiting three weeks before leaving, as the last crew, for Africa. Continued our training there and eventually went with the Group to Italy and our baptism of fire in combat. I felt fortunate to have been assigned as a member of this crew which worked so well together.

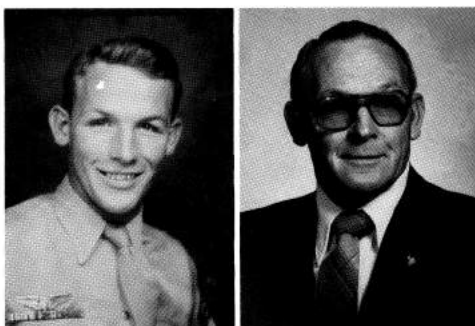
We were eventually assigned to the 736th Sqd. and completed our missions with this organization. As I had flown some missions before, I completed my fifty missions prior to the rest of the crew and anxiously awaited their return. Boarded a ship in Naples and reached New York two weeks later.

Married to Marie Clark April 23, 1945. Adopted three children, Michael, Esther, and Marilyn. Have eleven grandchildren, two great-grandchildren.

Entered the education profession and retired after twenty-eight years.

DONALD W. JONES

Enlisted in the Army Air Corps at Chanute Field, Illinois February 7, 1941. Completed Airplane Mechanics School and assigned to Sheppard Field, Texas September 1941. Joined the 572 Scho. Sqdn. ground crew on B-24's (Pilot Transition) in February 1942. 572nd moved to Smyrna, Tennessee in September 1942. Spring 1943 was sent to Salt Lake City and then on to Tucson, Arizona. Took a short course in aerial gunnery and assigned to the crew of Capt. Jay Tee Win-



Donald W. Jones

burn. During the Summer of 1943, during training, survived a crash and, after 18 days hospitalization, sent to McCook, Nebraska and the crew of Hugh West. During a short furlough in hometown of Oblong, Illinois, married Ruth Roush, and both returned to McCook. Upon completion of missions, was sent home and to Keesler Field, Mississippi for the duration. Entered Purdue University in fall of 1945 and lived in Lafayette for over 40 years. Presently employed part-time at Boone Tavern Hotel in Berea, Kentucky.

RUSSELL E. JONES

Russell E. Jones enlisted in November 1942 and received Basic Training at Atlantic City. In May he was graduated third highest in his class at Seymour Johnson Field, N.C., where he took a course in Mechanics. Was selected as an instructor in Hydraulics. After volunteering for Gunnery, he attended Gunnery School at Buckingham Air Force Base, Florida, where he was graduated fourth highest in his class and was chosen one of four out of 310 to compete in the first Gunnery Meet at which he took the top individual high score.



Russell E. Jones

Was assigned to the 454th in August 1943 and to the 737th at McCook, Nebraska. Went overseas to Italy via the southern route in December 1943. As Tail Gunner on Sherman's crew, he flew on the first group mission and on both missions for which the Presidential Unit Citation was awarded. Credited with shooting down 3 confirmed and 2 probable fighters. After completing 51 missions, returned to U.S. in September '44 and volunteered for the Pacific. Discharged in October 1945 and joined the Air Force Reserves, flying out of Westover A.F. Base in M.A.T.S.

Married in 1951 to Arlene Buskey and had 2 sons, Corey and Steven and a daughter Sally and 2 grandchildren.

Retired after 29 years as a tool and die maker with the L.S. Starrett Co.

Has attended all but one reunion.

THOMAS CARBERY JONES

Born March 6, 1920 in Baltimore, MD. Enlisted May 23, 1940, 110th Field Artillery, 29th Div. Became an Aviation Cadet Sept. 3, 1943. Trained at Selman Field, Monroe, LA.



Thomas Carbery Jones

After graduation in Advanced Navigation, and Phase Training, was assigned to a crew in the 737th Squadron of the 454th Bombardment Group (B-24s). We departed Mitchel Field in Dec. 1943 for Cerignola, Italy via what was known as the Southern Crossing (Natal to Dakar, etc.).

Our first mission was on Feb. 8, 1944 — the Group's first. I completed my 50 mission tour on July 6, 1944 before my crew because I flew as Lead Navigator on several missions. Missions flown included airdromes, marshalling yards, etc. with heavy emphasis on oil installations (two missions over Ploesti, Rumania).

I feel our survival as a crew was due in large part to our team work and Pilot Lt. Corbett's leadership. Unfortunately, we lost our Co-Pilot, Lt. Oscar Washer, over Genoa, Italy flying with another crew.

After being discharged in June 1945, I resumed studies at Johns Hopkins (night school) while working at several jobs allied with my Civil Engineering major. Upon graduation, I was employed by a major international contractor as Project Engineer on various projects around the world for six years. Unfortunately, I came down with polio in Guatemala. Upon recovery, I went to work in the Bureau of Engineering for Baltimore County, Maryland, retiring in 1980 and am currently in Real Estate Sales.

WILLIAM C. JONES

William C. Jones — I was drafted out of Fisher Memphis Aircraft Div., where I worked, into the Army Air Force at Fort Bragg, N.C., Dec. 1942. Graduated Aerial Gunnery School, Harlingen, Texas, Feb. 1943. B-24 Aircraft Mechanic School, August 1943, Keesler Field, Biloxi, Miss. I joined the 454 Bomb Group Sept. 1943 at Clovis, New Mexico. Trained as a Tail Gunner at McCook,



William C. Jones

Nebraska and Charleston, S.C. I left the States, Dec. 1943 via Brazil, South America and Tunis, North Africa. Arrived San Giovanni Air Field near Cerignola, Italy, Jan. 1944.

I completed fifty missions over northern Italy, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia.

I received the D.F.C., the Air Medal with five clusters, and shot down one enemy fighter.

My crew and I completed our missions and left Naples, Italy, Sept. 1944.

I was stationed at Keesler Field, Miss. for a year, and was discharged Sept. 1945, at Fort Bragg, N.C.

My work at N.A.R.F., Naval Air Station, Norfolk, Va. was from 1947 to retirement, 1978. My present address, Norfolk, Va., March 1991. I have a wife, Velma, and two daughters, Nancy and Judy. One grandson, David.

FERRIS KIMBALL JOYNER

Born 3 Jan. 1923 in Dentsville, SC. I entered service at Fort Jackson, SC. Basic Training at St. Petersburg, FL. Radio School at Sioux Falls, SD. Gunnery School at Harlingen, TX.



Ferris Kimball Joyner

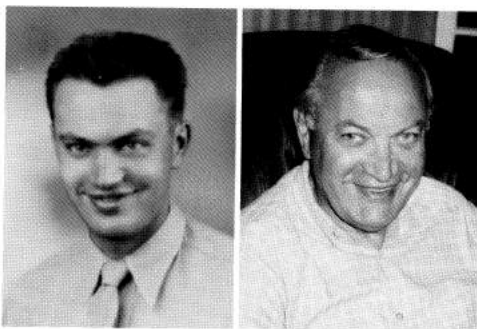
I joined Bob McGowan's crew in Salt Lake City, UT, going to Pocatello, ID, then to Overseas Training at Muroc, CA. Went in as a replacement crew to 737th Bomb Squadron at Cerignola, Italy with McGowan's crew. Made my first mission to Milano, Italy Marshalling Yards, May 30, 1944. Later flew missions with McGowan, Joe Roller and Billy G. Ray. Went down over Czechoslovakia August 29, 1944 on Ray's 50th mission and my 44th, with the crew of Ray, Garnet J. Niseley, Louis Stromp, Louis F. Leon, James B. Garrett, Robert H. Reid, Jr., Oscar H. Thielen, Jr., William F. Anderson, Andrew Sollock, and myself. There were other injuries but Sollock was the only one killed. I spent the rest of the war as a Prisoner of War. I am now retired.

CHARLES R. KADAR

Enlisted in 1942 as an Aviation Cadet. Basic Training at Atlantic City, NJ. Assigned to a College Training Detachment in Rochester, NY, for several months. Nashville, TN Classification Center; Scott Field, IL; Harlingen, TX; Hammer Field, CA; Walla Walla, WA; and Hamilton Field, CA followed in order.

Our crew was assigned a B-24 in California and flew it to Italy by way of Gander Field, Newfoundland, the Azores, and Marrakesh, French Morocco. Flew 35 missions, starting August 1944 to March 1945.

Most memorable mission was my first when I was assigned to a crew that lacked one man. This crew was on its' last mission,



Charles R. Kadar

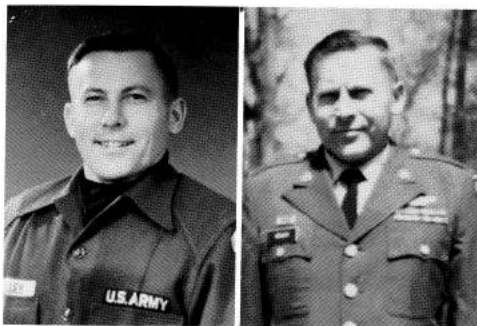
having already completed 34 missions. The plane suffered significant damage over Munich to the point where we couldn't maintain altitude. Our flight back was through the Alps.

Upon entering Yugoslavia, we prepared to abandon the aircraft due to loss of engine power. With the flight deck hatch open and poised to jump, the crew voted to stick with the ship. Although late, we managed to get back to our field. For the veteran crew members, the occasion was joyous! At the same time, it was hard to imagine that my turn was just beginning.

Retired from General Motors in 1982 as a Senior Project Engineer. Married 46 years to wife Jean. Three children, Dan, Sue and Bill.

NORBERT R. KELLEY

My "friends and neighbors" drafted me in January 1943. As Engineer-Gunner on Frank Cloaninger's B-24 bomber crew, 737th Sqdn, our missions included Ploesti, Vienna, and Blechammer. On 22 August 1944 at Blechammer, flak got us. We bailed out and spent 9 months as POWs. The Lord watched over us and we all made it back safely.



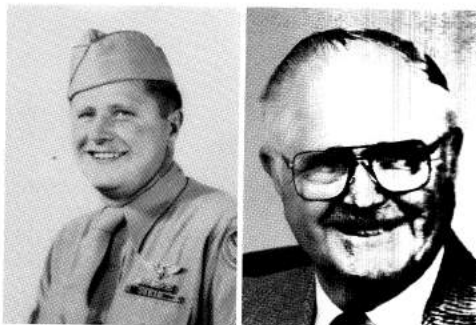
Norbert R. Kelley

In 1945, I headed home to Albion, Maine. However, 1948 saw me back in the "new" Air Force for 4 years. One assignment included Wheelus Field, Tripoli, North Africa. In 1952, I returned home to marriage, college, a job, and Air Force Reserve. However, in 1961, I joined the Army. Although my combat experiences are average, my three separate periods of Basic Training with large doses of KP in 1943, 1948, and 1961 are unusual. I "visited" hot and cold places — Korea, Alaska, Vietnam, stateside posts — with retirement at Ft. Campbell, Kentucky in 1977. From Oct. 78 to Oct. 89, I worked for Civil Service, spending the last 10 years at Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

My next PCS may be my last. I am honored to have served my country for 40 years. I salute my comrades and buddies. God Bless You.

MARLIN S. KERBY

Born June 28, 1922 at Bonner Springs, KS. Entered service Oct. 28, 1942 at Ft. Leavenworth, KS. Basic Training at Sheppard Field, TX; Gunnery School at Laredo, TX; Armament School at Lowery Field, CO.



Marlin S. Kerby

Assigned to the 480th Anti-Submarine Group, Port Lyautey, French Morocco, North Africa from June 25, 1943 to November 22, 1943. Flew single patrol and convoy coverage over the Atlantic Ocean. In Tunis, North Africa from Sept. 5, 1943 through Sept. 16, 1943, patrolling the Mediterranean Sea prior to the invasion of Italy. Flew 29 missions (312 hours) with the 480th. Back to the States on Nov. 22, 1943 after the Navy got B-24s.

Assigned to the Leon Polinsky crew in the 454th Bombardment Group at Cerignola, Italy on April 13, 1944. Flew first mission on April 21, 1944. Shot down over Brux, Czechoslovakia on April 21, 1944. The seven surviving crew members were taken P.O.W. Flew total of 28 missions and was credited with 39 sorties. Liberated on May 5, 1945 and returned to the States on June 21, 1945. Discharged Sept. 27, 1945 with the rank of Technical Sergeant.

Most memorable experiences — credited for downing a ME-109 on May 25, 1945 over Piacenza, Italy; flying over some of Hitler's most heavily defended targets — Ploesti (twice), Munich, Budapest, Bucharest, Friederickshafen and Brux, Czechoslovakia; bailing out of our burning plane from approximately 23,000 feet in the air; ten months as a German P.O.W.

Retired from Aetna Life and Casualty Co. in 1984 after 33 years of service and presently serving as Municipal Judge for the city of Bonner Springs, KS.

RALPH KINCKNER

Born April 2, 1922 in Bridgeport, PA. I was drafted January 26, 1943 and received my Basic Training at Miami Beach, FL. Armament School at Lowry, CO, then on to Gunnery School at Harlingen, TX. In September 1943, I joined the 454th Bomb Group at



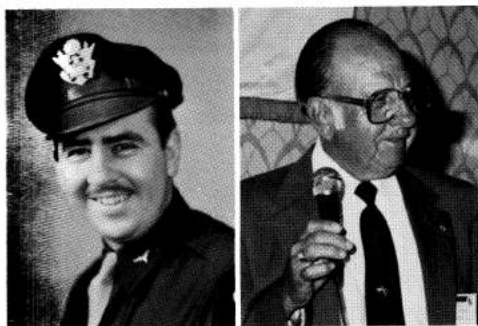
Ralph Kinckner

Charleston, SC. I flew as Tail Gunner on Lt. Ralph Yeoman's crew, 739th Squadron. We flew our first mission February 8, 1944 over Orvieto Air Field, north of Rome. My last flight was August 12, 1944 over Toulon, France. I returned to the States and became an Instructor at Power Turret & Gun Sight School at Lowry Field, Denver. Was discharged September 26, 1945.

I am presently enjoying my retirement from A.R.A. Services, Inc.

EARL E. KOEHLER

Enlisted in the Army Air Corps August 6th, 1943, graduated from Radio Mechanics and Radar Mechanics schools, was accepted as an Aviation Cadet for Class 44-A, graduated from Twin Engine Pilot School at Columbus, MS and commissioned on 7 Jan. 1944. Joined Capt. Hildebrandt's crew at Westover Field, MA and completed RTU training at Chatham Field, Savannah, GA. Reported to the 454th Bomb Grp, 736th Sqdn, in May 1944.



Earl E. Koehler

The crew flew many interesting missions such as: Ploesti, Vienna, Friedrichshaven, Linz (10 July '44 — the Group received an Outstanding Unit Citation award for this mission), and many others.

Was later reassigned to Lt. Hunter's crew and had some interesting missions, one of which, on Friday 13th, 1944, flew mission #134 against Hranice, Czechoslovakia. Due to flak damage and engine failure (three engines, were forced to bail out over Yugoslavia. The Partisans gathered us together and we were returned to the unit, except for one gunner, Art Husted, who suffered broken ankles and was admitted to the British Hospital on the Island of Vis.

Have many fond memories of the fellowship and association with all those during my tour at San Giovanni. However, I feel I have enjoyed most those missions starting with Mission #244 at Colorado Springs. These missions are "great" and continue to have more and more members, wives, and guests attending.

We did ourselves proud during WWII and I am very proud to have been a member of such a fine organization.

JOHN C. KOLEMBA

John C. Kolemba enlisted as Aviation Cadet Jan. 1943, Springfield, Mass. Flight training: Primary, Dorr Field; Basic, Greenville; Advanced, Freeman Field. Graduated Class of 44-A. Transitional B-24's, Sewart AFB; Replacement Crew Training; Westover Field; Radar Search-Attack, Langley Field. Flew B-24 overseas via Gander Bay, Azores, Maraketch, Tunis and Naples. Assigned 738th Squadron October 1944. Our crew flew



John C. Kolemba

first three combat missions accompanied by Lt. Sanderford, light flak, "Milk Runs." Indocination complete, next three missions, Linz — intense, accurate flak; Vienna — extremely intense flak, #3 B-24 our box, shot down in flames; Munich, intense flak. Complete new respect for combat.

Completed 35 sorties, April 5, 1945 without injury or casualties to crew. Memorable experiences: Missions to Brux, Moosbierbaum, Vienna, Prague and ST. VALENTIN. Night landing at San Giovanni was nightmare, no lights or distinguishable landmarks, tower finally assisted firing flares. Crosswind landing in 55 MPH crosswind with both upwind engines feathered, completed 2nd attempt. Christmas Day 1944 fog, landing impossible 454th. Loss of hydraulic system on take-off, main landing gear retracted halfway, manual crank inoperative. B-24 "Mechanics Nightmare" beached Northern Italy, complete loss Electrical/Hydraulic systems with dead, unfeathered engine. Returned civilian life Jan. 1946 after assignments Sewart, Long Beach, and Fairfield-Susan AFB's.

WILLIAM J. KOLLAR, SR.

Born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania on August 5, 1919. Enlisted in Army Air Corps (which, at the time, was a part of the Signal Corps) approximately a year of peace time or so before Pearl Harbor. Trained in Aircraft Mechanics at McDill Air Force Base and as an Aviation Cadet in Miami Beach. Cut-back in Pilot Training quotas but was able to continue flying as a crew member in the position of Flight Engineer-Gunner. Training at Tyndall Field, Florida. Joined my fellow B-24 crew members at Mitchel Field, NY and on to Westover Field, Massachusetts for transition before a 30 day ocean cruise on the Liberty Ship Smith-Thompson to the port of Bari, Italy.



William J. Kollar, Sr.

Flew thirty-three missions with Aircraft Commander Jack Nichols. All of them memorable experiences but particularly a night mission to bomb West Marshalling Yards in

Munich, Germany. The flak hits to our bomber and the eminent danger of crashing called for a bail-out order. The Tail Gunner and Waist Gunner parachuted to safety and were picked up by Yugoslavian Partisans. The two missing in action caused much concern and anxiety until, many months later, they were returned safely to the base at San Giovanni.

Discharged in September 1945 at Indian-town Gap, Pennsylvania. Recalled to active duty during the Korean War and remained with the Air Force to complete 30 years and retired with rank of Senior Master Sergeant. Life is much kinder as I approach 71 years than as a 20 year old youth with the 454th. Presently growing avocado, citrus fruit and macadamia nuts in Fallbrook, California.

CHARLES C. LAMB

Went through the usual routine — Gunnery School (Laredo, Texas), formed as a HBC crew (Casper, Wyoming), staging area (Topeka, Kansas), then to 736th BS (Cerignola, Italy), Nov. 44. Flew 25 missions and, after the war, we were allowed to fly the B-24 to the States. Believe we flew the route the original crew flew in December 1943.



Charles C. Lamb

After WWII, became a Master Paratrooper with the 82nd ABN DIV. During the Korean conflict, earned my first Combat Infantry Badge with the 187th ABN REGT Combat Team, later served with the United Nations Partisan Forces Korea. Member (16 years) Army Special Forces (Green Berets) serving world wide. In Southeast Asia 6 years (including SVN, etc.) in early war days (earning 2nd CIB). Also served in SVN with 101st ABN DIV. Proud to have a daughter, Morina, ROTC graduate, 1st LT, assigned 3d Div in Germany, and a son, Morgan, West Point graduate, CPT, serving as an Apache pilot, Ft. Hood, Texas. After 30 plus military years (joined 1943 as a Private), retired in 1975 as a Command Sergeant Major and now reside, with my wife Chieko, in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.

ROBERT L. LAMBORN

Born Feb. 7, 1923 in Anyox, BC, Canada. Was conscripted in December 1942 by FDR. After requesting service in the Infantry, was inducted into the AAF and sent to the 2nd AF for training. Joined 454th at McCook, NB December 1943 and flew Liberty Ship Hungry John Lawson from Newport News via South Atlantic to Africa to Naples. Advance cadre by train via Italian toe and heel to San Giovanni. Convoy beat us by two days.

Was Classification Specialist in 739th Orderly Room. Made major personnel decisions such as which cooks and bakers should be made radar specialists and adjutants. Re-classified myself as Journalist so I



Robert L. Lamborn

could be sent on detached service to Bari to work on 15th AF newspaper. Flew to Rome behind 5th Army to report on Open City. Interviewed Sterling Hayden sailing arms across Adriatic to Partisans. 15th AF Intelligence scrubbed story. Returned to San Giovanni as Staff Sergeant and Staff Editor of "Flight of the Liberators." Photographed "Pappy" Gunns' big feet emerging from communications hatch of ME109 escape vehicle, the initial step of his courageous move that resulted in the repatriation of 15th AF POWs shot down during our many runs against the Ploesti oil refineries in Rumania.

I have been a Private Investigator for 30 years and own a winery, but nothing compares to the great and glorious adventure with the 454th.

God Bless the fine young men who stayed behind.

COL. WILLIAM R. LARGE, JR.

Graduated Texas A&M 1936, B.S. Chemical Engineering, 2nd Lt. F.A. Res.; 1½ yrs. Humble Oil and Refining Co., Baytown, TX; one year, Carnegie Institute of Technology, Pittsburgh, PA.



Col. William R. Large, Jr. USAF (Ret.)

Aviation Cadet Training, Ryan, San Diego; Randolph; graduated Kelly Field, Class 40-C. Retired September 1968. Instructed at Randolph: Commandant of Cadets and Squadron Commander, Lake Charles, LA; Sqd Commander, Carswell; Training Inspector Hq. Air Training Command, Ft. Worth; Operations Staff, Hq. 2nd Air Force, Colorado Springs.

Operations, Hq. 304th Bomb Wing, Italy. Flew missions with 454th Bomb Grp.

On 17 August '44, when Lt. Col. Gunn (Acting Commander of the 454th) was shot down over Ploesti, was assigned as his replacement. When Col. Aynesworth returned from the ZI on 29 Sep. '44, was relieved and became Deputy Commander until April '45. Served a few days as Commander in May '45.

June '45 assigned to 314th Bomb Wing, 20th AF, Guam, and then to Operations, Hq

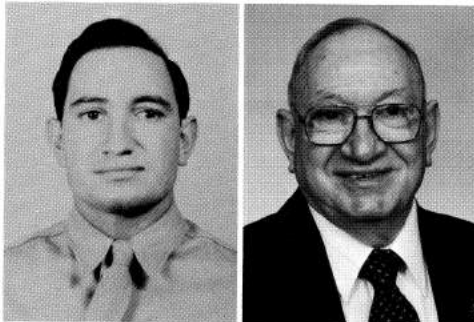
U.S. Army Strategic Air Forces (Guam). Operations Staff, Hq., JTF-7, Operation Crossroads (Bikini A-Bomb Tests); Operations, Hq. USAF and Hq. SAC; Commander, 320th Bomb Wing (B-47s) March AFB; Deputy Commander 7th Air Division (SAC), England; Deputy for Operations, AF Ballistic Missile Div. and Asst. CINCSAC (SAC-MIKE), Inglewood, CA; Commander Strategic Missile Wing, F.E. Warren AFB; Hq ARDC, later Air Force Systems Command; Commander, Eastern Contract Management Region, Middletown, PA; Chief of Staff, Aeronautical Systems Div. WPAFB, OH.

Awards and Decorations: Silver Star, Legion of Merit w/OLC, DFC w/OLC, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal w/30LC, AF Commendation Medal w/20LC, EAME Campaign Medal w/1 Silver and 4 Bronze Stars, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal w/2 Bronze Service Stars, Armed Forces Reserve Medal, and Senior and Master Missileman Badge.

Married over 37 years to Sophia, who died in June 1983. Three children: Peggy, Capt., William III, U.S. Navy, and Linda — 4 grandchildren.

EDMOND H. LeBLANC

Enlisted at Fort Devens, MA, July 21, 1942. Went to Aerial Gunnery School, in Harlingen, Texas, and Radio School in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Started air crew training in Pueblo, CO, but flew to Westover Field, MA, for final training.



Edmond H. LeBlanc

We picked up B-24 BUZZzz JOB at Mitchel Field, NY in April 1944. Flew by way of So. America and Africa to Italy. Assigned to 738th Squadron, 454th Bomb Group. Completed 51 missions, including such targets as Ploesti, Bucharest, and Vienna. Was on the mission to the Herman Goering Tank Works, in Linz, Austria, July 25, 1944 when our Group won the Distinguished Unit Citation.

Left Italy in August 1944. Attended Radio School at Scott Field, IL. Flew several months from Langley Field, VA, then transferred to Air Transport Command and Radio School at Reno, NV. War ended before I was shipped to the Pacific. Discharged at Westover Field, MA, October 5, 1945.

After the war, I was in the garage business, test man on jet starter controls, at General Electric, and radio technician and dispatcher at a concrete and bituminous concrete plant, for thirty three years before retirement.

ALFRED O. LEE, JR.

Enlisted, sworn into Army Air Corps as Aviation Cadet 20 March 1942. Received Navigator's wings, 2nd Lt. appointment, 25 August 1943.

Joined Peyton's TAIL WIND crew 5 September 1943. With Col. Gunn as crew mem-



Alfred O. Lee, Jr.

ber, B-24 flown December 1943 via South America to Africa to San Giovanni Airfield, Italy. Flight over Atlantic tested my navigational skills — one of my most memorable experiences 7 July 1944, one of first in Group to complete combat missions (51). Received Air Medal with 6 Oak Leaf clusters, Presidential Unit Citation and Award of Valor. On completing combat assignment (50 or more missions), TAIL WIND crew still intact, one of few.

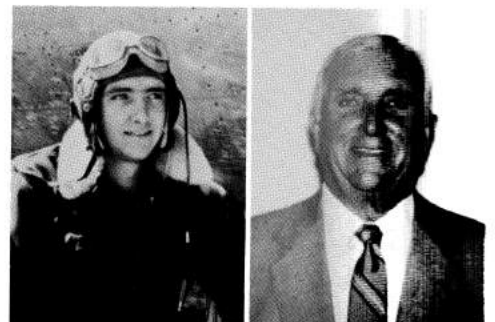
Reassigned to Charleston AAFB as Navigational Flight Instructor in B-24s, October 1944. Completed my WWII military career there as Navigational Instructor for ATC pilots November 1944.

As Korean conflict retreat, completed 21 months of active duty, May 1951 to February 1953. Served as Navigator in C-97s for MATS, also in B-29s with 580th Aerial Resupply and Communications Group under Col. John (Killer) Kane, leader of first Ploesti air raid in August 1942.

Presently reside in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania after successful career in Human Resources managerial positions.

CHARLES E. LEMLEY

Ball Turret Armorer-Gunner of the "Gentleman Jim" crew of the 737th Bomb Squadron. Entered the Army Air Corps at Ft. Dodge, IA in Jan. of 1942. Took Basic Training at St. Petersburg, FL. Armament School at Lowry Field, CO. Gunnery School at Ft. Meyers. Went from California to Arizona for crew assignment. Crew Training at Charleston, SC. To New York and then Morrison Field. Overseas by air via South America and Africa to Italy. On first mission, the plane behind in formation exploded when a bomb was dropped on it. Buddies quit at 36 missions — moved to tail position when radar antenna filled ball turret position. On Aug 12, 1944, Col. Gunn called him forward and congratulated him and offered to fly him home. Chose to go by boat instead and spent quite a bit of time on a banana boat. Flew 258 hours and 30 min. combat time. Was in Ft. Logan Convalescent Hospital from Nov. 13, 1944 to Apr. 5, 1945 when he was discharged. Married his



Charles E. Lemley

sweetheart and they have 2 wonderful boys and 1 girl.

In business for self 49 years and retired 2 years ago. Now reside in Spring Hill, FL.

ANGUS R. MACDONALD

Was the Ball Turret Gunner on Leo Venable's Crew. Joined the 739th Bomb Sqdn in Sep 1944. Completed 35 combat missions, (13 to Vienna), in Apr 1945. Left the Group a week later, left Naples in May, landing in Boston harbor on my birthday, May 15 — a helluva birthday present!

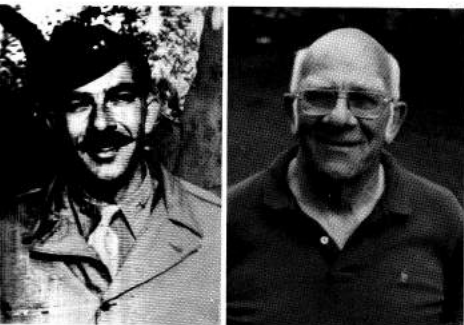


Angus R. Macdonald

Am damned proud to have been part of a combat crew in the 739th and the Great 454th Bomb Grp! Am double-damned proud to have served with Leo (NMI) Venable, Bardwell, TX, as our Aircraft Commander. To this day, I have not met a man that I respect like I did, do, and always will; as a pilot, leader, man, and friend — THE GREATEST! We "walked away" with our "asses intact" many times because Leo was driving that "magnificent monster." I salute the other men on Venable's crew — artist "Hud" Prichard — Co-Pilot — deservedly checked-out as First Pilot and got his own crew; Norman E. Andross — Navigator — became Squadron Navigator; Robert W. "Zim" Zimmerman — Bombardier; Donald J. Brenneman — Nose Gunner; Frank A. Carbone — Engineer and Top Turret Gunner; Robert H. Graybill — Engineer and Right Waist Gunner; Frank T. "Johnny" Johnson — Tail Gunner; Harold D. "Ship" Shippen — Radio Operator and Left Waist Gunner. Thanks, you beautiful, brave, bastards — if you're ever in Sarasota — give me a holler!

VAUGHN MARKER

Enlisted in the Army Air Corps, June 1942. Placed on inactive reserve. Ordered to Active Duty November 19, 1942 to report to Valley Forge Military Academy, Wayne, Pennsylvania. After basic training, reported to Army Air Force Technical Training School, Yale University for assignment to the Armament class. Completed Armament training June 3,



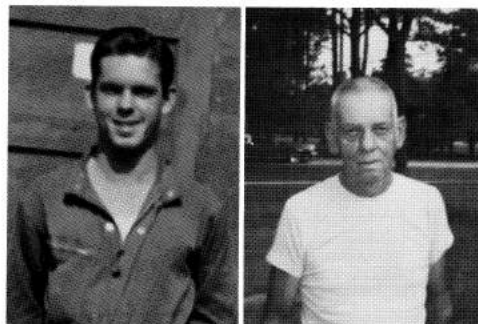
Vaughn Marker

1943 and was commissioned as 2nd Lt. AUS. Ordered to 39th Bomb Group 2nd Air Force, Davis-Monthan AAB, Tucson Arizona. Assigned to Cadre of the 454th Bomb Group July 1 1943. Sent to Gunnery training, Camp Seven Mile Spokane, Wash. Rejoined 454th at McCook, Neb. Flew overseas to San Giovanni, Italy with Lt. Lysle W. Elfrink and crew in the air echelon via South America and North Africa. Remained with the 738th Sq. 454th Bomb Group to the end of WWII. Relieved from Active Duty November 17, 1945. Accepted Commission as Captain in the Air Corps Reserve.

Recalled to extended Active Duty on January 22, 1951. Ordered to the 1002nd IG Unit Hdq Command USAF at Norton AFB, San Bernardino, California. Assigned to the Directorate of Technical Inspection. Member of "team" inspecting SAC units for combat readiness during the Korean Conflict. Separated from Service March 31, 1953.

JOSEPH E. MARKLEY

Joseph E. Markley — I enlisted in the Army Air Corps on 21 August 1942. Following Radio and Aircraft Gunnery Schools, I was assigned to Tucson, Arizona in May 1943 where I became Radio Operator on the Model Crew representing the 739th Bomb Squadron. We took Model Crew training at Orlando, Florida followed by Phase Training at Tucson, Arizona; McCook, Nebraska; and Charleston, South Carolina. While processing for overseas at Mitchell Field, New York in December, 1943, our airplane was christened "WINGED VICTORY" in honor of Moss Hart play. We witnessed a performance of the play in New York City followed by an introduction to the cast. We departed Morrison Field, Florida on 24 December 1943 and flew through South America and across North Africa to Tunis where we had to spend a month waiting for an operating location in Italy. We arrived at Cerignola on 1 February 1944, and regrettably, was shot down 25 days later. Following 14 months in POW status, I was discharged on 12 October 1945. I reenlisted on 14 November 1945 to pursue a career in the Air Force. I retired at Seymour Johnson AFB, North Carolina as of 1 September 1973 in the grade of CMSGT with 31 years of service. My wife Wilma, whom I incidentally married on 13 December 1943 while at Mitchell Field, and I elected to make our home in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Our oldest son, Terrance Wayne, retired from the USAF in August 1990 with 26 years service. He was named after pilot Terrance Breidenstein and co-pilot Wayne Mortenson. Our other 3 sons are namely Ross, Dale, and Joseph and our two daughters are named Linda and Ellen.



Joseph E. Markley

DAVID D. MARTIN

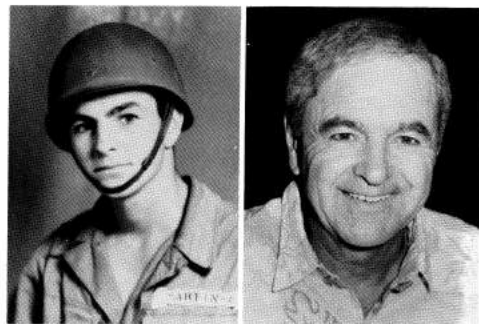
Was a Navigator on Robert E. Cooper's crew in the 737th Sq. Enlisted at 17 on April 20, 1943, was inducted June 13, 1943, and graduated in Class 44D from Ellington Field on April 22, 1944, while not yet 19 years old. The crew was put together at March Field and shipped to Italy Aug 22, 1944, arriving for combat duty at the 454th as a replacement crew in early September. After 11 sorties (17 mission counting double credits) was hospitalized with a suspected kidney disease in Bari, grounded, and sent back to the States in Jan 1945. Was one of the youngest flying officers to see combat duty in WWII. Was separated from the service in November 1945, entered the University of Texas at Austin (B.A., 1948; M.A., 1949) and then UCLA (Ph.D. in Economics, 1955). Retired from teaching in 1989 after 31 years at Indiana University School of Business. Served in several temporary positions as a government economist. Married to Nancy Graves, and their children are Carol Martin Watts, David Graves Martin, and Melinda Martin. Have four grandchildren. Have a vacation home in a hilltown north of Rome and travel to Italy frequently, but will continue in retirement to live in Bloomington.



David D. Martin

ROBERT M. MARTIN

Enlisted, Aviation Cadet, 1942, Ohio State University. By mistake, posted to Camp Wheeler Georgia for Infantry Training. After eleven weeks of a heavy weapons platoon, I was saved by my brother Charlie, Test Pilot, Eglin, who arranged Air Corps transfer. Common waystations followed: Biloxi, Miss., (Prickley Heat); Butler Univ., Indiana (10 hours of Piper Cub); Brooks General Hospital, San Antonio, Texas (no fun); Buckley Field, Colorado, (armor); Tyndall Field, Florida, (gunner); Charleston, So. Carolina, (crew training — Oscar Helton, Bob Meury, Pilots); San Giovanni, Italy (454th Group, 739th Sq.). I slipped my 6'1" frame into the ball turret for a very good reason — no other volunteers. Lingering Questions Depart-



Robert M. Martin

ment: Why did we take an inelegant tour over Styr and Linz to bomb St. Valentin? What really caused "Betty Co-Ed" to explode in front of us as we tried to land?

At the beach in Dakar on the way home, I treated clapping natives to a display of body-surfing. The truth came later: the sea was full of sharks! Discharge and civilian life meant: Amherst College, Mass.; Dublin Univ., Ireland; U.S.C. Law School, California; Monica, Swiss wife; daughter, Tara; sons, Brian and Stacy; four grandchildren and counting. Career: Teacher; Aerospace Executive; State Government Official; 22 years as Prosecutor, Trial Lawyer. Future: Travel law practice with son's firm.

JOHNNIE J. MASSEY

I was born Sep. 20, 1912 at Pleasant Shade, TN. I entered military service Feb. 5, 1943 at Ft. Oglethorpe, GA. Had Basic Training in Miami Beach, FL. Went to Buckley Field and Lowery Field, Denver, CO in April 1943, where I specialized in maintenance on power operated gun turrets and computing gun sights.



Johnnie J. Massey

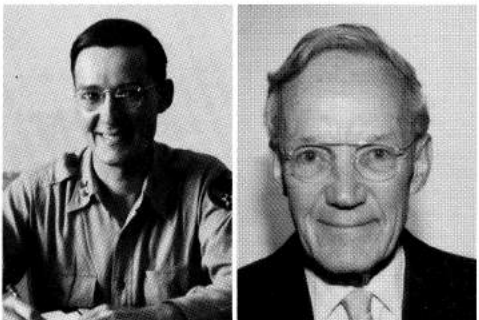
I joined the 454th Bomb Group at McCook, NE Sep. 30, 1943. The Group moved to Charleston, SC. We (ground personnel) left Charleston Dec. 8, 1943 and boarded ship at Norfolk Dec. 13, 1943, landing at Naples, Italy Jan. 13, 1944. We soon started setting up camp at San Giovanni Air Field. I was in the 737th Sq.

I would like to praise my boss, Armament Officer A.B. McClure and the men who worked with me in keeping the turrets in shape. I was called the "Turret Man." I was promoted to Sgt. Feb. 1, 1944 and to S/Sgt. May 5, 1944. Was discharged Oct. 9, 1945.

I entered U.S. Postal Service Jan. 16, 1949 and retired at Nashville, TN Feb. 25, 1977. The greatest assets I have are the friends I've made.

J. ALAN MATHESON

I was born June 26, 1919 in Philadelphia, PA. I attended the Statistical Officer Candi-



J. Alan Matheson

date course at Harvard and was commissioned a 2nd Lt on December 5, 1942. In the summer of 1943, I joined the 454th Bomb Group at Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, AZ and attended the School of Applied Tactics at Orlando and Pinecastle, FL with the training cadre. I went overseas with the ground cadre aboard the Liberty Ship, John Cropper, which dropped behind the convoy the first night because of a mechanical problem. Passengers were asleep. Next morning, we were back in our proper position in the convoy. We had been fair game for an enemy submarine during the night, but weren't aware of it until morning. We reached Cerignola in January 1944. Life was primitive at first — eating cold rations in unheated tents. I received notice of my father's death shortly after VE Day and I was given a hardship leave. My last station was Bolling Field, Washington, D.C. with discharge as a Captain in the fall of 1945, followed by a return to law school and later to enter the surety bond business, retiring in 1989, but continuing on a part-time basis to this day.

HARVEY P. MCCLANAHAN

I was drafted in March 1943, Anniston, Ala.; attended Power Turret and Gunsight School at Lowry Field; assigned to 39th Bomb Group at Davis-Monthan, (attended Aerial Gunnery School there); joined the 737th Sqdn. at McCook in Sept. 1943; remained with 454th until discharged at Sioux Falls on 10-7-45.



Harvey P. McClanahan

I'll always remember the 30 days on a Liberty Ship from Norfolk to Naples; crossing the mountains from Naples to Cerignola in an open 6x6 in convoy without lights; the mud and sleeping in a pup tent the winter of '44; the take-off and landing crashes; my despondency following a crew I knew being shot down or killed in an accident. (For that reason, with few exceptions, I never became "close" with replacement crews.)

I'll always remember the long line of "birds" taxiing out for take-off, "peeling off" for landing and swinging off the runway onto the taxi strip. I did my assigned job and didn't make any "waves" except for an occasional case of unbriago to the abomination of "Ali Ben" McClure, (armament Officer).

JOHN D. MCCORKLE

John D. McCorkle graduated Hondo, Texas as navigator April 1944. B-24 phase training at Boise, Idaho (Col. Killer Kane). Pilot Harold Meyer and crew flew brand new B-24J from Topeka, Kansas all the way to 739th Squadron, 454th Group. After 2nd mission, July 1944, named our plane "Flak Happy." Watched Col. Gunn and several others B-24's go down over Ploesti 17 August 1944.

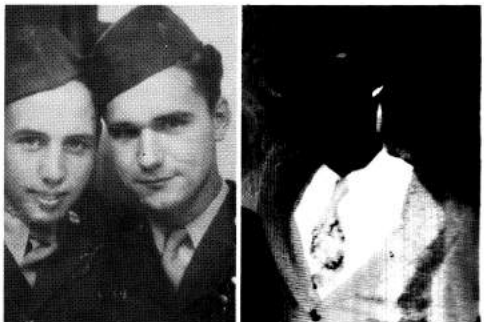


John D. McCorkle

Was on flight line when Col. Gunn was pulled out of ME-109. On 13 September 1944 with Harold Meyer as pilot and Capt. Allen Unger as co-pilot (a mixed crew in a Mickey plane) shot up over Odertal with only 4 engines — not enough! Bailed out over Vienna Forest in Czechoslovakia. Visited all the best prisons in Hungary and Germany. Lost track of both crews (Unger's and Meyer's) and the 454th. Got in touch with 454th thru Bob Collings, Jerry Bradbury and Ralph Branstetter. My original crew was a replacement crew. Some missions were flown with Capt. Unger's surviving crew in August and September 1944. I never really got to know the 454th before bailing out 13 September 1944. Hope to remedy that at the upcoming reunion!

GEORGE R. MCFADDEN

George R. McFadden — Enlisted in the Army-Air Force May 3, 1943, May 10, 1943 I reported for active duty. Basic Training took place in Miami Beach, Florida, then it was on to Denver, Colorado for Armament Training. Gunnery School in Laredo, Texas was my next stop. Upon completion of my schooling I was sent to Salt Lake City, Utah for crew assignment. As a crew, we trained in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where I was assigned as a Ball Gunner. From there it was on to Kansas City, Missouri where our crew picked up a new B-24 and transported it via the southern route to San Giovanni Airfield, Italy. May 28, 1944 we were assigned to the 454th Bombardment Group, 738th Squadron and left Italy on October 7, 1944. We flew fifty missions from May-September 1944 with our Captain Arthur Williams. I received credit for shooting down two ME-109's (got lucky). Our crew received a Presidential Group Citation and an Air Medal. Upon returning from Italy on October 22, 1944 I served as a Clerk-Typist at the Las Vegas Air Force Base where I was discharged on October 19, 1945. In December of 1945 I began the Sheet Metal Trade until retirement of 1987. I am a 66-year resident of Akron, Ohio. My wife's name is Eleanor, and my children's names are Heather, Sandra, and Robert.



George R. McFadden

ROBERT R. MCFALL

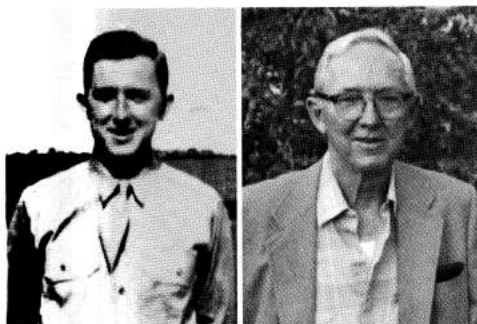
Enlisted Cadets Dec. 1942. Graduated Class 44-C at Waco, TX, was assigned as a Co-Pilot on John McAuliffe's crew at Davis-Monthan Field, AZ for transition. Crew picked up B-24 at Topeka, KS July 1944 and flew to Foggia, Italy via Newfoundland, Azores and Africa. At Foggia we were assigned to 737th Sq, 454th Bomb Grp. On our 6th mission, we went to Ploesti Aug 17, 1944. Col. Gunn was leading that day. I remember realizing as we turned toward the target that the black cloud ahead was flak. Just as we reached the target, the four planes ahead of us were hit and literally knocked out of the sky and we were hit bad but could continue to fly. We salvaged our bombs and headed for home. We didn't quite make it — we bailed out over Greece when the mountains ahead were above us. Half of our crew were captured and the rest of us were rescued 20 days later by transport command and flown to Bari. When we were in the hospital in Bari, our POWs from Bulgaria arrived. The look in their eyes was just like the look of a caged wild animal. I witnessed this same look when our POWs from Japan arrived at Santa Monica. I returned to the States Dec. 1944 and was discharged Sep. 1945.



Robert R. McFall

FRANK E. MCKIMMEY

Frank E. McKimney, Tech Sgt, Radio Operator on Lt Patrick Tolson's crew, 737th Squadron. Attended Gunnery School at Tyn-dall Field, Florida. Completed Radio Operator training at Scott Field, Illinois, May 1944. Arrived at 454th Base near Cerignola, Italy, October 16, 1944. On mission to Linz, Austria, November 11, 1944 (second mission), the crew was forced to bail out over Yugoslavia because of fire in one of plane's engines. The entire crew landed safely and were picked up and cared for by the Partisans. With the aid of the Partisans, the crew returned to the 737th within a short period. Completed 32 missions before the war in Europe ended. Battles and campaigns par-



Frank E. McKimney

ticipated in were: No. Appennines; Po Valley; Rhineland, and Air Combat Balkans.

Decorations: EAME W/4 bronze stars, Purple Heart, Air Medal W/2 bronze clusters.

All of the original members of Tolson's crew flew back to the States together in July 1945. Received discharge at SAD, AAFDC, San Antonio, Texas, October 25, 1945.

REX E. MELTON

Graduated from pilot training at Pampa, TX, with class of 44D, April 1944. Completed B-24 transition at Fort Worth AAFB; then went to Casper, WY, for crew and pre-combat training. Shipped overseas on a French luxury liner converted for troop transport duty. Several ships were in the convoy. Changed ships in Naples to a British mail ship for trip around toe to port near Gioia Del Colle. Rode truck to San Giovanni in early December. Flew 24 missions before end of war in Europe.



Rex E. Melton

Decorations: Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, Air Medal w/2 Clusters.

Now retired Penn State Professor Emeritus of Forestry living near Penna Furnace, PA with wife, Margie, Four children: Dawn, Kay, Karen, and Rex, Jr.

DELBERT L. MILLER

Inducted into service January 8, 1943 and reported to Camp Dodge, Iowa January 15, 1943. Basic Training at St. Petersburg, Florida and then to Aircraft Armament at Lowery Field Colorado. Attended Flexible Gunnery at Las Vegas, Nevada. Staged with crew at Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, Arizona and then to 454th Bomb Group (H) at Charleston AAF, Charleston, North Carolina. Sent to Mitchel Field, New York and assigned to an aircraft which they flew to Italy, leaving on December 24, 1943 and arriving at San Giovanni Field, Cerignola, Italy on January 26, 1944. Assigned as Ball Turret Gunner on Lt. Louis C. Kisylia crew in the 738th Bomb Sq. Flew 27 combat missions for a total of 136 combat hours.



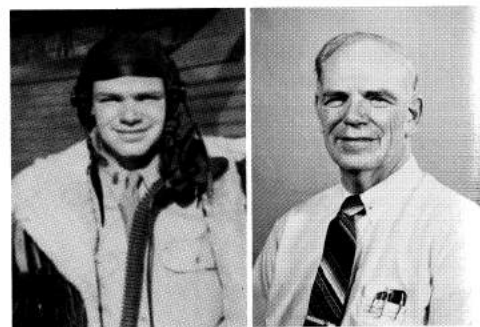
Delbert L. Miller

Decorations: Air Medal w/2 Oak Leaf Clusters, Distinguished Unit Medal, Good Conduct Medal.

Returned to U.S. on September 26, 1944 and received an Honorable Discharge on October 10, 1945 at Sioux City AAB with the rank of Staff Sergeant.

DAVID A. MILLINGTON

My military service offered much to me after leaving the 182 acre Ballston Lake, NY farm and enlisting in the Army Air Corps June 1942. Arriving at Fort Dix, NJ, I took the opportunity to take the Aviation Cadet Entrance Exam. Having passed, my boyhood desire and dream was accomplished when I graduated as a Pilot from Brooks Field, San Antonio, TX Aug 30, 1943.



David A. Millington

I became a member of Lt C. Rymers' B-24 crew as a Co-Pilot in the 738th Sq at McCook, NE in early Sep 1943. I was assigned Airplane Commander with the crew March 1944 while in combat operations.

April 13th 1944 mission over ME-109 Aircraft Component Factory near Budapest ended with a crash off the runway at San Giovanni caused by German fighter damage to our left main gear tire which blew out. Two of my crew, Sgt Joe Marrone and Sgt Rudy Martin were seriously injured by FW-190 action.

I retired from the Air Force in 1966 as a Major after serving 23 years of Regular and Reserve time. I also retired from the Knolls Atomic Power Lab of the GE Co. in 1986 as a Senior Mechanical Designer, designing reactor refueling equipment for the Frigate Class ship, the USS Bainbridge.

Thus I enjoyed and experienced a variety of life-fulfilling endeavors.

JOSEPH MINOTTY

Inducted into Army as Private — Fort Dix, N.J. 6/18/41.



Major Joseph Minotty — Deceased 7/5/88

Trained at Camp Wheeler, Fort McClellan and completed Non-Com. Officers School 12/28/41.

Graduated Army Air Force Officers School as a First Lt. 12/9/42. Group Commanding Officer of the 39th Bomb Group Davis Monthan Field. Sailed for Italy 12/13/43 — was Group Adj. for the 737th Bomb Group then Headquarters.

Separated at Sioux Falls, S. Dakota Jan. 7, 1946.

Joe was married to Gertrude R. Fitzmaurice in Philadelphia, PA on 7/18/42 had one daughter Mary Lou and two sons Joseph E. and Paul V.

He was Vice President of insurance company and held a political office for 13 years serving two terms in the New Jersey Legislature, also President and Chairman of the Board of a New Jersey Bank. He attended the reunion of the 454th in Orlando, Fla. in October 1987 and suffered a stroke on Saturday morning.

MANUEL MOGA

Began military career on March 7th, 1942 as a medic in Fort Dix, New Jersey.



Manuel Moga

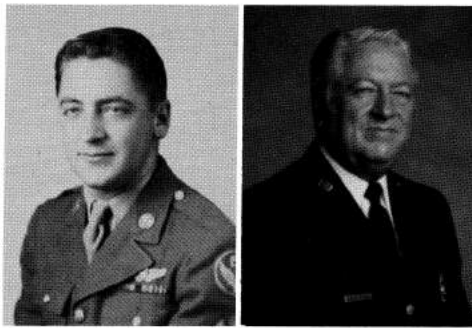
Transferred to the U.S. Army Air Corps and completed Basic Training at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi. Attended Army Air Forces Technical School at Lowry Field, Denver, Colorado and graduated Aircraft Armorer in August 1942.

Served in MOS at various stations in Kansas and Nebraska before being assigned to the 454th in McCook, Nebraska in September 1943. In addition to armament duties, during 1944, when spare parts were hard to come by through regular channels, was able to bypass the official modes requisitioning and obtain needed equipment through "clandestine" channels and establishing good rapport with area Service Groups as well utilizing cannabilizing tactics where necessary and thus earning the nickname of "Parts Pimp."

VJ Day arrived in the middle of his New York furlough and, having more than enough points to make him eligible for immediate discharge, promptly returned to Fort Dix for that elusive document and ultimate return to the Import-Export field from which he retired in 1984. Currently resides in Bellport, N.Y. in Long Island's Suffolk County happily married to the Italian girl he met while on leave in Rome in June 1944.

JOHN H. MONSEES

Enlisted in the Air Corps at Ft. Bragg 3 December 1942; graduated from Airplane Mechanics School in Biloxi; trained in Laredo, TX Aerial Gunnery School. Transferred to Clovis, NM where I was assigned to air crew



John H. Monsees

led by Joe E. McAllister. Charleston, SC Air Force Base served as our air crew training prior to assignment overseas. Our crew picked up #312 at Mitchell Field which on 31 December 1943 was christened "MISS AMERICA — '44," the plane that flew more missions than any other B-24 for the 454th. Arrived in Cerignola, Italy 28 January 1944, assigned to 739th Squadron. Promoted to Technical Sergeant and served as Engineer Gunner on MISS AMERICA — 44 flying 37 sorties and 51 missions. Our plane was considered to be "lucky" and we were. We suffered much damage but were able to return to base after each mission. Our Nose Gunner suffered damage to his left arm on 25 July 1944 over Linz, Austria and was the only crew member to sustain an injury.

My most memorable mission had to be the 454th's first mission to Ploesti 5 May 1944. Seeing planes from the groups ahead of us burning and blowing up was quite an experience. Completed last mission 12 August 1944.

KEVIN P. MORAN

Kevin P. Moran — "K.P." enlisted in AAF 6 July 42 in New York. Basic training in Biloxi, Miss. and Armament School, Lowry Field, Colorado. At Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, Arizona I became a member of the original cadre of the 454th. Further training and practice at McCook, Nebraska before reaching Charleston AAB, S.C. Even though I was a member of the ground crew I flew to Italy which gave me a week to visit home from Mitchell Field, Long Island. The air trip continued to Florida, South America, Africa and finally Cerignola, Italy.



Kevin P. Moran

Four of us lived in a tent at San Giovanni for a year and a half; Bernard Mizera, Bethel Harris, William McCormick and I. Other faces came into view, Vernon 'Frank' Cline, 'Jake' Jagielski, Joe Papparatto, Edward Moran, Section Officer (no relation). After forty five years one wonders where they are today.

Returned to N.Y. on the S.S. Argentina, discharged September 7, 1945 from Fort Dix, N.J.

Employed as a Public Adjuster for forty years; retiring in 1987 and residing in Rockville, Maryland.

BENNETT O. MOYLE

Born 31 October 1919 at Big Bend, WI. At the commencement of hostilities on 7 December 1941, was a Sophomore in the College of Engineering at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Married Mary Alice Lawler (Grad of OSU) on 23 May 1942. First week of June 1942, entered the Enlisted Reserve Corps as Aviation Cadet. Taught Aviation Production Mechanics at Willys Overland in Toledo, OH until called to active duty 5 January 1943. At Nashville Aviation Cadet Center, passed all tests with flying colors; chose Navigation School as the earliest feasible escape from Nashville ACC. Joined the 454th at McCook, NE about a week before the Group flew to Charleston. Flew Nose Turret Navigator on Mission #1 to Orvieto. That was sort of "my thing." The available maps of Europe were (in my view) excellent for pilotage and it was kinda nice to have someone else keep the log. At any rate, I flew most of my 37 sorties as a Ns Trrt Navigator. Sort of reduced the Group's defenses as I wasn't that much of a "shot."



Bennett O. Moyle

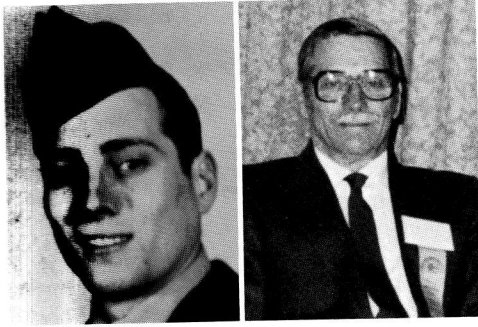
Rotated out of there in late mid-August of 1943. Spent most of the rest of that war as an Officer Student in Air Force Pilot training. The war ended midway through Single Engine Advanced Training so I went back to college without the pilot wings. After a year at Ohio State I found myself back on active duty as a Regular Officer headed into yet another year of college training in meteorology at the New York University. Served 17 years as a Staff Weather Officer, retiring at the Duluth AFB on 30 November 1964 as a rather "ripe" Major.

Taught school, sold Volkswagens and completed a degree in Industrial Education before becoming a St. Louis County Probation Officer in August of 1968. Retired from that on 31 December 1985. Like this retirement.

Our six children are established adults, our five grandchildren keep pleasing us, we keep busy, in fact, neither Mary Alice nor I can figure out how we found time to go to work all those years.

JOHN E. NEWELL

Born January 24, 1926 in Emporium, Pennsylvania where he attended DuBois High School in DuBois, Pennsylvania. Enlisted in the Army Air Corps at the age of 17, January 19, 1944. Attended Basic Training and, upon completion, was assigned to Aerial Gunnery



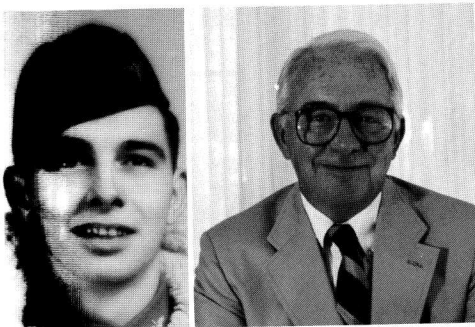
John E. Newell

School. Was transferred to Mt Home, Idaho for B-24 Combat Crew Training. Assigned to Lt Charles Riley's crew as Nose Turret Gunner.

Crew was transferred to Newport News, Virginia and embarked January 1945 on the USS West Point to join the 454th Bombardment Group. Was shot down on March 8, 1945, and landed behind Russian lines. Along with "Red" Davis and Marcellus Schwartz, was returned to Cerignola. Flew 13 more missions and received the Air Medal with cluster and other awards. On one mission, John was hit with some flak, but missed injury as the flak stopped just short of causing even a scratch. Was discharged in 1946, attended Pennsylvania State University, joined the 28th Division of the Pennsylvania National Guard in 1948. Served in Korea and Germany as Sergeant F.C. Married in 1952 and has two sons. Searched for 44 years for his former crew members. Located his Engineer with the help of Ralph Branstetter. Attended his first reunion in October 1988 in San Francisco. Passed away unexpectedly March 3, 1989. Survived by his wife, Dorothy, his sons Terry and Dennis, and 2 very adorable grandchildren. The family still resides in Medina, New York. Dorothy is continuing on as a member of the 454th Bombardment Group in honor of John's memory.

WILLIAM M. NEWTON

Enlisted in '42 at Cincinatti, my home town. Took my Bombardier/Navigation training at Big Spring, TX, Class '44-1. Joined the 454th in Italy, June of '44.



William M. Newton

During second mission, we were forced to bail-out over Yugoslavia and spent 26 days MIA with Chetniks behind German lines, then returned to base. My 13th mission, we straggled back thru flak and fighters and landed on Vis. On 20th mission, forced to land behind Russian lines in Pecs, Hungary — MIA for 10 days. Finished the war with 23 missions.

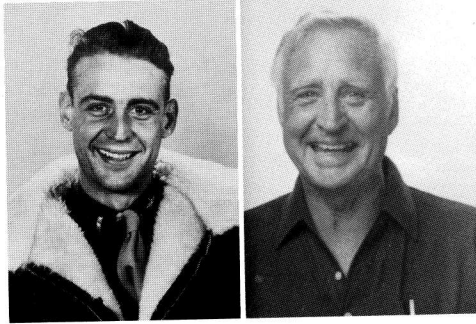
Decorations: DFC, 3 Air Medals, a Purple Heart, Presidential Citation, and 7 Battle Stars . . . it was a very interesting war.

After WW 2, married and attended the Art Institute of Chicago. Got into television in the early days producing children's shows, interrupted briefly by a recall during the Korean War. Entered the film industry and spent 25 years as a producer/director of television commercials and corporate films in Chicago and Los Angeles.

Retired and living with my wife Dorothy of 46 years in Lake Bluff, IL. I am professionally painting watercolors and oils of my favorite subjects.

JOHN W. NORTON

John W. Norton: Drafted March 1942. Completed Basic Training, Aberdeen, Proving Grounds, Maryland. Class 43K, Randolph Field, Texas.



John W. Norton

After graduation, assigned to Tarrant Field, Ft. Worth Texas for B-24 Flight Training. Crew assembled in Salt Lake City, Utah. From there to Peterson Field, Colorado Springs, CO for phase training.

Picked up aircraft Lincoln, Nebraska and flew to San Giovanni, Italy via Bangor, Azores, and Africa.

Released from Active duty October 1945. Recalled October 1950 for the Korean War. After returning to Randolph Field, Texas for B-29 training, spent three years in Japan as Operations Officer, 91st Recon Sqdn., flying reconnaissance in RB-29's, RB-50's and RB-45's over Korea.

Completed two Vietnam tours. One flying from Clark AFB, Philippines and the other flying reconnaissance out of Korat AFB, Thailand. Have logged over 1200 combat flying hours.

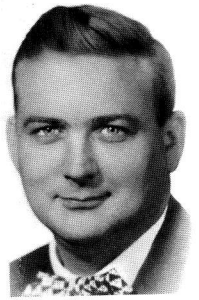
Decorations: DFC with one cluster; Air Medal with 13 clusters; Bronze Star and Distinguished Service Medal

Retired November 1969. Presently residing in St. Petersburg, FL. Fran and I celebrated our 50th Wedding Anniversary April 5, 1991.

EUGENE R. NUSBAUM

Enlisted in the Air Corps and left for Dorr Field, FL on Feb. 19, 1943. Graduated in Class 44E. Went to CTD at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA. Went South for flying training and received appointment as Flight Officer at Turner Field, GA May 24, 1944. On to Harlingen, TX for 6 weeks and then to Lincoln, NE and Casper, WY, where he became Co-Pilot on the Howard crew.

Next to Topeka, KS and on, by boat, to the 454th BG, 738th BS at San Giovanni Air Field, Italy. Was being considered for his own crew when the War ended. Received commission as 2nd Lt 22 May 1945. Separated from service 29 Sep 1945 at Fort Sheridan, IL.



Eugene R. Nusbaum

Decorations: Air Medal with 20LC, EAME Ribbon with 4 Bronze Stars for Northern Apennines, Po Valley, Central Europe, and Air Combat Balkans.

Worked many years as a salesman and finally succumbed to a heart attack on Dec. 3, 1967. — Donna Nusbaum

Nowhere else in life could the relatively short association with other persons result in the kind of relationship that developed between the members of our bomber crew. Having Eugene R. Nusbaum assigned to Crew 7509 in Lincoln, NE in July 1944, as our Copilot, was indeed a major factor in our safe and successful tour in the 454th Bomb Group. "Bomber," as we called him, had never been in a B-24 until he joined our crew, but if that was a disadvantage to him, he never realized it. By the time we completed our crew training in Casper, WY, where he was accompanied by his wife Donna and son Mike, he was well established as a qualified pilot and member of our crew. In combat, he always shared the long hours of formation flying, not to mention the responsibilities of setting her down — the job he loved most.

A few stories on our Copilot: Once, when we were at low altitude approaching San Giovanni, a P-38 settled on our right wing tip and, for a moment, it looked like Gene would walk out the wing and jump aboard the P-38! His desire had always been to fly the fighters!

When the rats invaded the officers' tent in early 1945, Gene decided to prepare himself for the worst. He announced that his Colt .45 was loaded with bird shot and would be on duty by his bedside at night. This caused considerable concern among the other officers who wondered if Purple Hearts would be issued to recipients of "rat war" injuries! Luckily, we never found out.

Perhaps the true Gene came out when he walked into our tent with a dressed chicken, compliments of the Mess Sergeant — he told us — under his jacket. If the Mess Sergeant was a part of this, why did Gene look so guilty? His face would have convicted him in any court of law! So we all enjoyed a snack of crew-cooked-in-the-backyard barbecued chicken! — James W. Howard

ROBERT (BOB) OTT

Born Oct 25, 1918 near St. John, KS. Graduated Butte Valley High 1936. Followed the rodeo circuits and ran mustangs.

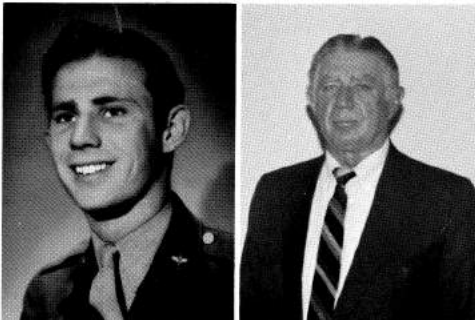
Enlisted in 1943. Took Basic Training at Amarillo, TX and shipped to Laredo for Gunnery after being phased out of Pilot Training. Shipped to March Field, Riverside, CA and was assigned to the B-24 crew of Lt. Birch. We flew our required training flights over the Mojave Desert and shipped by rail to Newport News, VA where we were put on board the French liner "Athos II" and steamed via convoy to Naples, Italy. Thence by train to

San Giovanni Air Base at Cerignola and the 454th where we were assigned to the 739th Squadron. Were assigned a new a/c from Willow Run and soon had a painting of our mascot on the side — my step-daughter, Juanita, in a bathing suit — and named "Wo! Hoo!" On a run over Vienna, we took German flak under the right wing. It flipped us over at 25,000 ft and we leveled off at 17,000. The wings were flopping like a sea gull. When we got her home, the rivet holes were so elongated, the ship was salvaged and we took over old "Flak Happy." Flew several sorties during the winter and made a belly landing at Pecs, Hungary behind Russian lines. Walked to the Adriatic Sea with a guide from Marshal Tito's Partisans, then to Italy by fishing boat. On a bomb run over Athens, Greece, we took some heavy flak and lost #3 engine. Had two cables cut and no hydraulic system. The skipper managed to keep her level with trim tabs until I patched the stabilizer cables with the emergency release from the top turret. The ship had 135 holes and was landed with the Bomb sight, using parachutes for brakes. Was discharged at Camp Beal, CA and joined the Reserve. Recalled as T/Sgt and assigned in 1951 to 5th Strat Recon Wing, Travis AFB, CA. Sent to Lowry AFB for refresher aerial and color photo processing. Back to Travis and 1st photo on a 4 man photo crew on RB-36. Into the World Mapping Project for several thousand hours. Requested combat duty and assigned to 91st Strat Recon Sqd, Yokada, Japan. Designed a camera mount and para flare combination with a couple others. Promoted to M/Sgt by direct order of Gen. Curtis LeMay, Commander of SAC. Separated from Reserve and immediately enlisted in the regular AF. Served as NCOIC Base Photo Lab at Beal AFB, Mt Home AFB, ID, and Tule, Greenland. Organized small-bore rifle teams at Tule, Bolling AFB, Washington, DC, and Hill AFB, Ogden, UT. As NCOIC of small arms training, entered several competitions and won awards, also organized first AF Honor Guard. Built firing ranges at several assignment stations. Promoted in 1966 to SMS. Retired in 1972 with 70% disability. Now living in Western Colorado and have 4 grown children, 18 grandchildren, and 23 great-grandchildren.

Decorations: "Have 24 clusters on my Air Medal, twelve Battle Stars and three Presidential Unit Citations besides the other ribbons and medals you collect on the way."

CHARLES E. OVERTON

Born in Granville County, Oxford, NC, July 14, 1921. Inducted October 20, 1942 at Fort Bragg, NC. Attended service schools at Scott Field, IL and Tyndall Field, FL. My military occupation was Radio Operator and Machine Gunner with Army Air Force #757. Received my Gunnery Wings and Air Crew Member Wings. Battles and campaigns were



Charles Edward Overton

Rome-Arno, Northern France, Southern France. Was wounded by 20 mm cannon fragments in both legs while on mission to Blechhammer. Was reported missing in action August 22, 1944 to August 26, 1945. We were on a mission on a ten man, four engine B-24 Liberator bomber attached to the 454th Bomb Group. Our plane was shot down. Alexander Gorashko and I were the only survivors. We ended up at Stalag-Luft IV.

My decorations and citations: Air Medal, Good Conduct Medal, Purple Heart, EAME Ribbon with four Bronze Stars and Unit Citation.

Was discharged October 9, 1945. Home and Lost. I farmed one half year and then went to work for the USDA. Was married in 1952 and we had three children. My wife died in December 1971. Remarried to a widow in 1973 and she had two daughters. We now have nine grandchildren. I enjoy fishing, playing cards and retirement.

VINCENT A. PALUMBO

Born Feb. 24, 1923, in Force, PA. Family moved to New York City because of better job prospects.



Vincent A. Palumbo

Enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force at Mitchell Field, New York on Nov. 28, 1942. Received Basic Training in Miami Beach, FL. Attended Mechanic Training School in Keesler Field, MS and Aerial Gunnery School in Laredo, TX. My first experience in an aircraft was standing up in a Trainer cockpit firing a .30 caliber machine gun at a tow target.

After training, I was assigned to Lt Norm Stokers' crew and participated in Flight Training at March Field, Riverside, CA prior to going overseas.

Our crew was assigned to a new B-24 bomber which we flew overseas by way of Trinidad, Brazil, North Africa, and Italy. While at Cerignola, beginning in March of 1944, our crew flew approximately 38 combat missions, but was credited with 51 missions due to double credits. Most memorable targets to me were the Ploesti Oil Refineries, Odertal Oil Refinery, and the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery.

It is difficult to recall the many experiences while with the 454th Bomb Group, but the few that I do recall, gives me a faith, and a sense of responsibility, that I have carried with me always. It is a tribute to the members of our crew that we have survived to return to our loved ones. The 738th Bomb Squadron was a credit to the Group.

I am currently employed with The Department of Engineering, with the City of Newark, New Jersey, as Manager of the Division of Traffic and Signals.

GEORGE H. PAPPAS

Captain George H. Pappas. My military life began March 1941. About 100 boys and I were the first to be drafted in the U.S. Air Corps. We were sent to Luke Field, AZ. I became a Buck Sergeant. Pearl Harbor was bombed, long war, and decided to become a Flying Cadet.



George H. Pappas

Graduated as a Pilot-1943 B from Williams Field, AZ, flying the Curtis AT9's. Sent to Albuquerque, NM, Kirkland Field, where I flew AT-11's. With Bombardier Instructor, we taught Cadets to become Bombardiers.

In 1944, we became a crew and trained in Casper, WY. Reached Replacement Center at Bari, Italy, where we were assigned to the 739th Squadron. We flew our regular missions — my crew completed their 35, I completed only 31 due to flying Deputy Group Lead, later Group Lead.

My Bombardier, Howard Stoner, was wounded over Bologna, Italy — lost his eye. The original ten all returned home to the good Ole U.S.A.

Married to Louise Nicholson, 2 daughters and one son, plus three grandsons.

Now retired — active in Lions Club, fishing, stock market, and do some traveling.

Decorations: Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, EAME Theatre ribbon, Air Combat Balkans, Germany, Po Valley, and Appennines.

FERNAND A. (FRED) PAZZAGLIA

Born August 26, 1922 in Buffalo, NY. Enlisted on January 6, 1943. Attended Aircraft Armament Course, at Lowry Field, CO and Aerial Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, FL. Participated in 50 combat sorties from Feb. 8 to July 13, 1944 for a total of 250 combat hours.



Fernand A. (Fred) Pazzaglia

One of my memorable experiences was a mission to Bad Vaslov, North Austria, where we bombed the ME Assembly plant. The bomb load was 100 pound demo bombs. We

encountered heavy flak, 50-75 enemy fighters. They were ME-109s, FW-190s and ME-110s. The Nose Gunner destroyed one enemy fighter. The Group didn't lose any ships. It was our roughest raid so far.

It was pure Hell that day, with fighters shooting rockets. Rockets were a new thing to us. The sky was full of flak and rocket fire. I came close to hitting a fighter, but missed again, as usual. Tracers from all ships screened the sky that day with black puffs of flak. Mission accomplished!

Afterwards, I spent 7 days on the Isle of Capri. I spent 3 days in Rome, touring the city and visiting St. Peters.

Decorations: European-African-Middle Eastern Theater Ribbon with Battle Stars for Rome-Arno Campaign and Normandy Campaign. Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf clusters. 1 Overseas Service Bar.

I was discharged on April 30, 1945.

I retired in 1984 after 37 years as a building contractor of residential homes. I built well over 140 homes.

JOSEPH PRIBULA

Enlisted as an Aviation Cadet. After sessions at Xavier U and Tyndall Field Gunnery training, was sent to San Angelo, Texas for training as a Bombardier. Graduated 29 April 44, Class 446-DR. Transferred to Westover Field, MA and was assigned to Irv Abravaya's crew for replacement training. Left Bangor, ME for Bari, Italy, via the Azores and Africa.



Joseph Pribula

Assigned to 454th Bomb. Group, 739th Squadron at San Giovanni in August 1944. Was Flight C Bombardier. The busy month of Sept. 44 flew on 12 missions.

Decorations: Air Medal/3 clusters, DFC for action over Trieste, Italy.

Completed 35th mission over Plattling M/Y, Germany on 22nd of Feb. 45. Returned to USA via Bermuda to Midland, Texas for retraining and reassignment to the Pacific Theater. Thank God, the war ended and I was separated from the service.

I retired from a Telephone Co. as a Communications Planning Engineer. Presently live in Exeter, PA with wife Jean and son Patrick John.

FREDERICK A. PYECROFT

Joined U.S. Army February 1943, Enlisted Reserve from University of Pennsylvania, arriving at Fort Meade, Maryland. Took Basic Training at Camp Wolters, Mineral Wells, Texas. Transferred to the Air Corps and went to pre-flight at Santa Ana, California and Navigation training at Hondo, Texas. After the war returned to Merchantville, NJ, married Jeanne Smith of Bala Cynwyd, PA and moved to Drexel Hill, PA. In addition to the

B.S. in Economics from University of Pennsylvania, went to Drexel University for 9 years at night and received a B.S. in Electrical Engineering. Retired Dec. 31, 1990 from Philadelphia Electric Co. after 43 years of service. Have three sons.

MARTIN C. RADAWICZ

Enlisted U.S. Army June 1940. Served in Army Air Corps at Albrook and Howard Fields, C.Z. until about June 1943. Went to Armorer, Power Turret and Gunsight School at Rio Hato, C.Z. Reassigned to Biggs Field, El Paso, TX. Served as an Aerial Gunnery Instructor. Volunteered to join 454th Bomb Group about Sep. 1943. Reported to Charleston AFB and was assigned as Tail Gunner on Lt. Otis Whitney's crew. Was in the hospital with S/Sgt. Olson, Waist Gunner, when Lt. Whitney was shot down. Olson was lost while flying with Lt. Ward. I flew with various other crews as a replacement until I had the very good fortune to join Lt. Bernie Hogan's crew as their Tail Gunner. Finished my 50 missions with them. Got out of the AAF Sep. 1945. Joined Air Force and Navy Reserve until retirement in 1978.



Martin C. Radawicz

CHARLES T. REILLY

Charles T. Reilly — Enlisted December 1942 as an Aviation Cadet. Assigned to Atlantic City, NJ for Basic — Penn. State, State College, PA and Maxwell Field, AL for Pre-Flight. Flight training — Primary, Camden, AR — Basic, Malden, MO, and Advanced, Stuttgart, AR. Commissioned May 23, 1944, Class 44E. Assigned as Pilot B 24s (1092) and sent to Maxwell Field, AL for transition. Crew training was at Mountain Home, ID. Assigned to the 454th Bomb Group, 738 Squadron in January 1945 at Cerignola Italy as a replacement crew. Completed 12 missions as Airplane Commander. Flew a B 24 with all of my original crew and some passengers back to the states in June 1945 via Africa, South America to Savannah, GA. Left active service in November 1945 and remained in the active reserves until



Charles T. Reilly

September 1955. Married in 1945 to Virginia. We raised four children and now have six granddaughters. Worked for New Jersey Bell Telephone Co. in various management positions for 38 years. Continued flying as a hobby until my retirement in November 1984. I feel I was fortunate to have an excellent crew who were dedicated and worked well together so that we all returned without major injuries.

ALFONSO P. RICCARDI

My one-year DRAFT extended after Pearl Harbor. Medic in Barksdale AFB 2 years awaiting call-up. Pilot Primary, Tucson. I soloed and washed, "Reckless Flying." Bombardier training, Victorville (Edwards). Brother, stationed nearby, pinned my wings. Joined 454th at McCook, then Charleston AFB. Overseas, Bill Sherman's crew. Christmas Concert, Nelson Eddy, in Brazil. To Dakar, Africa, New Year's Eve 1943.



A.P. (Rick) Riccardi

One of original crews to Cerignola. Toughest mission was the first, expecting the worst. After 50 missions, rotated. Married, 4-day honeymoon; crossed USA 3 times in one week — by train! Sent to Santa Ana Rest Camp. "Battle Fatigue," they said. PE Instructor at Midland and San Angelo. Reserves, 1945. Back to school, CCNY. Teacher in Harlem, 1948 to 1952 while attending Columbia U. Teacher College for Masters' Degree. Korean War, B-29 Combat Crew, 1952-1958. Moved to Florida. Retired USAF, 1975. Retired, 1983, Public Schools, after 28 years teaching.

Mary says, greatest thing I've done (besides marrying her!) was re-grouping 454th after 40 years of isolation. AFA Magazine notice brought 7 members to Fort Lauderdale, July 1983 — Carpenter, Eseman, Vignetti, Slater, Widmer, and Pappy Gunn. First Reunion, Colorado Springs, 1984. Annual reunions bring out the cream of the crop.

May we share fond remembrances with successive Reunions, knowing we did our duty, without protest.

Like Julius Caesar — VENI, VIDI, VINCI!

ROBERT D. RICH

Robert D. Rich — I was born in Arcadia, Louisiana on June 8, 1923. In this small town I became aware of everyday values that had great meaning to me — love of home, family and my country.

In Feb. 1943, while attending Louisiana Tech University at Ruston, Louisiana, I was drafted. I joined the Army Air Corps and was sent to Salt Lake City, Utah to Radio School and to Gunnery School in Tucson, Arizona. I was assigned to Lt. Shep Hughes crew and was sent to Charleston, South Carolina for training with a wonderful group of guys.



Robert D. Rich

In Dec. 1943 we left Florida for Italy with the 454th Bomb Group — 739th Squadron. I went into combat as Radio Operator and Gunner with Lt. Hughes and later with Lt. Strom and crew.

On May 19, 1944 our plane was hit with flak and had to ditch. Four of our crew did not survive. After being rescued I was taken to a hospital in Naples. Not being able to return to my outfit, I was sent back to the States where I spent the next seven months in a hospital. I was discharged in Dec. 1944 as T/Sgt. Robert D. Rich.

I am now retired from one of the local banks in my home town.

WILLIAM P. RIDDLING

William P. Riddling — Aviation Cadet, Class 44E. Upon graduation, entered B-24 training. In January, 1945, assigned to the 454th Bomb Group. Flew a B-24, via Newfoundland, The Azores, and North Africa to San Giovanni Air Field, Italy. Completed 19 combat missions by war's end. Following WWII, served as a Flight Instructor and Squadron Commander in the Training Command. Flew C-54 transports on the Berlin Airlift and in the Korean War. Following Korea, assigned to the Air Proving Ground. Served as Squadron Commander and Operations Staff Officer in the Drone Program. Completed Air Command and Staff College in June 56 and assigned to SAC in the B-47 program. Flew lead crew and served as Director of Safety. In June, 1959, transferred to England with the Thor Missile program. In July, 1961, returned to SAC HQ. for four years as a staff officer. In June, 1965, assigned to Europe as Base Commander, Dreux Air Base, France, and later as HQ Commandant, Lindsay Air Station, Germany, USAF. Retired in July, 1969. Since retirement, occupied as securities dealer and stock broker. Presently residing in Seattle, WA.



William P. Riddling

DONALD H. RIMBEY

Donald H. Rimbeley enlisted in the Army Air Corps on his 18th birthday. After completing Radio and Aerial Gunnery schools, he was assigned to Lt. John Norton's crew. The air crew completed their phase training at Peterson Field, Colorado and flew their own airplane to Italy where they joined the 454th Group, 739th Squadron in July, 1944. Norton's crew functioned smoothly as a team. Except for the Navigator, the entire crew completed their missions and returned home in early 1945. Navigator James Gaunt flew with another crew in January, 1945. Their plane was severely damaged and reportedly exploded over the Adriatic on the return flight. After being discharged, he attended the University of Illinois and earned B.S., M.S. and Ph.D., degrees in Mechanical Engineering. His professional career spanned forty years and was divided between working in industry as a practicing engineer and employment as a Professor of Engineering at Illinois and the University of South Florida. After retiring from academic life, he founded Rimbeley, Howell and Rimbeley, Inc., a consulting engineering firm based in Tampa. He married his home town sweetheart in 1950. They have seven children and many grandchildren.



Donald H. Rimbeley

ROBERT E. RINKER

Enlisted as Private, United States Army Air Corps Dec. 10, 1941. Graduated from Stewart Technical School as Aircraft Engine Mechanic and worked as such until entering Aviation Cadet Training. Graduated from Pilot Training School, Class 44A and received commission as 2nd Lt, 7 Jan. 1944. Embarked for overseas assignment 18 May '44 which was my 23rd birthday. Assigned to 454th Bomb Group, first the 738th Bomb Sqd, and later the 739th. Flew as Co-pilot on the late Donald Clarke crew. On mission to Ploesti, 15 July '44, aircraft suffered severe damage from flak. Aircraft abandoned over Island of Hvar off coast of Yugoslavia. Returned to Base several days later. Shot down again 10 Aug '44 while on mission to Campina — different crew. Returned to Base 37 days later. Returned to States in Oct '44. Separated from Active Duty 17 June '45. Entered Reserves and was retired from US Air Force as Lt Col 18 May 1981.

ROBERT C. RIPPY

Tech. Sgt. Robert C. Rippy 38436552. I was an Engineer on Lt. Felix D. Harrod's crew. I have always been proud of being a member of this crew. I entered the service in April of 1943 and was discharged in Oct. of 1945.



T/Sgt. Robert C. Rippy

We had a lot of excitement on our tour of combat such as; (1) Bomb-bay doors would not open. Finally got them open about 6' on each side. We dropped bombs through the doors, ripping them off the tracks. (2) Hydraulic lines for landing gear and flaps were blown apart. We had to crank the gear down and kick out the nose wheel. The Co-Pilot, Gene Baker, had to pump the flaps down. (3) Transfer pump would not transfer fuel. After replacing blown fuses about a dozen times and beating on the pump, it started pumping. We were about 3 minutes from setting down in the Adriatic. (4) Running out of fuel and having to land on a fighter strip in Northern Italy. (5) A hole about the size of a 50 cent piece shot through a prop blade, causing a lot of vibration. We didn't know what was causing the vibration until the next day. We were starting the engines and, when #3 was started, I noticed the vibration. I asked Harrod to cut #3, and before the prop stopped, I noticed the hole in the prop blade. The Maintenance Officer was called, and he said it was O.K. to fly. However, before we got off the hard stand, the supercharger amplifier burned out, so we did not fly that day. (6) The top of the upper turret was shot off while I was standing inside, disconnecting my oxygen mask, electric suit, etc., so I could check to see why the bomb-bay doors would not open.

This is just a few of many problems we encountered. I realize there were many crews that had all of these same problems, and many more, who were not as fortunate as we were to make it home safe.

After being discharged from the service, I returned to my native home at Richardson, Texas and farmed for about 10 years. I worked in a machine shop about 30 years as a Quality Control Manager. I retired in 1986. I still live in Richardson, Texas with my wife Onida, 2 sons, 6 grandchildren and 7 great-grandchildren!

WILLIAM M. ROBISHAW

Born August 25, 1921. Entered Military Service on October 31, 1942. I received Bombsight/Autopilot Maintenance training



William M. Robishaw

at Lowrey Field. Additional training followed at Davis-Monthan Field, where I became part of the original cadre of the 737th Squadron — later becoming the Staff-Sergeant head of the Bombsight Department. I was pleased to fly overseas on the "Gentleman Jim," piloted by Lt James Corbett — for the flight crews' advanced training near Tunis.

I was discharged October 6, 1945; then took advantage of the G.I. Bill, becoming an elementary teacher in 1940. I subsequently received a Master's Degree from Kent State and, in 1961, became an elementary school Principal in Westlake, Ohio. I remained in Westlake twenty-eight years, the last twenty-one as Principal, retiring in 1982.

While at Lowrey Field, my Cleveland sweetheart, Jean, had come out, and we were married in Denver that same day. We now have three children, and five grandchildren. In 1984, we moved to Port Charlotte, Florida, near our oldest son. Following his three children's activities keeps us busy. Both of us volunteer one full day a week in the library of an elementary school; and also keep active in our Methodist Church.

HARRY M. RODD

My military career started in Concord, N.H. in the Civilian Pilot Training Program. After completion, I was requested to enlist in the Cadet Program and reported to Maxwell Field for Pre-flight and subsequently to Lakeland, FL for Primary, Sumter, SC for Basic and Albany, GA where I graduated with the class of 43-E, May 28, 1943. I was then assigned to Hendricks Field, Sebring, FL for B-17 training. After completing B-17 training I was assigned to Headquarters 26th Anti-Submarine Wing, 25th A Sqdn, Jacksonville, FL flying B-25s. In October 1943 the Wing was deactivated and we went to Clovis, NM to form a Heavy Bombardment Group. This was cancelled and I was sent to Central Instructors School (B-24) at Smyrna, TN and after completion was assigned to Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson, AZ where I was an Emergency Procedures Instructor. In June of 44, I was assigned a crew and in July of 44 was assigned to the 454th Bombardment Group, 738th Squadron. While a member of the 738th, I served as Training Officer and Squadron Operations Officer. On June 12, 1945, I flew home in the "Reddy Maid," landing at Hunter Field, Savannah, GA. I remained in the Reserve and my first assignment was Instructor with the Civil Air Patrol and eventually was Wing Commander, N.H. Wing for 4 years. I then was assigned to 9116th Air Force Reserve Recovery Sqdn as Operations Officer, Education and Training Staff Officer and finally as Squadron Commander. I retired from the Reserves as a Lt Col on June 25, 1971.



Harry M. Rodd

Decorations: DFC, Air Medal w/3 clusters, Presidential Unit Citation, American Theater Ribbon w/1 star, European Theater Ribbon w/4 stars.

EDWARD W. RODGERS

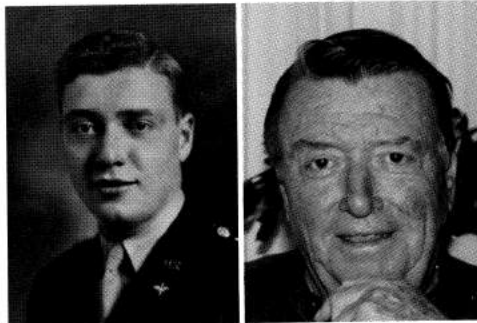
Edward W. Rodgers, Lt.Col. USAF (Ret.), Civil Service Chief Engineer Vandenberg AFB (Ret.), PE Civil Engineer CA. Joined the AAF September 19, 1942 and graduated as pilot Class of 43F at George Field, Illinois, June 30, 1943. Assigned to Davis Monthan and checked out as pilot and assigned crew there without transition. Assigned to 454th 1 Oct. 1953 at Charleston. Assigned B24-H, "Sassy Lassy," and flew her overseas December. 43 Missions and shot down over Hungary June 7, 1944. Stayed in Civil Service, mostly as Post Engineer and Civil Engineer. Retired as Lt Col at Vandenberg AFB, CA, 30 April 1963. At AF request stayed at Vandenberg another 22 years, mostly as Chief Engineer. Retired February 5, 1985. Lost Lt. John A. (Jack) Simmons over Hungary. Did not open chute. Sassy Lassy was lost in Adriatic by another crew before we went down. Our second plane we lost with only the name on one side. Overseas tours in addition to the above: 86th Fighter Bomber Wing, Neubiberg, Ger., and 16th AF, Spain. Served AFROTC tour at Texas A&M. Taught first Primary/Basic classes at Randolph in T-6's 16 students, no wash-outs and no wash-outs in advanced.



Edward W. Rodgers, Lt. Col. (Ret)

GEORGE F. RUGGE

Graduated in Pilot Class 43H, Ellington Field, TX; went to Transition School, Liberal, KS; OTU training at Pueblo, CO and Westover Field, MA. Came to 15th AF March '44, flying from Mitchel Field, NY through South America and Africa in "San Antonio Rose." Assigned to 736th Sqd, then to 737th. My cousin, Charles La Dow, pilot of "Dragon Lady" lived in the tent across from mine. Lost three of our original crew — Bombardier, Navigator, and Ball Turret Gunner. Charles and I finished our 50 missions at about the



George F. Rugge

same time and returned home together via ATC in October '44. Charles was married the next month. (Died in November '74). Went to Smyrna, TN to Central Instructor's School and was assigned to Liberal, KS. Was selected to go to C-54 Transition School at Homestead, FL; flew with ATC on the North Atlantic run for 2 years, then left the Service. Went to college and received a BS in Aeronautical Engineering in '51. Spent the last 40 years in the Aerospace Industry, including time at Cape Canaveral in its early days; now semi-retired. Married my high school sweetheart, Barbara, in '45 and have two boys. One works for the Government and lives in VA, the other is an Attorney in TX. Blessed with four delightful grandchildren (2 boys and 2 girls). Live in the San Diego area in Poway, CA. Listed in Who's Who in Aviation & Aerospace.

Decorations: Conspicuous Service Cross; DFC w/1 Cluster; Air Medal w/3 Clusters; European, African, Mid-East Theatre w/7 Stars; Presidential Unit Citation w/1 Cluster.

RAYMOND T. RUNNING

Born in North Dakota and grew up in Spearfish, South Dakota.



Raymond T. Running

Enlisted in the Cadet Program at Fort Meade, S.D. in Sept. 1942. Reported to Santa Ana for duty March 1943. Was kicked out of the program five days after I arrived and sent to Fresno where it was determined I would be a Gunner. Off to Armament School at Buckley and Lowrey Fields, Colo., then to Kingman, Ariz.

Our crew was formed at Salt Lake. After training at Davis-Monthan, Ariz. and Biggs Field, Texas, we reported to Topeka, Kansas where we got a brand new B-24H that we dubbed "Club 400," and flew it to San Giovanni via Morrison Field, Trinidad, Belem, Fortaleza, Dakar, Marrakech and Tunis.

We came into the 736th as the 5th replacement crew as distress flares were dropped by returning bombers while we attempted to set "Club 400" down.

I flew the tail guns, and our crew (Hake) had its share of experiences between March 1944 and August 1944, finishing fifty missions.

I came back to the U.S. on Athos II in August of 1944 with many ex-POW repatriates from Rumania.

Discharged Sept. 1945. Went to Ag school at SDSU. Married in 1950 and have been farming and ranching in western S.D. and eastern Wyo. since. Have four children and seven grandchildren.

TADIUS T. SADOSKI

My military career began shortly after I enlisted in the Cadet Program while in college. After being called to Active Duty in Jan-



Tadius T. Sadoski

uary of 1943, the major training stages took me to Susquehanna University, Maxwell Field, AL, Primary Flight Training in Cape Girardeau, MO, and then Basic Flight Training where I washed out. Next came Gunnery School in Fort Myers, FL, followed by Navigation School at Selman Field in Munroe, LA (Class 44-8). After graduation, the next assignment was for Replacement Crew Training at Westover Field in Massachusetts in July of 1944. There I was assigned to the Hofsatter crew. Overseas duty in the 454th ran from mid-September of 1944 to mid-April 1945. I completed 35 sorties with 5 as Group Lead Navigator. In the U.S. came more Navigation Training at Ellington Field in Texas and eventual discharge in October of 1945. Then I obtained an Engineering Degree and a M.B.A. Degree and completed a career in Engineering Management when I retired in 1986.

RICHARD S. SAMPSON

S/Sgt Richard S. Sampson was the Ball-Turret Gunner on the Howard crew of the 738th Sqdn. After flying almost 30 missions, the war ended, and Sammy returned to his home town of Pullman, WA. For several years, he worked first as a meter reader and then a power lineman for the Washington Water Power Co.



Richard S. Sampson

While working as a power lineman, Sammy distinguished himself by rescuing his boss after he had encountered a 35,000 volt line. I quote from a newspaper account of the incident: "The accident, which would have cost the life of Mr. Bevens had it not been for the quick thinking of Sampson and other fellow workmen, occurred on a pole in the North Fairway section. Unconscious and with his clothing afire after coming in contact with a high voltage power wire, Bevens was given artificial respiration at the top of the pole by Sampson who also beat out the flames with his hands." For his heroic action Sampson received the National Safety Council President's Lifesaving Award on April 27, 1950.

Having to leave the Power Co. for health reasons, Sammy was then employed by the Washington State University as a groundsman until his health forced him to retire. Sammy indulged his love of the outdoors by actively pursuing his hobby in photography, taking mostly outdoor scenes.

Sammy died of cancer April 16, 1980 at the age of 59.

WM. A. (SANDY) SANDERSON

Born July 14, 1922 at Goodland, KS. Enlisted April 6, 1942. Preflight at Santa Ana, CA; Bombardier School at Albuquerque, NM, Class 43-6; Navigator School at San Marcos, TX, Class 43-12. Joined the 454th Bomb Group, 738th Squadron, Lt. Burkes' crew, at McCook, NB in September 1943. First combat mission was 2/8/44 and last was 7/28/44. Returned to the U.S. in October 1944. Completed Navigation Instructors School, Ellington Field, TX 1/20/45. Instructed cadets at San Marcos, TX from 1/24/45 to 6/5/45. Instructed pilots at Hobbs, NM from 6/9/45 to 9/12/45. Discharged October 24, 1945 at Ft. Bliss, TX.

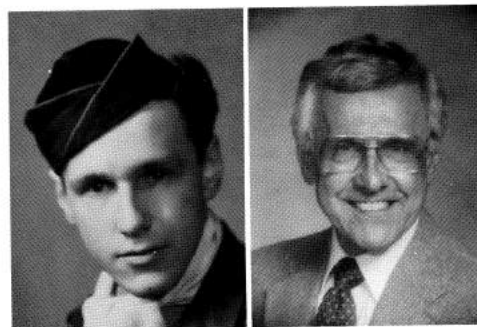


Wm. A. (Sandy) Sanderson

Married 4/28/45. Have two daughters and five grandchildren. Graduated from Denver University in August 1947. Except for period 12/1950 to 5/1955 as cost plus auditor in Texas City, TX, I was involved in public accounting in my home town of Hutchinson, KS. Have been retired since July 1984.

ROBERT LEE SARVER

S/Sgt. Robert Lee Sarver — Entered military service Dec. 2, 1942 from Sarver, PA to receive basic training in Air Corps at Miami Beach, while being housed in Traymor Hotel.



Robert Lee Sarver

Attended Armorer School in Buckley Field, CO, Aerial Gunnery School in Ft. Myers, FL, with further training at Salt Lake City and at Davis-Monthan in Tucson. Our crew was formed while receiving extensive training in Charleston, SC.

In Dec. 1943 we flew from Mitchel Field, NY to Tunisia, Africa via Brazil. From San Giovanni Airfield, Italy, I flew 24 missions as a Tail-Gunner with 739th Squadron.

Awarded EAME Theater Service Medal w/3 Stars and Air Medal w/2 Oak Leaf Clusters.

Returned to States in August 1944; then was stationed at Gowen Field, ID, in Armament. Discharged Nov. 1945.

Attended Thacker Academy, Pgh. and owned and operated retail store in Saxonburg, PA for 35 years.

Now reside in Chautauqua, NY with wife, Alma. Have one daughter, Cherie Touchet.

JAY T. SCHECK

I enlisted as an Aviation Cadet Aug 1942. Graduated Multi-Engine Pilot Training from Brooks Field, San Antonio, TX, Class 43-H. Graduation Orders sent me to the newly formed 454th BG 738th Sq assigned as Co-Pilot on 1st Lt James W. Tisdale's crew at McCook, NB. As new members, the pressure was on, to work hard learning our new airplane and duties and to band into a well-tuned crew unit. On Feb 2, 1943, I participated on mission #1 of the 454th BG and on Aug 17, 1944, while flying my 50/51 mission (Group Mission #98) to Ploesti, the plane was hit by flak and we had to bail out over Bulgaria. I was captured almost immediately upon landing, and was moved in stages to P.O.W. Camp in Shumen, Bulgaria where I joined over 300 others. Mid-September '44 saw the German forces withdrawing, leaving us in charge of the Bulgarians who neither needed or wanted us. They put all 342 P.O.W.s on a train to their southern border, where they pointed the way to Greece and we walked a torn up railroad bed to freedom. I returned to the USA Nov 4, 1944 and was discharged at Fort Dix, NJ may '45 — Thank God.



Jay T. Scheck

I feel very close to the other members of our Group and other WWII service people, knowing full well the tensions and fears we felt. We carried on, each to our limit, and in so doing, contributed to the successful conclusion of WWII. I am happy and thankful to be working hard at being retired in beautiful New Hampshire.

FRANCIS X. SCHMID

My brother, Walter Harry Schmid, was in the 20th C.T.D. at Centre College, Danville, KY in 1943, but left there in February 1944, when the then Army Air Corps decided they had too many pilot trainees. He volunteered for gunnery training, and was lost on his tenth mission April 2nd, 1945, when the B-24 on which he was flying as a Ball Turret Gunner was forced to ditch in the Adriatic Sea. He

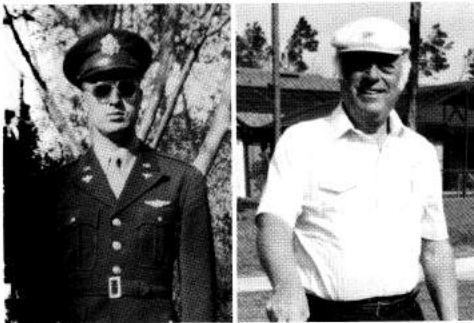


Walter H. Schmid (KIA)

was a member of the 738th Squadron and in Ryder's crew. He was among five crew members killed in action. I discovered the Co-Pilot, Howard C. Horton of nearby North Falmouth, after forty-two years, through a reunion notice in my DAV magazine in April 1987. Our oldest son, who is named after my brother, and I attended the Group's 247th mission-reunion in Orlando, Florida in October of that year. Horton and Richard J. Schmid, the Flight Engineer and Top Turret Gunner, are the only two surviving members of that crew.

JOHN C. SCHRECK

I was born May 7, 1918 in Detroit, MI. I enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in October 1941. My military life was exceptionally exciting. I started out in Santa Ana, CA, went to Blyth, CA and then to bases across the country. I left the service in 1945 with the rank of Captain.



John C. Schreck

Two of my most memorable experiences were as follows:

1. While stationed in Charleston, SC, we wanted to have a party but couldn't buy any booze there. The Major that was checking us out for going overseas, said, "if we could get a plane, we could go to Cuba and get all we wanted." So, a Training Mission it became, and 56 cases of booze were purchased in Cuba. While there, we met Ernest Hemingway, which was quite a thrill. Everyone had a good time at the 454th party.

2. This experience was in Italy. A group of us flew to Cairo, Egypt with hopes of doing the same thing we had done in Cuba, but the British would not sell us anything. We had a good time, anyway, visiting the Sphinx, Pyramids and riding camels.

We were shot down over Friedrichshafen, Germany July 20, 1944. Our plane was named "Borrowed Time."

I have been a Doctor of Chiropractic for the past 53 years.

WILLARD B. "BILL" SCHUYLER

Enlisted in Army Air Corps June 1942 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I was called to active duty January 5, 1943 in Nashville, TN, for Aviation Cadet Classification. Pre-flight at Ellington Field, Aerial Gunnery in Laredo, Bombardier Training at Midland. I washed out last week of training and went to Scott Field for Radio; Salt Lake for distribution to crew. John Norton's crew took phase training at Peterson Field, then to Lincoln to pick up plane, eventually ended up with 454th. Nothing outstanding as a Nose Gunner.

I met my wife on the Isle of Capri, October 1944, and married her in Denver, CO on May 25, 1946.

Norton's crew was a well disciplined bunch, that endured some rough missions, as we all did, but that is why we came home, except for the loss of Lt. Jim Gaunt, who went down with another crew.

As Squadron Leader for a number of missions, we took our share of flak.

PHILIP L. SCHULTZ

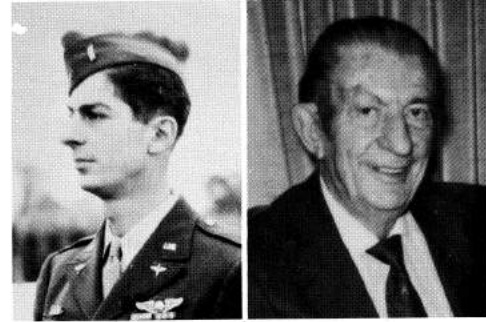
Philip Schultz — Flying Class 44C, Columbus, Miss. Met Abravaya crew at Westover RTU. Flew B24J to Italy. Set up tents and cots on Aug. 17. Flew first mission to Blechhammer, Germany on 27 Aug. Awarded DFC for action over Linz. Upgraded to 1st pilot. Checked out new crews who cussed going through flak until I told them I was praying. 35th mission Feb. 27, 45 over Augsburg, Germany. Our crew (less two) left Naples in March for flights via Dakar and Belem to the States. Was assigned to Ferry Command, Memphis, where I flew again with Abravaya and met Sally Johnston. We married in 47 in Memphis, where I worked close to 454th Bombardier, Clatworthy. Recalled as Troop Carrier Pilot (C-46s, C119s) in 1951. Graduated AF graduate school (MBA) 1954. Retired from AF in 1970 after 4 Contracting Officer assignments. I am grateful for the great esprit de corps we had as crews and for the spiritual recommitment that came while at San Giovanni.



Philip L. Schultz

JOHN J. SHAUGHNESSY

John J. Shaughnessy: Enlisted AAF Sept. '42. Technical School — Depot Tinker Field — Aviator Cadet 1943 — San Marcos AAF, Apr. '44 2nd Lt. with rating of Navigator — B-17 CCT Dyersburg, Tenn. — Langley Field, Mickey Operator Class #1, graduated as Radar-Navigator Bombardier — joined Bob Baker's B-24 crew — Flew to 454th BG and 736th BS in Oct. '44 — "Mickey" operators were in demand thus flew numerous missions in deputy lead, lead, and "Lone Wolf" Aircraft — Never to be forgotten was



Co. John J. Shaughnessy

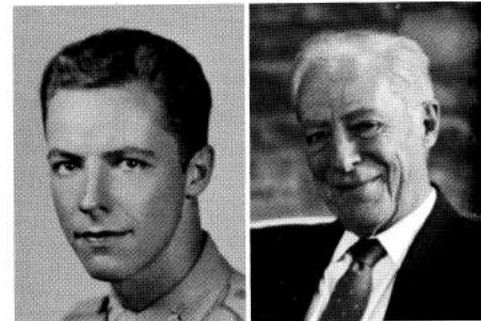
the mission to the OSWIECIN (AUSCHWITZ) O/R on 18 Dec. '44 where the strike photos revealed "barracks" around the O/R.

Post WWII: Radar-Navigator Bombardier Instructor and Air Inspector ATC (1945-46) — O&T IG Hq. PAC Hawaii (1947-48) — MATS Liaison Officer with Navy MARS Flying Boat Squadron (VR-2), logged 600 hours in the MARS (1948-50) — Navigator, Adj. Exec Off 1254th ATG (Special Air Missions) MATS Washington National Airport (1950-57) — MBA Geo. Wash. Univ. (1959) — Procurement Officer Hq. ATF 13 (P) and Hq. 6214th T.G. Taiwan (1959-61) Procurement IG Hq PACAF Hawaii (1961-63) — Action Officer, Deputy Chief, Chief Plans Group, Office of Legislative Liaison, Secretary of the Air Force, The Pentagon (1963-72).

Decorations: Legion of Merit; Distinguished Flying Cross; Air Medal w/3 OLC; AF Commendation Medal; Retired Colonel USAF; Master Navigator with 7500 flying hours.

WILLIAM H. SHERMAN

Born Nov. 26, 1915 in Fordland, MO. Appointed Aviation Cadet, July 3, 1942 at West Coast Cadet Training Center. Took my Primary Pilot Training at Hemet Field, CA; Basic Pilot Training at Gardner Field, CA; Advanced Pilot Training at Stockton, CA.



William H. Sherman

Assigned to the 15th Air Force. Went to Tucson, AZ for multi-engine training, from there to McCook, NB for combat training; then to Mitchel Field, NY where I was assigned First Pilot to Crew #136 and picked up our new B-24H #44-52225. After training for a short time with the crew, we received orders to proceed to West Palm Beach, FL. From there to Natal, Brazil; Dakar, Africa and Foggia, Italy. Had to fly around waiting for the CB's to finish pulling out the steel runway mats at Foggia.

Our first mission, and the first mission flown by the 737th Bomb Squadron, was to Orvieto, Italy on Feb. 8, 1944. Flew our 50th and last mission Aug. 22, 1944 over Blech-

hammer, Austria. Our most memorable missions were over Ploesti, Rumania.

I was part of one of the best crews in the Air Corps, and was blessed to be able to complete 50 missions and return home together — a tribute to our crew and extraordinary ground support we received throughout our missions. Separated Oct. 6, 1945 as 1st Lt.

Since 1950, I have resided in San Antonio, TX. Happily married for 43 years to my wonderful wife Rosemary, have three children: Michael, Carolyne, and Rebecca, and three granddaughters and two grandsons.

I am proud of the reputation and success I have developed through 41 years in the electronics business as owner of Sherman Electronics Supply, Inc. in San Antonio, Corpus Christi, and Houston, TX.

H.M. SINCLAIR

H.M. Sinclair entered the service as an Aviation Cadet January 1943, completed Gunnery Training in Harlingen, TX and Navigation School in San Marcos, TX November 1943. He was assigned to a bomber crew undergoing combat training and, in March of 1944, flew from Topeka Air Base in a B-24H named the "Club 400" via South America and Africa to Italy as a replacement in the 736th Squadron. Due to attrition of Lead Navigators, he flew with various crews on 51 combat missions including 6 to Ploesti and Bucharest, shot down a FW-190 and ended his tour of duty September 1944 as a First Lieutenant.



H.M. Sinclair

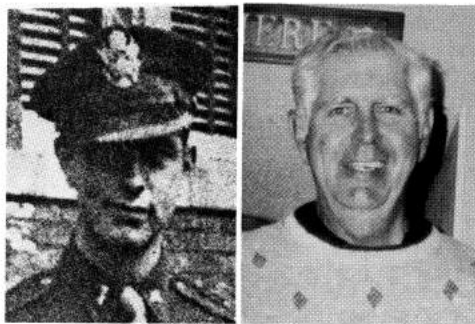
Decorations: Air Medal w/4 clusters, 5 Battle Stars and Presidential Citation.

He returned to the U.S. for Pilot Training and, on V-J Day, was completing Advanced Pilot Training in P-51s at Luke Air Base. Returning to civilian life, he started a frozen foods business in Omana, NE. Then, in 1955, he joined Radio Free Europe in their fight against Communism in Eastern Europe. In 1973, when the CIA connection was exposed in Congress, he left government service for private enterprise and has been National Director of Public Relations for Allright Parking Corporation in Houston, TX for the past 19 years. He has a wife, Louise, 3 children and 3 grandchildren.

ROBERT C. SLYDER

I enlisted in Oct. 1942 in a college R.O.T.C. O.C.S. program, but somehow I wound up in Feb. 1943 in Air Corps Basic Training. After basic I qualified for the Cadet Program and graduated from Childress, Texas Bombarrier School in May 1944.

Our combat crew trained at Pueblo, Colorado and left for Europe in Sept. 1944 arriving at the 737th Squadron in October. Our pilot Lt. Dick Fry (later Capt.) was very capable and we began flying as a Squadron Lead

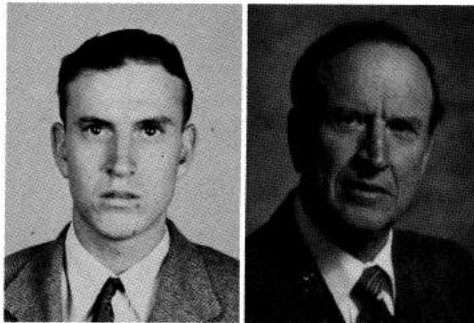


Robert C. Snyder

Crew after six missions. In Jan. we transferred to the 736th Squadron flying as a Squadron or Deputy Lead Crew. We were fortunate to survive a powerless crash landing on the "Spur" and had no crew injuries until we were shot down on Feb. 14th 1945 at Vienna. Of the twelve man "Mickey Ship" crew, six of our regular crew died as a result of the crash. Four of us were together in German P.O.W. camps at Nuremberg and at Moosburg. We survived some rough conditions and with two of the fellows deceased Bob Haws and I are the only two survivors. After 30 years in sales and marketing I retired to the San Diego area where my wife and I enjoy outdoor activities and our two daughters and their families who reside in the same town.

BOYCE M. SMITH

Born 3 April 1924 in Tull, AR. Enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in May 1943, and received orders to report to Active Duty 3 June 1943. Took Basic Training at Miami Beach, FL, College Training (CTD) at the University of Tulsa, OK and Navigation at Ellington Field, TX. In October 1944 joined my bomb crew (Lt Ryder) at Charleston AAF, SC. The crew arrived at Bari, Italy in January 1945, where we were assigned to the 738th Squadron. I flew 10 missions with Lt Ryder, then was selected for radar training at Bari. On the next mission, Lt Ryder and crew ditched their B-24 in the Adriatic Sea. Five crew members, including Lt Ryder and the officer who took my place lost their lives in the accident. I was discharged in January 1946. Joined the Reserves, spent 4 years in college at the University of Arkansas and returned to Active Duty January 1957. Flew 29 missions in the Korean War, served a tour in the Vietnam War, retired from the Air Force April 3, 1980 with the rank of Colonel.



Boyce Miles Smith

Decorations: The Legion of Merit, Meritorious Service Medal with OLC, and Air Medal with 4OLC.

I am currently a stockbroker with Daley Securities, Inc. in Atlanta, GA.

LIGON SMITH, JR.

Born September 30, 1919 and raised in Dallas, Texas. Attended SMU two years before enlisting in Army Air Corps on December 30, 1940 as a Flying Cadet, class of 41F. Received wings and commission as a Second Lieutenant at Stockton, Calif. on August 15, 1941. Assigned duty as a Flight Instructor at various bases in Air Corps Training Command until April, 1944. Transferred, by request, to B-24 training, and eventually, to the 454th Bomb Group in November, 1944. Appointed Commander of the 738th Squadron in January, 1945. Flew eighteen missions, the last fifteen as a group lead. Received the DFC and Air Medal during tour of duty. Became Deputy Group Commander before Group returned to U.S. in July, 1945.



Ligon Smith, Jr.

Left Air Corps active duty in December, 1945 and returned to SMU for degree. After some years in accounting, went into residential contracting business and am still active.

CHARLES W. SNODGRASS

I entered the Army Air Corps in Sept. 1942. After Basic Training at Moore Field, Mission, Texas and Technical School at Chanute Field, Rantoul, Ill., I was assigned to B-24 Training Squadron at Army Air Base, Pueblo, Colorado as a Sheetmetal Worker.



Charles W. Snodgrass

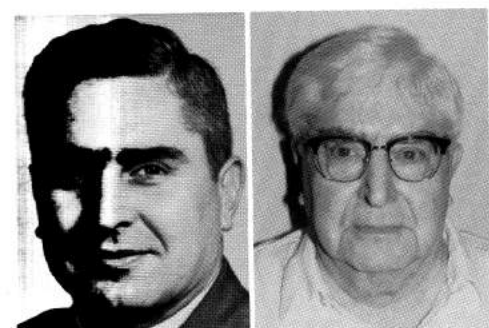
I joined the 454th Bomb Group at McCook, Nebraska in August of 1943 and was attached to the 737th Squadron.

We went to Charleston, South Carolina Army Air Base for further training. We shipped out to Camp Patrick Henry for overseas processing and from there to Hampton Roads port of embarkation where we boarded the Liberty Ship SS Button Gwinett on Dec. 13, 1943. We arrived in Naples, Italy on Jan. 13, 1944, from there to a Wellington base not far from San Giovanni until we could move there. I returned to the States with the Group and at the end of the War was discharged in Sept. 1945.

I returned to the farm but was unable to stand the cold weather and moved to California in 1948 where I worked at various jobs until I went to work at Edwards Air Force Base in 1952. I retired from there in 1952 and went to work for myself in Real Estate here in Litterlock, CA where we still live at present.

AARON SOSNIN

Enlisted in 1942, washed out of Pilot Class 43-D and made it as a Navigator in Class 43-12 at Selman Field, Monroe, Louisiana. Joined the 454th in September 1943 at McCook, Nebraska, and was assigned to the C.W. Grant crew in the 739th and completed my 6½ missions. On the half mission, we lost 2 crew members, 2 were taken prisoner by the enemy but survived and, as of 1991, are still around. Two of the 10-man crew have since passed on but, since making contact with the 454th Organization, I've been in touch with the other 5 survivors of our crew, plus several others of the 739th, and that has been a great pleasure after 47 years.



Aaron Sosnin

PAUL S. SPEILER

Entered service Nov. 4, 1942 at Ft. Bliss, Texas. Service schools, Armament — Lowry Field, CO, Aerial Gunnery — Tyndall. Crew training — Davis-Monthan, Tucson, AZ and Alamogordo, NM. Joined 454th from 400th Replacement, Alamogordo just ten days before 454th left Charleston for overseas via South America to Africa to San Giovanni Airfield, Italy. Served as Ball Gunner on Whitworth's crew. Left USA on December 20, 1943, arrived San Giovanni Airfield January 26, 1944. Flew the Groups' 2nd mission to Arezzo, Italy on February 14, 1944. Flying most of my missions in the 737th Squadron Lead or 2nd Wave Lead.



Paul S. Speiler

Some of the targets — Vienna, Austria; Steyr, Austria; Bodvoslou, Austria; Toulon, France; Ploesti, Rumania, and Montpellier, France — just to name a few. The last mission I flew was to Maneredweiss, Hungary on

July 2, 1944 which was my 42nd and was the Groups' 72nd.

I arrived back in the States on August 3, 1944. Our crew left the Group on R&R but we had our orders changed at 19th Replacement Depot so when we left Naples we did not return.

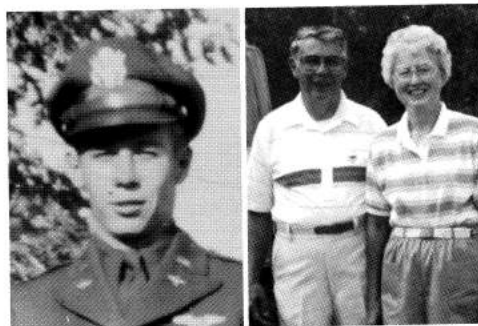
I ended up a Gunnery Instructor at Tyndall Field, till the end of the war. I was discharged October 7, 1945.

I retired in 1984 from West Texas Utilities in Abilene after 38 years in the Power Plant.

I now reside with my wife, Bonnie, in Abilene, Texas.

CLARENCE J. STEVENS

My military service was with the 454th Bomb Group, 738th Squadron under Charles Reily, Commander. I served as Navigator and Radar Observer Bombardment, 5 missions with each MOS. I became an Aviation Cadet in February, 1943 at MacDill Field, FL. This was followed with Pre-flight at Santa Ana, CA, then Navigation Training at Hondo, TX. I reported for B-24 Transition Training at Mountain Home, ID under Lt. Charles Reily in 1944. Our crew was one of 39 air crews assigned with 10,000 Mountain Infantry shipping from Newport News, VA to Naples, Italy, on the American Liner in early Jan. 1945. Special remembrance was March 8, 1945 on a flight to Zamky, Hungary in support of the Russian Front. Flying in the famous B-24, Buzz Job, that had 114 sorties, we were shot down at Keschemet, Hungary, landing with a full bomb load and armed. The Russians at this airbase were flying A-20 bombers, under a lend-lease program with the USA. Returning to Bari, Italy after changing two engines from previously downed B-24s, I was trained as Radar Observer Bombardment, while waiting for reinstatement to flying status. Our crew was lucky to avoid injuries throughout the war.



Clarence J. Stevens

Married to Eileen with three children — Bruce, Jeff, and Jim. Have four grandchildren — Sean 8, Scott 7, Kyle 3, and Cory 1. Graduated from Purdue in 1951 as an Industrial Engineer. Employed by Whirlpool Corp. 1951-54 and Bendix Corp. 1954-87.

NORMAN P. STOKER

Passed the Aviation Cadet exam January 42, Bolling Field. Sworn into enlisted reserve June 42 during dedication of Washington National Airport. Cadet Class 43-1 SAACC, Chickasha, Oklahoma. Primary: Garden City, Kansas, Basic: Pampa, Texas, Advanced and 2nd Lt October 43. B-24 transition: Tarrant Field, Texas and RTU: March Field, California. Orders for Pacific Theatre but son born April 9, 1944, Quincy, FL. Managed orders change to ETO. Superb Buzz Job of



Norman P. Stoker, Colonel USAF Ret.

Quincy enroute West Palm Beach and arranged, with the help of Navigator (actor) Arthur Frantz, a ground visit to Quincy. Then to San Giovanni via southern route. Crew and "silver" B-24J assigned 738th May 8, 1944 and flew our first mission May 13. After 51 missions, several very interesting — 3 engines Munich, 2 engines Linz and a landing off the coast of Yugoslavia and partial gear up landing return from Ploesti August 17 — entire crew rotated safely home. B-24 instructor Courtland, Alabama and Smyrna, Tennessee.

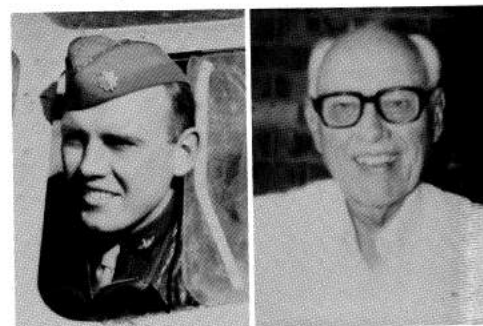
Post WWII — B-29 pilot 46th Recon Sq. Ladd Fld, Alaska 1946. BSBA — U of RL 49: regular commission 47. Strategic Air Command: MBA U of TX. Commander 6091st Recon Sq, Japan, reconnaissance of Russia, China, N. Korea: Naval War College: Air Staff Pentagon; Dir of Plans, Hq AF Reserve for reserve utilization Vietnam; CINCPAC — Chief of Operations Security with extensive involvement in SE Asia and Korea, ground, air, sea operations. Retired August 73, MacDill AFB.

Decorations: Distinguished Service Medal, DFC, Air Medal 6 Clusters, Army Commendation, AF Commendation and assorted usual.

Residence: Tampa, Florida.

DARWIN E. SWANSON

Darwin E. Swanson — My service career began in June, 1940 as a flying cadet in Class 41-A. Then came assignments as advanced flying and gunnery instructors. In May 1943 I went into B-24's at Carswell AFB, TX. After 9 months as a Combat Crew Training Instructor, I then took over a crew at Muroc AB, CA and arrived in Italy in April, 1944, via the southern route. B Gen Upthegrove informed us we were the first replacement crew for the Wing. My first assignment was as Operations Officer with the 738th and then Squadron Commander of the 739th. Our crew flew 7 sorties into Ploesti and then sorties into France, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Vienna, and Budapest. We had 35 sorties which with double missions totalled 50. The most dangerous flying was rendezvous and



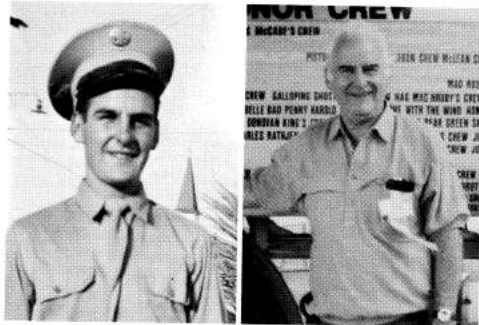
Darwin E. Swanson

practicing night formations for the invasion of southern France. On the night before D-Day, formation flying was still "hairy" but there was no flak or ME 109's over the target — it turned out to be a milk run. On subsequent missions some of the crew didn't make it. The Waist Gunner and the Radio Operator were killed. Tail Gunner Johnson was hit with a ME 109 cannon shell and miraculously survived with minor injuries. Bombardier Hank Harper bailed out with 'Pappy' Gunn over Ploesti. He made it back with the repatriots. I returned to the states in March, 1945. After WWII my various assignments included Alaska, Korea, Okinawa, and Japan.

Decorations: DFC, Air Medal w/Clusters, Legion of Merit, French Croix de Guerre w/Palm. I now live in Federal Way, WA.

WILLIAM P. TAUBE

Drafted into the Infantry in June of 1943 and took Basic Training at Ft. Bliss, El Paso, TX. Had a great view of B-24's crashing on training missions out of Biggs Field — "You could never get me into one of those flying crates 'cause I was gonna be a fighter pilot!" Five months later, I had transferred into the AAF.



William P. Taube

Took the classification tests at Keesler Field, Biloxi, MS and scored highest as a Pilot. Washed out on the 5th list and elected to go to Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, Panama City, FL rather than back to the Infantry.

After graduation, was shipped to Westover Field, Springfield, MA and was assigned to Lt (later Capt) Gene Barter's crew. After finishing OTU and a 28 day boat trip, was assigned to the 738th Sqdn, 454th Bomb Grp.

Flew 32 missions, mostly in "Easy Take-off," to Linz, Vienna, Mooserbierbaum, the Brenner Pass and other interesting places. I'm told that cats and career gunners have nine lives, and, if this is true, I owe every one of them to Capt Barter. Needless to say, I learned to love that old B-24 and I've still got those silver wings.

LYLE A. TAYLOR

737th Sqd, 454th Bomb Grp, Engineer — Gunner on Lt. George T. Huff's crew. Trained at Tucson and Charleston. Flew overseas via Brazil and Africa. Lost our Bombardier in a Jeep wreck in Tunis, N. Africa. We never flew as a crew in combat. I made the Groups' first mission (Feb. 8th 1944) to Orvieto, Italy.

19th March 1944 — unable to reach Steyr, bombed Graz, Austria. 12 Libs lost. I went down with Lt. Edwards' crew. Captured by Germans. Spent 35 days in Zagreb, Yugoslavia Hospital. P.O.W. at Krems, Austria. Stalag XVIIIB near Vienna. Liberated by Americans, May 3rd 1945 in Bronau, Austria!



Sgt. Lyle (Zack) Taylor

EUGENE L. TERZANO

Born in and a lifelong resident of Burlington, New Jersey. Called to active duty as an Aviation Cadet on February 28, 1943, reporting to Nashville, Tenn. Trained in Montgomery, Ala., Camden, South Carolina, received aerial gunner's wings in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and commissioned a Navigator at Selman Field, Monroe, LA. My brother Walter, a paratrooper in the 11th Airborne Division was stationed nearby and was able to attend my graduation. He was proud to be the first to salute his older brother. Before they would commission me a 2nd Lieutenant, I was mildly interrogated as to my "roots" in Italy. I was asked if I would navigate a bomber over targets in Italy. I replied "yes," and as it turned out, I ended up in Italy in July, 1944, assigned to the 454th Bomb Group, 736th Squadron, and navigated to several targets in Northern Italy. I was a member of Edgar Eugene Rich's crew. On August 14, 1944, we crash landed north of Rome on a mission to Southern France in the B-24 named "Our Mom," which was destroyed beyond repair. Completed tour of duty in March, 1945, in our regular B-24 named "Silver Sturgeon."



Eugene Luigi Terzano

Decorations: Purple Heart.

JOHN F. THOMAS

Born 8 September 1922 in Canonsburgh, Pennsylvania. The family moved to Gary, Indiana in 1929, where he attended various schools in Gary, graduating from Froebel High School 4 June 1941. At the age of 17, John enlisted as a member of the Indiana Army National Guard, serving with Combat Engineers, Company B, 38th Division from 1939-1940. He enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps 29 July 1941. During WWII, he attended A&E Mechanics, B-24 Aircraft Maintenance, and Aerial Gunnery schools. Upon completion of Gunnery training, he was transferred to Mt. Home, Idaho for B-24 Combat Crew Training, and there was assigned to Lt Charles Reilly's crew. The



M/Sgt John F. Thomas

crew was shot down, 8 March 1945, landing behind Russian held lines. The crew, with the exception of three gunners, remained behind, repaired the aircraft, and returned to Bari, Italy three weeks later. He also served on Operations Vittles as Aerial Engineer on C-54 aircraft during the Berlin Blockade. Prior to the Korean conflict, he attended, and successfully completed, Instructor Training and Flight Engineer Schools. Upon completion of his Flight Engineer training, John was assigned overseas and served in the Korean Theatre. His flying career included the A-20, B-17, B-18A, B-24, B-25, B-29, B-50, C-47, C-54, C-97, and Aerial Refueling Tanker, KC-97E, F and G models. John has several awards and decorations. He had earned Gunners wings, Crew Member wings, and Flight Engineer wings. Prior to his retirement from the United States Air Force on 31 May 1962, he was awarded Senior Crew Member wings which denotes flying for 15 years without interruption.

PAUL L. THOMPSON

Paul L. Thompson, 1st Lt. I was born in Blanchardville, WI, Feb. 13, 1921. In June of 1942, I enlisted in the Aviation Cadet program. Training took place at San Antonio, TX; El Reno, OK; Winfield, KS; and Altus, OK. I then reported to McCook, NB and was assigned to Ken Smith's crew as Co-Pilot. We trained at Charleston until Dec. 1943 when we flew our bomber "Stardust" to Italy. Our crew took part in missions until June 1944.



Paul L. Thompson

In the Fall of 1944, at Luke Field, Phoenix, AZ, I completed the Single Engine Flight Instructors' School and instructed cadets until June 1945, when I received a Discharge at Ft. Snelling.

Gloria and I were married April 1945 at Phoenix. I received a D.V.M. degree at Iowa State U. June 1949.

I am now retired from a dairy cattle practice and keep busy with community activities. Gloria and I both enjoy the slower paces of retirement.

One of the three crews I could have been assigned to at McCook was lost on a training flight from Charleston to the Bahama Islands and Lt. Thompson's crew was lost on a training flight after arriving in Italy. We that returned home were the fortunates. Sgt. Daniel Joy was wounded on one of our missions. The rest of the crew received no physical wounds.

THORN CREW

By Sgt. Al Palmer (Stars and Stripes Staff Writer) — With the 15th AAF, Feb. 13 — The nine men stood in a happy huddle in a corner of the operations hut and talked about Vienna. Just an hour before, the nine men had completed their missions simultaneously.



— Thorn Crew

The target for today was Vienna, known to the bombing crews as the most heavily defended air targets with the aggressive sweep of the 15th AAF. It was a rough way to complete their tour, and it was possible that this crew was the happier for knowing that once again, on their last mission, they had returned from a bomb run on the Austrian capital.

Here are their names. If you know them tell them good-bye. They have accomplished an assignment and earned a rest.

Pilot, Capt. David W. Thorn, Shelby, Mont.; co-pilot, Lt. Harold J. Geiger, Little Rock, Ark.; navigator, Lt. Hyman Gassner, Chicago; engineer, T/Sgt. Albert Walker, Detroit; radio operator, T/Sgt. Virgil Kirkpatrick, Ingleside, Texas; waist-gunner, S/Sgt. Wilbur O. Hammond, Guilford, ME; ball-gunner, S/Sgt. P.J. McDonough, Versailles, MO; tail-gunner, S/Sgt. J.A. Diprima, Chicago, and nose-gunner, S/Sgt. John A. Lofty, Milwaukee.

They said they'd hoped for an easier bomb run on their last trip. In about six months of flying together, they have been over most of the "name" targets hit by the 15th — Friedrichshafen, Budapest, Belgrade, Munich, Odertal, Breslau, Oswiecim and most of the rest.

This morning, though, at the briefing, when the target was named, it was just the same as usual, they said. The name Vienna always brought a hush over the assembled crewmen. If the weather man said "Cavu," everyone's nerves jump a little. Translated, "Cavu" means "Ceiling and visibility unlimited" and the bombers are a clear picture within the Nazi ack-ack range.

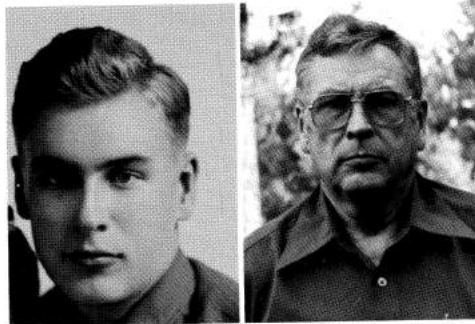
Capt. Thorn, spokesman for this crew which stayed together throughout their tour, will tell you there is none of the usual chatter on the intercom on the way to Vienna. Everyone is quiet, tense. Everyone, probably, is thinking only of the solid barrages of vicious flak they always meet.

Then they are in it, everyone busy with his job. The bombs fall away, and then, as they turn for home again, the chatter begins to crackle through the intercom. The chatter, they say, is thicker than the flak was, because the relief is greater after bombing this target.

Once this crew had a bombardier, Lt. Wylie R. Clatworthy, Memphis, Tenn. but he got so good they took him away to fly as the group's lead bombardier. Now he has seven more to go, but today, on their last mission, he flew with his old buddies.

JACK TINSMAN

I was born June 13, 1925 at Underhill, WI. I enlisted in October 1943. Started training in Radio/Pre-Radar School at Truax Field in Madison, WI. From there, I went to Laredo, TX to train in Gunnery School. Nose Turret on a B-24.



Jack Tinsman

Next, I went to Pueblo, CO for crew training. Next to Cerignola, Italy via Camp Patrick Henry on the east coast.

We arrived there just before Christmas in 1944 and were assigned to the 454th BG 737 Squadron. Saw some combat and was promoted to S/SGT and operated as a Nose Gunner/Radar Spot Jammer/Asst. Radio Operator. We were sent back to the U.S.A. when the fighting ended. Received a few ribbons, the usual stuff given to aircrew people.

My most memorable experience was the amount of flak they threw up at us.

I was discharged in 1945.

I am retired after having worked for Civil Service for over 31 years. Most of that time was in Air Traffic Control. I enjoy pleasure flying, golf and ham radio operating plus doing what I want to do when I want to do it.

FRANKLIN E. TOMLINSON

I enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in Nov. 1940. Graduated in the class of 41-E and, after a short stint as Instructor, was assigned to B-24 training at Tucson, Arizona. After going through crew training at different bases, I returned to Tucson as the 739th Squad-



Franklin E. Tomlinson

ron Commander of the 454th initial cadre which trained at many bases, including Charleston. The Group departed the US and flew to South America and then over the Atlantic To Tunis. More training and then over to Italy.

I flew 27 missions, leading many of them, and was shot down on a mission over Friedrichshafen. We bailed out over Switzerland and the whole crew came out alive, however, some were badly wounded by the flak which knocked out three engines. After internment in Switzerland, I was returned to the US in 1945. I was assigned as Military Attache to Denmark, where I spent three lovely years. Upon return to the US, I held several different Intelligence posts at the Pentagon, Tactical Air Command, Air Command and Staff School and Far East Command in Tokyo. Returned to Hawaii in 1954 in the cadre to start up PACAF. I was promoted to Colonel. In 1957, I was transferred to Westover AFB as Deputy Director of Intelligence, 8th Air Force.

I retired in 1960. I was awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with clusters, Purple Heart, Knight of Dannenbrog, and Commendation Medal.

IGNATIUS J. "TONY" TORNATORE

In March 1943, I was an Aviation Student at Springfield College, MA, where, upon completion, I was sent to Nashville, TN Classification Center. Radio and Gunnery School next, and on to Westover Field, MA, where I was assigned to Lt Keneally's crew. After completing our training at Westover, we embarked from Camp Patrick Henry, VA and wound up at San Giovanni Air Base at Cerignola, Italy. As a combat crew, Keneally's boys lucked out. Vienna, Linz, Blechhammer, etc. all gave us their best shots but the whole crew survived without a scratch. I would say our good fortune was the result of excellent piloting and the strict flight discipline the crew maintained. Also, just before take off on a combat mission, we would kneel in a circle, beside our airplane, touching hands, and each saying a silent prayer. As far as I knew, this practice was unique to Keneally's crew.



Ignatius J. "Tony" Tornatore

The flight back to the States stands out in my memories. In June 1945, we took off in "Gravel Gertie" and buzzed the 738th orderly room at tree-top level. There were stops at Gioia, Oran, Marrakech, the Azores, Newfoundland, and final touchdown at Bradley Field, CT, U.S.A. The end of a perfect combat tour.

HARRY R. TOROSIAN

I enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in May, 1943, Miami Beach. Ended up at Gunnery School located N. Panama City, FL.



Harry R. Torosian

Reported to Langley Field, Virginia, January, 1944 and assembled as a crew with Lt. Adrian Willfinger as first pilot. We picked up a new silver radar B-24 and flew and trained at Westover Field, Mass.

Flew to Merraketch to Tunisia then Cerignola, Italy in June, 1944. Arrived at 739th, 454th bomb group.

We flew many missions with the Grey Old Lady, "Miss America '44," the Hero Ship, 144 missions with 8-enemy planes to her credit. Was proud to fly with her and to be with the 739th. The best.

I remember out of 3-successive missions we had two landing wheels shot-out, on one landing we ran off the runway into a ditch and the second one Capt. Willfinger landed on one wheel. He was the greatest. We flew lead or deputy lead.

After the war I went to Meinzingen Art School and became a commercial artist.

"Miss America '44" was on display at Greenfield Village after the war. She was built at Willow-Run plant. Resides in Garden City, MI.

JOHN G. TRAPANI

Graduated as Flying Cadet, Class 3C, 1943 (Turner Field, Albany, Georgia). Then to B-24 Training at Davis-Monthan Field. Became part of original cadre of 454th, then The School of Applied Tactics, Orlando, Florida.



Capt. John G. Trapani

Was Co-Pilot for Captain Winburn (738th) on 10-hour mission, ran short of fuel, crash-landed. We lost a Navigator and Radio-Operator. I suffered permanent eye injury which grounded me. At McCook, Nebraska, Colonel Aynesworth transferred me to the 736th, made me a Tech Supply and also Air-drome Control Officer. Then to Charleston, then Camp Patrick Henry, then on Button Gwinette to Naples; then to Cerignola. After

19 months at San Giovanni Field, returned with personnel of our Group on S.S. Argentina back to States. Two weeks after returning home, Germany surrendered. With sufficient points, I requested discharge. Appeared before General Retirement Board at Walter Reed Hospital and was retired as Captain because of line-of-duty physical disability. Finished law school and admitted to practice. The 454th — they were the greatest men on the greatest team I have ever been associated with and eagerly look forward each year to the next reunion.

This year (1991) Marge and I celebrate 50 years of marriage. Have daughter Marilyn and son John Jr.

CHARLES R. TROMMER

I was with the 736th squadron as a Radio Operator/Gunner on Switzer's crew and also flew with several other crews during my 51 mission tour of duty. Joined the 736th at McCook, Neb. and completed my missions in August of '44.

After the war I learned degrees in chemistry and worked as a research chemist in industry and as an adjunct professor at Southeastern Mass. University until my retirement at the end of 1987. Moved here to the Big Island (Hawaii) where I have served as a lecturer in chemistry at the Univ. of Hawaii-Hilo on an intermittent basis. Senility is taking its toll, but the winters here are a bit milder than those in Mass. so that I am able to put up with this place.

JOHN C. TROPEA

Graduated as Bombardier, Class WFTC 43-13, AAF Bombardier School, Roswell, New Mexico, Sept. 11, 1943. Met bomber crew and trained at Mountain Home and Boise, Idaho. Ferried a brand new B-24 overseas from Topeka, Kansas to South America, Africa and on to base at San Giovanni, Cerignola, Italy. Our arrival at 454th was April 13, 1944. On about our 40th mission, I was scratched from the mission for no apparent or given reason and the crew was shot down by anti-aircraft fire. Our Pilot, Leon Polinsky, Engineer, Tunis Gaalswyk, and Radio Operator, Robert Finley, were killed. The others became German prisoners of war. I was recently re-united with our Tail Gunner, Marlin Kerby, after 47 long years. Completed European tour of 50 missions Sept. 13, 1944. I was placed in a Redeployment Group and sent to Navigational School at Selman Field, Monroe, LA. While there, I met my wife, Rosemary. Discharged from service 9/25/45. After the war, I attended Pharmacy School, Loyola University of the South, New Orleans, LA, and graduated in 1951. I've been practicing Pharmacy for almost 40 years. I have three children: Debbie, John, Jr., and Elizabeth.



John C. Tropea

ROBERT J. WELLS

I became a member of the U.S. Army on 13 February '43 and was assigned to St. Petersburg, FL for Basic Training. In an attempt to shove a square peg into a round hole, the Army decided my experience as a jig-builder for North American Aviation qualified me for training as an X-ray technician at Lawson General Hospital in Atlanta. Next stop Hammer Field, CA for assignment to Hamilton Field near San Francisco.



Robert J. "Skeets" Wells

I took the very first opportunity to apply for aerial gunnery training and was shipped to Las Vegas where I completed the course as a B-17 Ball Turret Gunner and was sent to Lincoln, NB for crew assignment. From there to Biggs Field, El Paso for RTU. I was assigned to the crew of Lt. F.K. Vosper and to my surprise, B-24s.

Training completed, we were shipped to Topeka and on to Langley Field and transferred to the 3539th Tech School for radar training. In October, we sailed from Camp Patrick Henry for Oran, Naples, Bari and on to the 454th/739th.

We flew several missions in December and January until the end came on Mission 180 to Linz where we were hit by flak and eventually had to bail out. On return to stateside, I spent three days at the Pentagon for Intelligence debriefing and then home. I was sent to Ft. George Wright Convalescent Hospital for treatment of a back injury caused by hitting a tree on the bail out.

I was discharged as a S/Sgt. on 17 August and returned to civilian life where I spent 30 years on the Long Beach, CA Fire Department and retired 2 May 1977. Since then, I fly Radio Control models, have a model railroad and go fishing at every opportunity.

JOSEPH J. WERTHEIMER

Enlisted December 1942. Assigned to Central Training Command. Completed Preflight Primary, Basic, and Advanced in Texas, graduating with Class 44E. Received B-24 transition to Ft. Worth and trained with crew at Casper, WY until Christmas, 1944. Flew



Joseph J. Wertheimer

new B-24 from Topeka, KS to Gioia, Italy via Gander Field, Azores, Morocco, Tunis. Assigned with 737 Sq March 13, 1945 until base was disbanded in June 1945. Flew 10 combat missions — M/Y, O/D, Bridges, also numerous supply missions to Udine area after VE Day.

May 10, 1945, taking off from Naples at Pomogliano Air Field, after switching seats with Co-Pilot, we had #4 engine fail when just airborne. Encountering strong vertical updrafts at approach of short runway, necessitated 3 engine go-around over Bay of Naples and Mt. Vesuvius before successful landing. Flew war-weary aircraft "Consolidated Mess" from Gioia via South Atlantic to Fortaleza, Brazil experiencing blown jug on #3 engine about 500 miles out. Final B-24 landing at Savannah, July 9, 1945.

Today I'm retired after 36 years as Engineer and Lab. Supervisor with refrigeration compressor manufacturer. Am still maintaining piloting skills in my light aircraft.

PARKER D. WILEY

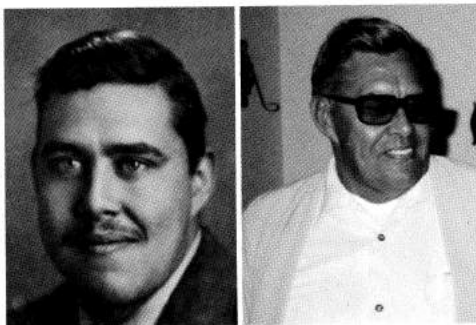
Parker D. Wiley — Enlisted in the Army Air Corps to train as an A&E mechanic. Tried the Navy once but was rejected for flat feet. Sworn in at Ft. Riley, KS on Oct. 20, 1942; sent to Ft. Leavenworth for clothing and indoctrination; next to Sheppard Field, TX for Basic and B-25 AM school; Advanced B-25 training in Calif.; Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, FL; reclassified as a B-24 H Gunner-Mech. and ended up in Clovis, NM for crew assignment. This is when Murphy's Law reared its ugly head. There were brothers by the name of Wiley, both Radio Operators in the Air Corps together, and to be assigned to the same crew. Yours truly had a brother for the first time in his life. Harold and his real brother could not get the order changed in time and they became separated for the duration. From Clovis it was McCook Air Base, Charleston AB, Mitchel Field for NEW planes and on to Europe via South America and Africa. Our flight from Tunis Air Field arrived at San Giovanni Air Field Jan. 26, 1944 at 17:30. The weather cooperated nicely while we were locating our respective areas and setting up our tents before dark. As memory recalls we went to bed wet, wet and WET!!! It was a cold winter rain — a typical Kansas 'toad strangler.' After 50th, shipped home from Naples, Italy in Sept. '44 and discharged April 19, 1945. To this day our original crew from McCook is intact. At present, life as a retiree is delivering 200 daily papers and working in my garden back home in Kansas. We travel in our 5th wheel whenever we can get free.



Parker D. Wiley

GUY W. WILLETT

Born Feb. 28, 1925 in Washington, D.C. Enlisted Sept. 14, 1943 at Ft. Meade, MD. Aerial Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, FL.



S/Sgt Guy W. Willett

Assigned to the 454th Bomb Group, 736th Squadron, as a member of Capt. Harold G. Buttles' crew. Flew 35 missions as a Top Turret Gunner on the B-24 "Jody."

Awards and decorations: Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters, Good Conduct Medal and Aerial Gunners Wings. EAME Campaign Ribbon with Bronze Stars for Rome-Arno, Northern Appenines, Air Combat Balkans, Rhineland and Southern France campaigns.

Employed by Metro Bus Systems, Washington, D.C. for 34 years as a Mechanic and retired Mar. 1, 1981.

Charter Member of Bryans Road Volunteer Fire Department from 1962 until his death Dec. 17, 1989 after a bout with cancer. Lived in southern Maryland most of his life — near Indian Head.

CALVIN H. WILT

Calvin H. Wilt — Enlisted in the Army Air Corps July 14, 1941. Graduated from Chanute Field Aircraft Technical School January 1942.



Calvin H. Wilt

Served 14 months at Biggs Field, Texas in a Transient Aircraft Squadron.

Began "First Phase" training on B-24's March 1943. Boarded the Liberty Ship "Button Gwinette" for Naples, Italy and a wild night truck ride over the Alps to San Giovanni.

As a member of the 736 Squadron I was assigned Crew Chief on B-24 Number 9, Serial 4252324. Other crew members were Harold E. Baur and Tom E. Cavanaugh.

Number 9 was one of the last camouflaged replacements and the pilots said it flew like a truck so we named it "Bruise Cruiser."

It was to survive 61 combat missions and 5 enemy fighter kills.

July 1945 we left San Giovanni and "Bruise Cruiser" parked proudly on its hard stand

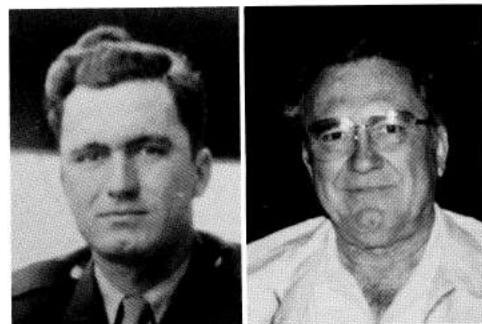
with the many combat damage patches shining in the sun.

Discharged September 8, 1945, I returned to my home town to become a professional firefighter for 35 years and a private pilot.

Calvin H. Wilt, 509 Pennsylvania Avenue, Cumberland, MD 21502. Wife: Dorothy M. Wilt; Son: Kenneth C. Wilt; Daughter: Joyce S. Sine; Granddaughters: Kenda Kober, Summer Sine, Starr Sine; Grandson: Kevon Wilt; Great-Granddaughter: Kelsey Kober.

GLEN R. WINTERS

Glen R. Winters — completed four years ROTC in 1941, served in Infantry as 2nd Lt. Transferred to Air Corps for Pilot training and graduated Class of 43-F, Pampa, TX.



Glen R. Winters

I trained at B-24 Pilots School at Liberal, KS. Trained with my crew at Clovis and Almagordo, N.M. and Charleston, S.C. We went to Mitchel Field, N.Y. to get our B-24, then to South America and Africa enroute to San Giovanni Airfield, Italy, arriving there Feb. 1944. We started flying immediately.

Blackie Hughes flew my airplane on its first mission and on returning had to ditch it in the Adriatic. My first assignment was to the 739th Sqdrn, then to the 736th. We completed many missions to Ploesti, Bucharest, Italy, France, Austria and Germany. After completing 30 missions, I was sent to U.S. with my crew for 30 days R&R. While in the States, I was reassigned to Training Command, San Angelo, TX. There I was made Squadron Commander. I've always been happy we were fortunate enough to have all my crew returned to the States safely.

Decorations include Air Medal with 2 Clusters, ETO Ribbon with 4 Battle Stars, Group Presidential Citation with 1 Cluster.

I am now retired and live in Pryor, Oklahoma.

OSCAR S. WOODARD

Oscar S. Woodard — My military life started in Grand Rapids, MI in October 1942 when my father, brother and I all enlisted at the same time. A big write-up in G.R. Press about



Oscar S. Woodard

a father and sons enlisting together. I went to Sheppard Field, Texas to be classified; Amarillo, Texas to Aerial Mechanics School; to Las Vegas, Nevada for Gunnery School; then to Casper, Wyoming to be assigned to a crew. Our crew went to Kansas City, Kansas to pick up a new B-24 with a stinger in its tail. We were sent to Cerignola, Italy to join the 454th-739 Bomb Group. We completed 23 missions with only one casualty, our co-pilot, Lt. Hunter.

I retired from the trucking industry as a Safety Supervisor in 1981. My family consists of my wife, Shirley, daughter, Tracy, son, Mark, two grandsons, Nicholas and Rocky and a granddaughter, Melissa. We spend winters in Sarasota, Florida and summers at our cottage in Michigan. My most memorable thoughts of this period were the many close friendships I made and the teamwork required from all of us to make each mission a complete success.

CHESTER M. WOODWARD

Born Jan. 12, 1919, on a farm in South Central Nebr. Reported for Aviation Cadet training in Feb. 1943, and took training at several air bases in Texas. Graduated from Bombardier school at Big Spring in Jan. 1944, and went to Westover Field to join an air crew commanded by Frank Cloaninger. After overseas training at Charleston and Cuba, the crew flew to San Giovanni in May. Flew on 29 missions including several to Ploesti. On Aug. 22, 1944, the crew was shot down over Blechhammer. All the crew members bailed out safely, and were sent to interrogation centers. Cloaninger, Jack Michels, Bob Baldwin and I were sent to Luft III, after completing interrogation at Frankfort. In Jan. 1945, all the "Kriegies" were moved from Luft III, when the Russians were getting close. We walked for two days and nights thru the snow and cold, and then loaded into box cars and shipped to Nuremberg. This was a very difficult six days, and the memory will be with me forever. After a few months in Nuremberg, we walked to Moosberg, just north of Munich. Patton's army liberated the camp on Apr. 29, 1945.



Chester M. Woodward

Since retiring, I now spend half the year in Aurora, Colo., and the other half in Sun City, Arizona.

JOHN D. BENNETT

Capt. John D. (Jack) Bennett was born in New Lexington, OH Aug 1, 1920. Enlisted in the Air Corps at Wright Patterson AFB 12/10/40. Progressed thru the enlisted ranks to the grade of Tech Sergeant, as a Crew Chief. Graduated from Flying School in the Class of 43H, Lubbock, TX with the grade of Flight Officer. Assigned to Clovis, NM AFB B-24 Transition School. Then assigned to the 454th Bomb Group, 739th Sq. at McCook AFB, NB as Copilot to the Lead Crew of Lt. Wm. Henry.



Capt. John D. (Jack) Bennett

Transferred to Charleston AFB, SC for final Combat Training. The crew was sent to Mitchel Field, Long Island to pick up its aircraft. Flew to West Palm Beach, FL for embarkation. First stop was Puerto Rico, where he was hospitalized with a broken ear drum Christmas Eve 1943. Weeks later, after discharge from the hospital, he hitch-hiked aboard a B-24 being ferried to the 8th AF which took him to Marrakech, Morocco. He was able to catch a ride to Tunis, then on to Bari, Italy via Malta, Sicily, and finally Bari. Caught a supply truck from the 739th to transport him to Cerignola where he joined the crew of "Borrowed Time".

Flew 42 missions with the 739th Sq, first as Copilot for Bill Henry until Bill was shot down, and then joined Blackie Hughs, who became 1st Pilot for the crew. He was checked out as Airplane Commander and flew first missions with new crews as they were assigned to the 739th.

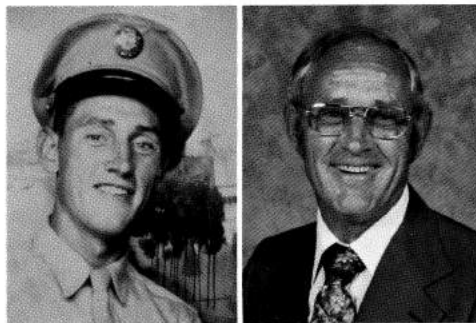
On Aug 17, 1944, he flew as Copilot, with his crew, to Col Gunn and was shot down over Ploesti and taken prisoner and held in Bucharest, Rumania until Rumania capitulated. He was repatriated to Italy, advanced to 1st Lt, and returned to the USA. He was returned to the USA aboard a troop carrier ship and landed at Ft Slocum, NY. He was assigned to Camp Atterbury, IN for reassignment. After leave, he was assigned to Miami Beach, FL for further assignment. He was assigned TDY to the 6th War Loan Drive as a member of the speakers bureau. After the War Loan Drive, he was assigned to Marfa, TX as an Advanced Flying Instructor. His next assignment was the AGO School, Ft Sam Houston, TX. Next assignment was School Secretary, Douglas, AZ, Advanced Flying School.

After VJ Day, he was assigned to Camp Atterbury, IN for release from active duty and assigned to the AF Reserve and retired from the AF Reserve in 1962.

In 1947, he married Agnes Bever and they have two children, Jean Marie and Robert John and four grandchildren. Jack worked for the NCR Corps for 35 years and has been working as a travel agent for the past 12 years.

JOHN C. CASSELL

Leaving my birthplace in North Carolina was the beginning of a long journey. I enlisted January 1943. Received my training in A.M. School at Keesler Field, Mississippi; Gunnery School in Harlingen, Texas. I was assigned to Charles W. LaDow's crew in Salt Lake City, Utah.



John C. Cassell

We trained for Replacement Crew, beginning in Pueblo, Colorado, on to Westover Field, Mass. Our departure was from Mitchel Field, New York to Port San Giovanni. I was assigned to the 454th Group, 737th Squadron. The plane we flew over was named "Dragon Lady". Most of our missions were flown in the "Dragon Lady".

Campaigns were: Rome-Arno; Northern France; Southern France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; Air Combat Balkans.

All of our crew returned to the States safely.

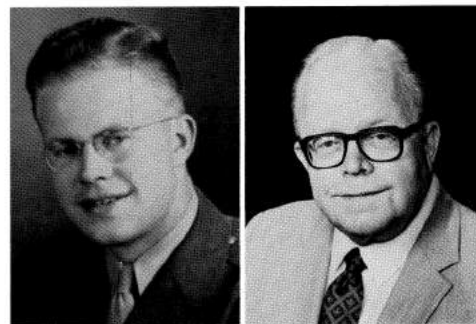
One memorable thought: When I was assigned to Charles W. LaDow's crew, he stated, "If anyone hands you the dirty end of a stick, let me know." He cared about his men. He was a true leader.

I was in the Reserves for awhile, was recalled for a year during the Cambodian Uprising. Also, a year in the Korean Conflict.

I am retired and often refer to my service as the best job I've ever had.

MARLIN W. DRAKE, JR.

Entered service January 7, 1943. Received Basic Training at Miami Beach, FL. Went to Armament School at Lowrey Field, CO and Turret and Gunsight School at Detroit, MI. Was sent to Salt Lake City, UT for assignment. Assigned to the 738th Bomb Squadron of the 454th Bomb Group at McCook, NB. Shipped with the Group to Charleston, SC. Departed with the Group from Newport News, VA on December 15, 1943, arriving at Bagnoli, Italy in mid-January 1944. Proceeded to Cerignola (San Giovanni Air Base). Remained until after VE Day. Returned to

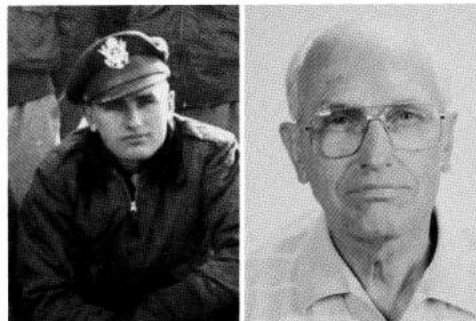


Marlin W. Drake, Jr.

USA July 1945. Separated at Sioux Falls, SD on October 7, 1945 with the grade of S/Sgt.

WILLIAM C. EHRMAN

My combat preparation included successful completion of Aerial Gunnery and Bombardier-Navigator schools and two Combat Crew training phases. I was assigned to the air crew piloted by Lt. John W. Devine and with this crew completed training at Pueblo AAB, CO in January 1945.



William C. Ehrman

The Devine crew flew a new B-24 to Gioia, Italy (where the plane was promptly taken from us) and we were assigned to the 454th Bomb Group, 739th Bomb Squadron on 26 February 1945.

I flew 18 combat sorties as a Bombardier-Navigator with the Devine and other 739th BS crews. The targets were primarily marshalling yards, bridges, and troop support. The Devine crew spent an overnight at the emergency crash field in Yugoslavia, returning from a Kralupy oil refinery sortie. The sortie over the Munich Reims Airdrome on 24 March 45 was quite "interesting" since the 8th Air Force and the 15th Air Force bomber fleets arrived at the same time and they (8th AF) were on top of us with loaded bomb bay doors open.

At wars' conclusion, I was a crewmember that took 454BG ground personnel on a low-level sightseeing tour of Germany. Also, I was part of a crew flying food supplies to Udine in Northern Italy.

Recalled to active duty in August 1950, I served 13 years with the Strategic Air Command and tours with the Organization of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Hq USAF Inspector General's Directorate of Nuclear Safety as a Nuclear Weapons Officer. I retired from the USAF on 30 June 1970.

Most significant memories of my 454BG assignment:

*Sitting on the ground in Yugoslavia and watching the 15th AF's 800+ bombers go over in a combat formation.

*Giving the garbage in my mess gear to the nuns so they could feed the hungry,

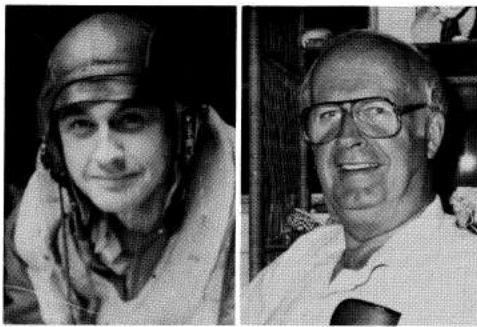
*From our 20,000' platform observing the endless line and firing of the Russian Army artillery, and

*The professionalism of all the aircrews that I was a part of on combat sorties.

WILLIAM R. GORMAN

Began in Class 44-C, Pilot Training. Washed out on check-ride, making forced landing turn below 250 feet. Graduated from San Angelo Bombardier School, Class 44-7 DR.

Bombardier on Vic Grimes Crew #5587 — Aircraft — Dragon Lady. Passed out from anoxia on Mission #148, November 11,



Bill Gorman

1944, to Linz or Villach, Austria. Badly frost-bitten feet put me out of action and back to the States.

Discharged one year later — November 11, 1945.

FELIX D. HARROD

My flight training was done in The Southeast Training Command, graduating from Moody Field in the class of 44-D. My transition into B-24s was done at Maxwell Air Base in Montgomery, AL. Crew assignment at Lincoln, NB, then on to Combat Training at Boise, ID, where Colonel Kane of the Ploesti oil fields missions fame was our Base Commander. From Boise, we meandered our way to Newport News, VA, where we embarked in the middle of the night on a banana boat for what would eventually be our new home — Nov. '44 — San Giovanni Air Field at Cerignola, Italy. The 454th was our Group and the 738th was our Squadron.



Felix A. Harrod

Our crew stayed intact during our sorties. When V-E Day came in '45, we had almost completed the required number of sorties for rotation back to the States. In Frost's poem, "The Gift Outright", there is a line, "such as we were we gave ourselves outright". I think this describes us and our efforts.

From the Word of God, we find in Isaiah 40:31 — "but those that hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not faint." And I praise God for His making that promise a flaming reality in my life — Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

TROY L. JACKS

At age 18, I enlisted as an Aviation Cadet at Greenwood AAFB, MS in Oct 1943. In Jan 1944, I began Basic Training at Miami Beach, FL. With a surplus of Cadets, they decided my size was just right for the Ball Turret. Aerial Gunnery Training at Laredo, TX from March to July was exciting. The shot guns (skeet shooting) and the .50 cal. machine guns.



Troy L. Jacks

I reported for Crew Training at Westover Field, MA and was assigned to Lt. McGabes' crew. We sailed for Italy from Newport News, VA on Oct 31, 1944. Our ship broke down twice. Spent 14 days at the Bermuda Is., 11 days at Oran, N. Africa, 7 days at Marseilles, France. Arrived in Italy the last of Dec 1944 and assigned to the 736th Sqdn of the 454th Bomb Group. Some of our missions were "milk runs" and a lot were not. We all remember Linz and Vienna, Austria; Regensburg and Munich, Germany; Maribor, Yugoslavia; the Brenner Pass, and many others. We flew a plane back via Marrakech, Africa, Azores Is, Newfoundland and Bradford, CT.

I retired as a Rural Mail Carrier Jan 1986.

WALTER KILIMNIK

Born Sep. 18, 1920 in Detroit, MI. Graduated from the University of Illinois in June 1941 with a B.S. degree in Metallurgical Engineering. Received a commission as a 2nd Lt. Field Artillery from University of Illinois ROTC. Called to duty at Ft. Sill, OK in Feb. 1942. Transferred to Air Force for pilot training and graduated with Pilot Class '43E from Blackland A.F.S., Waco, TX. Assigned to B-24 Transition at Davis-Monthan, Tucson, AZ. Assigned as 1st Pilot of Model Crew Cadre, 736th Squadron. Accomplished training with the 454th Group at Pinecastle, FL, McCook, NB and Charleston SC. Flew overseas to Italy via South America and North Africa with Capt. Jamison, arriving at Cerignola, Italy early in 1944. Flew 51 missions as Squadron and second attack wave First Pilot. Assigned as Squadron Operations officer. Left Cerignola Nov. 1944 for Naples and boat trip home, arriving in Nov. on East Coast. Reassigned to Chanute Field, Engineering School, at Rantoul, IL. Reassigned to 4th AF Headquarters, San Francisco. Discharged from service at Camp Beale, CA in Sep. 1945.



Capt. Walter Kilimnik

Presently President and Owner of Aerospace and Corrosion Int'l, Inc., Vancouver, WA. Corrosion resistant non-ferrous alloy distributor dealing with Petroleum, Petrochemical and Paper and Pulp Industries.

High Temperature Alloys and Titanium furnished to the Aircraft Industry.

CHARLES V. McQUOWN

I joined the Air Force on Nov. 12, 1942, I was sent to Atlantic City, NJ for Basic Training. I then went to Seymour Johnson Field, NC for Airplane Mechanic School and to Fort Myers, FL for Gunnery School. I went to Glenn L. Martin B-26 Dive Bomber School. I then went to Salt Lake City, UT where I was reclassified for B-24 bombers. I then went to Tucson, AZ where we formed our crew and started our 1st Phase Training as a crew.



Charles V. McQuown

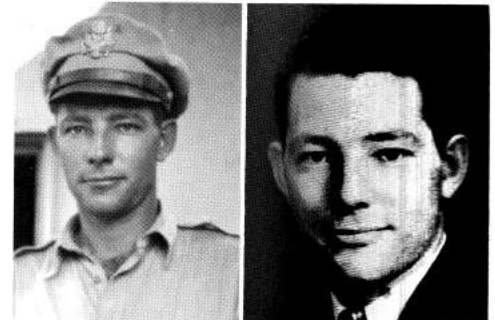
We went to Charleston, SC for our final training and left on Dec. 21, 1943 in a new B-24 we named "Delayed Action". We arrived in Italy on Jan. 26, 1944. On my 49th mission, I was wounded by 7 German fighters July 25, 1944 over Lintz, Austria. I was in the hospital for 12 days then had to fly my 50th mission when I came back to Group. I left Italy Sep. 12, 1944 and arrived in the U.S. Sep. 26, 1944.

I was awarded the Purple Heart, Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf clusters, Good Conduct Medal, Presidential Unit Citation, European-African-Middle Eastern Service Medal with 7 Bronze stars and promoted to T/Sgt. I was discharged Sep. 12, 1945.

I was married on July 3, 1946. We have 6 children and 10 grandchildren.

CHARLES J. MILLER

Born, raised, and schooled at Pateros, WA, Miller later became a 1941 top honors graduate of Washington State University. He enlisted for service the day after Pearl Harbor. Completing Air Corps training, he piloted B-24 Liberators from Central America to North Africa, finally based in the Italian campaign. There he completed 47 missions, where he termed those over Ploesti, Regensburg, and Budapest the roughest.



Charles J. Miller

Back in the States, he flew for the Air Transport Command, then was part owner/

manager of Indianhead Flying Service in Wisconsin — conducted G.I. flying classes and sold aircraft. Returning to Washington State in 1947, Miller resumed his intended career as a professional horticulturist, raised his own exemplary apple orchard beside the Columbia River, served as advisor to others. In professional interest, he made three European orchard tours from 1968-72. Miller served the fruit industry in many capacities, was on the Executive Board of the Washington State Horticultural Association. He supported the American Legion, the 40 and 8, was Board Chairman of his local United Methodist Church.

His death at 56 was mourned by his wife Jeanne, children Margot, Marshall, and Mark — all University graduates with love and respect for Charles, his talents, and his service to his country.

GEORGE B. MILLER

Graduated college in 1938 as Electrical Engineer. Enlisted Jan. 1942 as an Aviation Cadet. Called up for training in June 1942. Graduated Class 43-C from Columbus, MS, stayed there as Flight Instructor until April 1944. Went through accelerated B-24 Transition and Phase Training, arrived with crew and plane at Cerignola late July 1944. Finished my "50" by December, for two months served as 738th Executive Officer and returned to States in February, 1945 where I was assigned to Wright Field as an Aeronautical Development Engineer. Worked on preparing the P-80 for the Japan invasion. At war's end, gave up flying and returned to civilian life as an Engineer and later made a career switch to the computer field.

S/SGT J. FRANK MURRAY

Entered the Army Air Force in Sep. 43. Served with the 454th Bomb Group, 738th Bomb Squadron. Lost my original crew on first mission — flew 46 missions as extra Tail Gunner. Returned to the States about 3 months after the war ended with Germany in 1945.

JOHN R. NICHOLS

I was born in Lorain, OH on Nov 5, 1917, but moved to Rocky River, OH where I graduated from that high school in 1936. From there, I graduated from Baldwin-Wallace College in Berea, OH in 1942 and went to work for General Motors as a Concrete Inspector. I volunteered for the Army Air Force in early 1942, but they deferred my enlistment while I was in the Civilian Pilot Training Program. In January 1943, the Army Air Force called me up for Pilot training. From Maxwell Field Cadet Training, I went to Carleton (Arcadia, FL) and then on to Basic Flying Training near Decatur, AL. There, the 44th class was



John R. (Jack) Nichols Jr.

reverted to Class 44C due to a series of accidents. From there, I went to Two Engine Advanced Training in Columbus, MO where I received my commission in late Feb 1944. After a short delay, I was sent to B-24 Transition School again at Maxwell Field, AL. After this session, I was sent to Hollyoke, MA for training with our crew at Westover. In July 1944, our crew was assigned to the 15th AAF and arrived at Bari, Italy on Sep 3rd, 1944. We were sent to the 736th Sqd, 454th Group on 4th of Sep 1944.

Our crew flew 32 missions. Our earlier missions were the most difficult. We lost 13 engines due to flak — one a dud 88 mm shell in our No 3 engine. Two engines were burned out due to flame suppressors on the manifolds on our "bad weather" night mission to Munich, Germany, where we lost the Tail-Gunner and Ass't Engineer, who bailed out (by instructions) and who were in enemy territory for 81 days. Our Radio Operator was the only one injured.

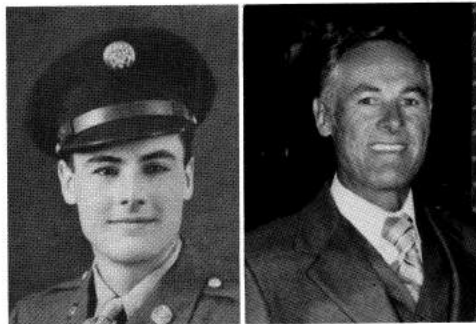
We flew home to Hunter Field in June 1945 and the crew disbanded. They were a superb crew — all of them.

I was sent to B-29 School at Harvard, NB but I received an early discharge after VJ Day on or about Sep 8, 1945. I was in the Reserve for another 5 years. I hold the DFC and Air Medal.

Meanwhile, I received a PHD in Economics at Ohio State University and specialized in teaching Finance and Securities courses. I taught for 37 years in various colleges and universities and retired as Emeritus Professor of Finance and Chair of the Finance Dept. at California State University, Fullerton, in 1983.

GILBERT A. PAGEL

April 13, 1944 (13th Mission) — We were to hit Budapest, Hungary on this mission. Just as we were coming off our target, one of the engines went out, and the Germans sent up fighter planes to finish us off. I suppose I fired too fast and the guns locked out of battery. When the enemy didn't see any more tracers coming from my guns, he zeroed in on the tail of our plane. His 20 millimeter gun shell shattered the glass window and flipped me into the catwalk behind me. We had Cameraman Harry Wilson that day. At first, Harry thought I was dead, but later he saw me staggering around. By this time, the plane was on fire and everyone was ordered to "bail out". I was bleeding from a head wound and couldn't see very well. Harry helped put my chute on and put his feet in the middle of my back and pushed me out the camera hatch. I had two pairs of gloves on and frantically tried to get them off to get to the rip cord. I finally put them between my teeth and off they went and my chute opened. I saw a German plane head toward my chute. I spilled



Gilbert A. Pagel, Staff Sergeant (Tail Gunner)

some air from the chute, and he came about 10 yds from me, tipped his wings and flew off.

When I landed in a plowed field, the Hungarian Home Guards were waiting for me. They yelled, "Ruski, Ruski". One man had a big hunting knife against my throat, another man had a rusty pistol against my ribs, another man was making a hangman's noose with a piece of rope. My grandmother had come from Austria, and she said that we were called "Americano" or "Americanish". They stopped in surprise when I said, "I am Americano". They gave me medical help with food and water. I was picked up at 5 p.m. by the Germans, was taken to Budapest, where we were kept in a castle up on a hill for 2 weeks. We were transferred to a federal prison for 2 weeks, then shipped to Sagan, Germany in box cars. I arrived in Luft III, South Compound on May 16, 1944.

On Jan. 27, 1945, we were ordered to start walking in 30 mins. We walked 3 days, 3 nights to a railroad station and headed for Mooseburg. We ran out of food, and for 9 days we had nothing to eat. I lost, altogether, 40 lbs. April 29, 1945, Gen. Patton liberated us.

JOSEPH PAPARATTO

Joseph "Pappy" Paparatto was photographer for the *Flight of the Liberator* book. He was inducted into the army on January 7th, 1943 at Camp Upton, Long Island, New York. Did Basic Training at Miami Beach, Florida and then attended the Air Force Photography School at Lowry Field, Denver, Colorado. Next, Joe was shipped to Davis-Monthan Air Base, Tucson and assigned to the 739th Squadron of the 454th Bombardment Group. From Tucson it was on to McCook, Nebraska and Charleston, South Carolina.

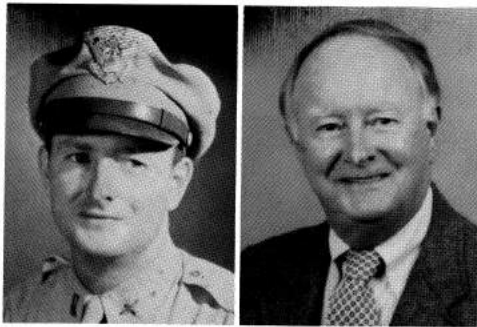


Joseph "Pappy" Paparatto

Joe left the USA with the ground crews, for San Giovanni Airfield, Italy where he was assigned to Group Photo Section, working on aerial strike photos for the first five months. Later he was transferred to Group Public relations where he worked on the *Flight of the Liberator*. Joe, known as "Pappy", was discharged from the army September 7th, 1945. Until retiring he continued to work in photography and lived on Long Island. He married and has two children, Ron and Denise. Is now retired and presently resides in Hallandale, Florida.

F. BRADLEY PEYTON, III

F. Bradley Peyton, III — Enlisted March 1942 US Army Air Corps — Aviation Cadet. Reported active duty June 1942. Completed cadet training Randolph and Kelly Fields, San Antonio; Primary — Coleman, Texas; Basic and Advanced Twin-Engine — Waco, Texas where I received my Pilot wings and



F. Bradley (Brad) Peyton, III

commissioned 2nd Lieutenant. Upon graduation, ordered to Davis-Monthan, Tucson. B-24 transition and crew assignment June-October 1943. On with my crew to Charleston October-December 1943. Joined 738th Squadron, 454th Bombardment Group. December 1943 — Charleston to San Giovanni, Cerignola, Italy via South America-Africa-Italy. My crew of 10 and passengers Major James A. Gunn, III, Lt. Siegel, M/S Hagan, and T/S Utterback — normal flight to destination.

53 missions. European targets including Germany, France, Austria, Ploesti, Romania, Bulgaria, Italy, Yugoslavia. My crew flew practically all missions together. Returned to U.S. August 1944 and continue regular reunions.

Decorations: Air Medal w/7 clusters, Presidential Unit Citation w/1 cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross w/1 cluster. Released from service August 1945 under Point System.

Returned to Charlottesville, Va. to continue my Peyton Pontiac-Cadillac automobile dealership which I started in 1940. Retired from automobile business; now active in banking, operating my farm, Seven Oaks Farm, Greenwood, Virginia.

JOHN L. PINNEY

John Pinney learned to fly from 1930-33. Soloed August 1933 at Aero Club Field in Chicago, in a J5 Waco.



Capt. John L. Pinney

Employed at Lockheed, Burbank, prior to commission as Pilot Officer in RCAF 1941. Assigned B-17 Combat Crew School after commissioned 1st Lieut. Rated Pilot, May 1942. Reassigned to Davis-Monthan as Instructor Pilot, retrained in B-24. Went through the phases with several Provisional Groups as Sq. CO.

Joined 454th BG at Charleston, Dec. '43. Posted to Group in Italy. Accepted position as Pilot for O.S.S. in the Balkans April '44. Volunteered as Pilot of P-38s August '44, 154th W.R.S. Flew 50th mission 9 April '45. Returned to the U.S. on May 15, 1945.

Awards: DFC, Air Medal with 5 clusters, American and European Theatre Ribbons with 6 Battle Stars. British 1939-43 Ribbon. 2 Group Unit Citations.

From 1945-1983 flew as Pilot in airline, commercial and company aviation in most types, from DC-2 through DC-7, Lockheed Constellations, Boeing 377, Sikorsky 4-Engine Flying Boat, the NASA "Guppies" and many others in various parts of the world.

Retired, flying Ultra-lites and driving a school bus.

JULIAN P. PRUETT

Enlisted November 6, 1942 at Blytheville, Ark. Attended A&E school at Keesler Field. Aerial Gunnery at Laredo, Tex. Crew assembly and training at Davis Monthan, Tucson and Alamogordo. Joined the 454th, 737 Sqdn., in Charleston, S.C. in November, 1943 as a replacement for crew lost at sea on training flight. Left West Palm Beach on December 23, 1943, flew southern route, arrived Cerignola, Italy on January 26, 1944. Flew on first Group Mission on February 8, 1944. Was on Feb. 25 mission to Regensburg when first plane lost by 454th and flying with crew credited with first enemy plane shot down. Flew last mission July 2, 1944 and came home on "rotation" after 43 missions. Was supposed to return to Italy after 30 days but orders changed while at home and did not have to return. To Atlantic City, back to Keesler for advanced schooling, became Instructor after graduation. Later to Chanute Field for additional specialized training and finally to Boca Raton, Fla. in July, 1945. Was discharged, 87 points, in October, 1945.

Crewmembers: O.L. (Buck) Whitworth, AP Commander, W.J. Spellicy, Co-Pilot, Steve Shea, Bomb., James Russell, Nav., Vernon Sadler, Engineer, Lavern G. Leverington, Radio, Charles Mercer, Armorer, Paul Speiler, Armorer, Warren Pohlman, Asst. Eng. A fine group of men.

Working career for 28 years, oilseeds processing. Starting as temporary laborer and advancing to Production Manager for seven plants in middle U.S. Married Pauline Moore in 1948 and will celebrate 43 years in August, 1991. Presently live in Kennett, Missouri.

JOHN W. RAKESTRAW

Born May 1, 1919 in Irvington, NJ. Drafted March 5, 1941. Assigned 34th Inf Reg, Ft. Jackson. In 1941 maneuvers, sent to Pacific, Dec 16, 1941 — destination — Philippines — never got there — Hawaii, Schofield Barracks. Applied for Cadets in June 1942 — accepted Nov 1942. Went to Santa Ana for Preflight — Victorville for Bombardier training. Graduated July 31, 1943 — Class 43-11. Al Riccardi was a classmate. Off to Clovis to meet Leon Burke. Shipped to McCook with the 738th Sqdn, 454th Group. Off to Charles-



John W. Rakestraw

ton, then off to Italy via Trinidad, Belem, Natal, Dakar, Agider, Oran and finally Tunis. Jan 44 saw us off to Italy and San Giovanni. Flew our first Group mission to Orvieto Air Field in Feb 1944. Last mission to Moosbierbaum oil refinery in June 1944. Home in August. Went to Pilot School at Goodfellow, San Angelo, TX. Washed out and sent to Midland for discharge. March 1951 recalled and sent to Mather Field. Instructed Pilots in bombing and radar. Harlingen, TX in May 1952 to train Cadets in Navigation. Upgraded to Celestial Navigator in 1953. In 1955 in Japan training Japanese. Sent to Randolph AFB in 1958 — Wheelus in Libya in 1961 — Germany 1963-65. Home to Keesler AFB and retirement. At Keesler, I supported the 454th Heavy Bombing, 15th AF at Columbus, MS. Retired in 1966 and reside in Universal City, TX with my wife, Doris.

JOHN L. VIGNETTI

Born in 1915 in Derry, PA. Joined the service in 1937, became a Command Pilot with 10,000+ hours, flying 50 WWII mission over N. Africa and Italy. Also flew B-52 missions over Vietnam. Was assigned to SAC for 31 years flying B-26, B-24, B-29, B-47, T-33, B-52, and KC-135 aircraft. Duty Commands: Aircraft Commander, MacDill AFB, FL; Director of Plans, MacDill AFB, FL; first KC-135 Jet-Tanker Squadron Commander, Carswell AFB, TX; Director of Safety, 2nd AF, Barksdale, LA; Vice-Commander, Clinton-Sherman AFB, OK; Director of Material, 7th Air Div, Anderson AFB, Guam (1965-1968); set up 1st Support Bases in Thailand; Base Commander: Grissom AFB (changed from Bunker Hill AFB. Retired from McCoy AFB, FL in 1970 as Full Colonel.



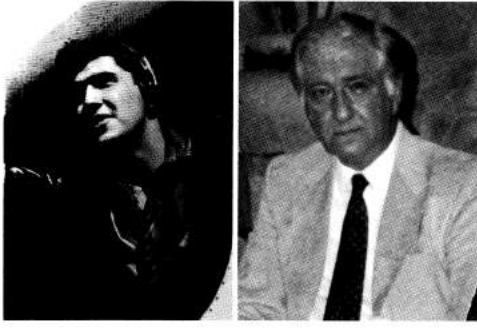
John L. Vignetti

1st City Manager of Ocoee, FL, serving for 13 yrs. City dedicated "Vignetti Park" after returning to work following heart surgery. One of first 7 officers to organize 454th reunions.

Decorations: Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with 6 Oak Leaf Clusters.

HARRY A. WILSON

We hit the target at 12:57, an airfield at Budapest, Hungary, with frag bombs. During the five minute run from the IP, I set up my camera. After I had my camera set up, I sat there and waited for the bombs to start falling. I could see the flak below us bursting, doing us no harm at all. About when the bombs were released, I started taking pictures and we got hit by flak, causing our ship to dip up and down almost throwing me off my seat. About that time, I heard the Pilot say that number 1 and 3 engines were knocked out. I then opened the case that held my camera for shooting out the waist windows and



Harry A. Wilson

adjusted it. "Fighters coming in at 6 o'clock" yelled the Tail Gunner. I took two pictures and then ducked back in. They did very little damage. The Radio Operator motioned for me to come to the other waist window. About 100 yards behind us, at four o'clock, was a 24 with a fire between 3 and 4 engines — 2 men bailing out. The Pilot told us to put on our chutes and I set my camera down, took off my flak vest, and put on my chute. The Tail Gunner yelled again "Fighters coming in on our tail". He fired at them until the guns jammed. The Pilot started our ship down so that the Ball Gunner could see to fire at the fighters. All of a sudden I felt a sharp pain in my head and knew I was hit. A foot from me, laying against the side of the ship in a sitting position, was the Radio Operator with the left side of his face blown off. When the Left Waist Gunner and I started to move him out of the way, all of a sudden, I saw what looked to me like fire works going off around the Ball Turret, which was really 20 mm. exploding. There, half out and half in his Turret was the Ball Gunner, with blood pouring from the back of his head. More 22 mm. started exploding and then our ship caught on fire around the Ball. The Left Waist Gunner started to see if the Ball Gunner was dead but couldn't get by the fire. The Tail Gunner was already out of his turret and coming toward me. After helping him put on his chute, he went out the camera hatch. I went to the camera hatch, turned around to see if the Left Waist Gunner was behind me ready to bail out after me, rolled forward, and out I went. I pulled the rip cord and saw a puff of white go past me. I stopped falling with a sudden jerk when my chute fully opened. After taking my oxygen mask off, I looked below and around me and saw one of the enemy ships that shot us down pass me on his way back to his field. I looked again at the ground and saw a house below me with women running into it. The ground came up mighty fast and I hit, thinking I had probably broken both legs. I unfastened my chute and stood up — no bones broken! Four or five farmers came running up from different directions with pitch forks in their hands. They looked me over and searched me for a gun. One of them pointed to my head. I took off my helmet and felt my head — it was bleeding and running down my cheek. One of my goggles was broken where the piece of metal had gone through. They took me to a house and made me take off my flying equipment. I started to take off my right glove and it stuck to my hand. I had been hit in the wrist by flak. They took me from one jail to another and finally to a state prison where I spent 16 days in solitary confinement. — From there to Germany.

STANLEY W. WITKOWSKI

My military life was just an interruption to my whole life. My goals were to graduate as a Mechanical Engineer from the University of Delaware, marry a wonderful girl and raise a family, which I managed to do after WW II — Thank God! I enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in Dec '42 and reported to Keesler in April '43 to the universal G.I. chant, "You'll be sorry." I completed my cadet training at Napier Field, Dothan, Alabama with intention of being a fighter pilot but instead was assigned to B-24 transition at Ft. Myers, Florida along with the rest of my class as copilots. After crew assignment at Westover, Replacement Crew Training followed at Charleston. This was a happy time for me and the crew. We became very close and I realized that being a bomber crew member had its rewards. Ordered to POE Dec '44, we arrived at Mitchel Field, picked up a new B-24 and were off to sunny Italy. We lost our pilot after his first mission to Linz, the crew was further reduced to four (our pilot was disabled, Bombardier never left the States, Flight Engineer, nose gunner and waist gunners were P.O.W.'s and our tail gunner was killed by German civilians as he hung from his parachute.) My most memorable thoughts of the 454th was the comradery of all the people there.



Stanley W. Witkowski

KIRBY HUGO WOEHST

Born 3/18/21, Bellville, TX. Enlisted 9/42, Houston, TX. Three years High School ROTC (Sgt.) Amateur radio hobby; Two-way Radio Maintenance was intended MOS; however, urgent need for Airplane Mechanics and aptitude for that field sent me to Mechanic School in Biloxi, Gunnery School at Harlingen AAB. B-24H crews formed at Davis-Monthan; became "Tailwind's" Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner. (Lt. F.B. Peyton, III crew). We became a "family" of ten dedicated souls, were claimed by 454th BG and 738th Squadron at Charleston USAAB. Christmas Day, 1943, we flew from Morrison Field, FL to South America, North Africa and to Cerignola, Italy, 15th Air Force. 37 times



Kirby Hugo Woehst

across targets in Southern Europe and Palesti, with credit for 50 missions. Entire crew came back to dear old U.S.A. in August '44. Discharged 9/25/45, attained rank of Tech Sgt.

Came back to Houston, wife, and son born 2/13/44, day before our first mission. He made USAF career, presently Colonel, Wing Commander, McGuire AFB, NJ, 21 AF. In 1947, had daughter, now an RN, ICU/CCU. Employed 32 years for Industrial Electronic Components Distributor, Houston, in Sales; retired 10/1/78 to our cattle ranch, Leona, TX; presently live also in Madisonville, TX. Married 50 yrs, May 30, 1991. Our family has been richly blessed.

MICHAEL R. ZSOLESAK

Enlisted Nov 5, 1943 in Pittsburgh, PA. From Pittsburgh to Fort Dix for assignment. On to St. Petersburg — Clearwater area for Basic Training. Then to Las Vegas Gunnery School. On completion of Gunnery School, to Lowry Air Force Base for schooling as Armorer-Tail Gunner. Then to Salt Lake Air Base; from there to Davis-Monthan Air Base, Tucson, AZ. On to Orlando School of Applied Tactics as Model Crew. Then to McCook Air Force Base. Assigned as Lead Crew to 739th Bomb Sqn, 454th Bomb Group. From McCook to Mitchel Field, NY. Our crew chosen to represent the Broadway show and cast of "Winged Victory". Our plane was named "Winged Victory". Next stop — Charleston Air Base; then to McDill Air Base from where we started our journey, flying the Southern Route to Merikech, then on to Cerignola. San Giovanni permanent base. Shot down over Hollenstein, Austria, on way back from bombing Regensburg. Taken prisoner of war and released by Third Army in April 1945. Returned to States and discharged Nov 1945.

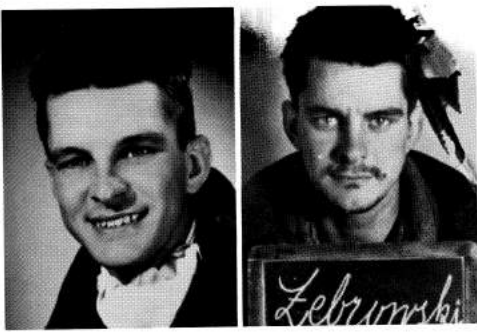


Michael R. Zsolesak

Presently retired and living with wife, Irene, of 45 years in Mt. Pleasant, PA.

DANIEL ZEBROWSKI

Daniel C. Zebrowski's home town is West Allis, Wisconsin, and he currently resides in Brookfield, Wisconsin. He entered military service and the Army Air Force on March 25, 1945. While in service, he completed Basic Training at St. Petersburg, Florida and subsequently completed Radio Communication Training and Aerial Gunnery School before joining the B-24 Bomb Crew at Tucson, Arizona. The crew was assigned to the 454th group, 738th squad. After 25 combat missions, the B-24 and crew were shot down by anti-aircraft fire over Vienna, Austria. He was strip searched, and later paraded at gunpoint through downtown Vienna as an exhibiton of German prowess. The pictures show Dan



Daniel Zebrowski

just prior to imprisonment and three weeks after solitary confinement in Budapest. Via boxcars and walking, he was transferred to Stulag Luft IV at Grosstychow near the Baltic Sea. With the approach of the Russian troupes, the camp was evacuated and the prisoners transferred by forced march and boxcars to Mooseburg, Germany. Quite a few perished from mistreatment and attacks from our own planes not knowing we were prisoners. After liberation and discharge, Dan obtained his degree at the University of Wisconsin, married Dorothy and has a son, Mark, and daughter, Kathy; both are attorneys. Dan has been retired 10 years from his position as a manager for Allstate Insurance Company. Things have gone well.