



CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Fall 2001 – Editor, Tom Ramey, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, WI 54915 (920) 731-2500

New 455th Bomb Group Association Address!

Please note that the address for the 455th Bomb Group Association has changed. Gus Wendt, your Executive Director and Treasurer has moved to Air Force Village in San Antonio, Texas, from Sierra Vista, Arizona. All mailing to the 455th Bomb Group Association should be addressed to the new address listed below. However, the Sierra Vista post office has been advised and for 6 months will forward all mail sent to the old address. Forwarding takes a few days hence there may be a slight delay in getting a response, if such is necessary. The new address is:

Gus Wendt
455th Bomb Group
Association, Inc.,
5100 John D. Ryan Blvd. #542
San Antonio, TX 78245-3535

From Your Executive Director Newsletter Mailing List to Change

With every mailing of the Cerignola Connection, we get between 15 and 20 copies returned by the Post Office. The Post Office puts their little yellow sticker on them saying "RETURN TO SENDER, UNABLE TO FORWARD". This bit of information costs us \$1.50 for each newsletter return or about \$100 per year. When we get this notification we immediately remove that persons name from the mailing list.

Of course, there are two possibilities that caused the return. The first is that the person has made his "Final Flight"; the second is that the person has moved and hasn't notified us of his change of address.

This matter was discussed at the last Board of Directors meeting and our action was considered appropriate. To try to minimize the newsletter returns, it was also decided that those that hadn't paid their dues in the last five years would be deleted from the mailing list. If we hadn't heard from someone for five years they have either made their "Final Flight", or they weren't interested in continuing their membership.

The format of the mailing label was changed slightly to keep individuals advised of their standing on the mailing list. On the top line of your mailing label you'll note some markings or a number. If you have an asterisk (*), you are a Life Member. If you have a pound sign (£), you are a Life Associate (Widow) member. A double slant (//) shows you are receiving courtesy copies (Museums, Libraries, etc.). An asterisk with a number, you are an Annual Associate member (usually a family member). If you have a number there, it shows the year that you last paid dues. This number will determine when you are removed from the newsletter mailing list. (Of course, we still keep your name on our roster.) After the fall issue of the Cerignola Connection, all those with a 96 on the upper line, will be removed from the newsletter mailing list.

"How do I become current."

The simplest way is to pay \$15 for this years dues (01). However, if

your number is 99, it might be better if you paid \$30 dollars for years 00 and 01. Remember, you can become a "Life Member" for \$10 after you have 10 consecutive years as an annual member.

In any case the choice is yours.

Final Flights

D.E. "Monty" Montgomery, 1/11/01,
Major, 742nd Squadron

Walter Frankel, 3/15/01 Group
Dentist

William P. Green, 3/23/01, RO and
Ball Turret Gunner L.L. Young's
Crew, 743rd Squadron

John H. Brandstetter, 5/22/01, Lt.,
740th Squadron

John N. Grimm, 1/8/01, 741st
Squadron, Lt.,
Navigator/Bombardier, POW

Edwin Szelemczka, 743rd Squadron

Lou K. Newfield, 6/22/01, 741st
Squadron, Co-Pilot, Gus Wendt
Crew

Owen Q. Hanley, 7/4/01, 742nd
Squadron, Rear Turret Gunner

Bert McInturff, 740th Squadron

Our hearts are with and sympathies go to the loved ones of the 455th members.

Thoughts For The Day...

Aging has it's advantages.

We might be getting older but we forget about it.

From Charles Wills

The enclosed article was sent to me by my cousin in Maine. I looked up the date of the mission and 455th flew it to Linz that day. Also I seem to remember a plane in our group called "Sleepy Time Gal" so I just thought it might be of interest.

WWII Plane Parts Home Former POW, past reunited

Presque Isle – More than 50 years after spending nine months in German prison camps during World War II, a former New Sweden man has received parts of the plane in which he was shot down near Linz, Austria.

The two metal pieces from the B-24 Liberator came to George Peterson from two Austrian men compiling a history of the day when about a dozen planes crashed during a bombing run on July 25, 1944.

Peterson, 85, was New Sweden's only World War II prisoner of war. He grew up near the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad station. His father was a potato farmer and broker. His sister, Charlene W. McIntire, still maintains homes in Presque Isle and Perham. Peterson and his wife, the former Valeda Finnemore of Presque Isle, are residents of Redlands, Calif.

Receiving the plane parts, which came from the engine and part of the bomb bay, was a bitter-sweet moment for Peterson when they arrived in February.

"It brings back past memories and what we went through," he said during a telephone interview. "No one can understand it unless they've gone through it.

Peterson was 27 years old when he was drafted and sent to Italy. He was a flight engineer on the crew of the B-24 Liberator, an airborne workhorse during World War II.

There were 10 members of the Liberator crew who flew together

for two years. The plane, nicknamed Sleepy Time Gal, had received no damage except for some bullet holes. But on their 44th mission, their luck ran out.

The target of the mission was the Goering tank factory at Linz. As the 21 planes, including Sleepy Time Gal, approached the factory, they encountered enemy fighters.

"Out of the 21 planes in our group, only eight arrived back to home base," said Peterson during an interview with the Redlands Daily Facts. "It was the worst disaster of the 15th Air Force history."

The crew prepared to bail out of the plane after the attack began. As Peterson jumped, he pulled the ripcord, which unexpectedly came off in his hand. He had to open the chute manually.

When Peterson talks to school children about his experiences, he tells them tongue-in-cheek that he had to look in the chute's manual for opening instructions as he was plummeting to the ground at a speed of 130 mph.

Peterson said that there wasn't much time spent by military instructors on bailing out and operating a parachute back then.

"It's something you had to pick up on your own," Peterson said.

Once on the ground, he became a German prisoner of war and was shuffled among several concentration camps in Austria, Poland and Germany for about nine months. He and other POWs were marched back to Germany, where British soldiers finally rescued them.

Throughout the ordeal, Peterson lost about 30 pounds, weighing just 115 pounds at the end of the war.

In 1995, he learned about the research being done on the July 25, 1944, crash by two Austrian men, Karl Affenzeller and Wolfgang Lehrmann.

Parts of the plane were sent to the pilot of the aircraft, who in turn shared them with living crew members of their widows.

"It's very unusual to have something like this happen after 56

years," said Peterson.

The veteran has attended several reunions of his former squadron and notes the increased interest that people have regarding World War II stories.

Peterson hopes to travel this summer to Austria to see the remains of the Sleepy Time Gal as it still lies in the field on the spot where it crashed.

Credit—Debra Sund,
News Staff

Chaplains Corner



Ever wonder about the abbreviation ASAP? Generally, we think of it in terms of even more hurry and stress in our lives. Maybe if we think of this abbreviation in a different manner, we will begin to find a new way to deal with those rough days along the way.

There's work to do deadlines to meet, you've got no time to spare. But as you hurry and scurry, ASAP—Always Say A Prayer.

In the midst of family chaos, "Quality time" is rare. Do your best, let God do the rest, ASAP—Always Say A Prayer.

It may seem like your worries are more than you can bear. Slow down and take a breather, ASAP—Always Say A Prayer.

God know how stressful life is, He wants to ease our care; And He'll respond to all your needs, ASAP—Always Say A Prayer.

Today I'm saying a little prayer that God will smile on you and send you all the special blessings that you deserve!

Pass it on – ASAP

France Honors WWII Vets With Certificate

The French government announced in January that it will present certificates to WWII vets in appreciation for liberating its country. To be eligible, veterans must have served on French territory, in French territorial waters or in French airspace between June 6, 1944, and May 8, 1945. The certificate is available to both U.S. and Allied vets, but will not be issued posthumously.

The 10 Consuls General of France in the United States (located in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco and Washington, D.C.) will issue the documents on behalf of French authorities.

France expects to begin distributing the certificates later this year. For more information and an application form, access <http://www.info-france-usa.org/news/statmnts/ww2/index.htm>.

Korean War Medals: Issued Daily



The Special War Medal Action Team at Randolph Air Force Base in Texas ships an average of 750 Korean War Medals per day to eligible vets of the war. More than 25,000 were mailed by the end of January.

Over the next three years (2001-3), the Air Force Personnel Center (AFPC)—the agency in charge of providing the medal to vets of all services—expects to ship 150,000 medals each year. Some 60 volunteers at the Center are making this all possible.

To request a Korean Service Medal Fact Sheet or other information, call **1-800-558-1404** or visit the Center's Web site:

<http://www.afpc.randolph.af.mil/awards>.

Bill Bowles Wants to hear From You

Bill writes asking any member of Bob Christensen's crew (741st Squadron) to drop a note to: William F. Bowles
106 Creed St.
Struthers, OH 44471-1631

Ed-ve plane "Raincheck – "Ole Soldier"

Short Bursts Worth Repeating

There were several incidents which occurred that were tragic to those involved but to others and in retrospect, they were rather humorous. For example, we lost two waist gunners over the target when the bombardier said: "Let's get the hell out of here" as he released his bombs over a target with heavy flak. The waist gunners, hearing this over the intercom, mistook the comment as an order to bail out, so they did. The pilot and remainder of the crew returned safely to base. The two gunners became POWs for the duration. Another incident occurred when the bombardier and navigator mistakenly bailed out over the target after bombs away. A flak hit in the nose section destroyed the intercom. The navigator, being concerned as to the status of the B-24, looked back at the pilot from the navigator's plastic dome. The pilot gave him an OK sign by making a circle with his thumb and finger. The navigator saw only his thumb and thought the sign meant to bail out, so he and the bombardier did. The rest of the crew returned to Italy badly shot up and bailed out over friendly territory. The navigator and bombardier became POWs.

Courtesy: 455th Bomb Group, Flight of the Vulgar Vultures

HELP!

Original photos Page 13, Fall 2000 Cerignola Connection need an owner

Ed

A PS From Walter Heidmous

I'm sending you a P.S. to my story that was published in the last C.C.

It has been brought to my attention by William "Bill" Hess, waist gunner, that my story on pg 6 of the C.C. Fall 2000 edition doesn't mention a third person helping me in the bomb bay during our ordeal. He sent me a photo copy of a page from his personal ledger in which he kept notes on each mission he flew. In his note of 17 April 1945 he mentions some of the problems we faced in neutralizing the jammed bombs.

The bomb and fuse Bill mentions was one of the tail fuses that came apart and the detonator remained in the bomb cavity. This was no threat because I had already removed the primer and the instantaneous nose fuse.

Everyday Lies

- Your luggage isn't lost; it's only misplaced.
- This hurts me more than it hurts you.
- Your table will be ready in a few minutes.
- The check is in the mail.
- I just need five minutes of your time.
- Open wide, it won't hurt a bit.
- You don't look a day over 30.
- I'll start my diet tomorrow.

Real Bumper Stickers

- Is there life before coffee?
- Change is good-dollars are better.
- Save trees! Stop printing tax forms.
- Very funny, Scotty. Now beam down my clothes.

From The Photo Album of Arnold Goldberg



USO – Doughnuts were free!



Italian Traffic light!



All in the family!



One close – one not so!



Bring it in closer!



Coming home!

Robert Newberg's Unlucky 13!

During the summer of 1944, I was a member of the 15th Air Force flying B-24's as a Co-Pilot. We flew out of Italy on bombing missions to central Europe.

Sept. 13, 1944 on our 13th mission, 30 of our planes were loaded with 500# bombs and sent to bomb the oil refinery at Odertal,

Germany. We were assigned to a veteran B24 – it had been on 90 missions and had been patched up many times but always came back.

We had reached Germany and were within 30 minutes of our target when one of our engines began leaking oil. The oil pressure dropped and the temperature rose – both reached the red zone and we were forced to shut the engine down.

Orders were, in a situation such as we were in, near the target and having outran our fighter escort, to attempt to stay with the formation. We tried to do just that. We pulled additional power on the remaining 3 engines of our B24 but slowly fell behind and couldn't maintain our altitude.

We then opened the bomb bay doors and released our bombs in hopes that the reduced load would help us stay with our group. We remained in sight of our formation and planned to rejoin it for the homeward trip. Then another engine began giving us trouble. It was running over the red mark in temperature and the waist gunners reported to us that it was throwing a large amount of oil.

The oil pressure dropped below the minimum so we had to shut it down and we headed for home on 2 engines with about 800 miles to go. We were fighting to keep altitude and had our crew throw out everything they could. This helped some but we continued to slowly lose altitude even though we were running the remaining engines at full power.

We now had reached the Czechoslovakia-German border and had dropped from 24,000 feet to

6,500 since we left the target area. We were steadily losing altitude. There was no way we could make it home and because of the mountainous area, no place to land.

The 1st pilot and I agreed that our best chance for the crews survival was to bail out. The 1st pilot gave the crew the order to abandon ship, he informed our fighter escort of our decision, the bombardier opened the bomb bay and rang the emergency bell. None of us had ever parachuted before and the only instruction any of us had ever had was to leave the ship, count to ten and pull the ripcord.

I climbed from my seat while the 1st pilot held the plane steady, after I saw the 8th man had jumped, gave a signal to the 1st pilot and I went out the bomb bay. There was no sensation of falling – just the rush of air. I pulled the ripcord and felt a sharp tug, then I floated towards earth.

All was serene and quiet as I drifted earthward except for the scream of the plane as it fell and the loud roar of the explosion as it hit. I was drifting with my back towards the line of drift and attempted to turn forwards by manipulating the shrouds but this caused the chute to oscillate. I gave up on that idea.

While falling, I saw one empty chute floating above. This meant that one of our crew must not have had it fastened properly and fell to his death when it opened.

Also, I could see a truck with what appeared to be soldiers in it driving towards where we might come down.

The next thing I knew, I landed in a small tree, released myself from the chute and ran toward a field where I heard my Navigator yelling. 5 of us gathered there – 2 Gunners, the Navigator, Bombardier and myself. We opened our Escape kits, containing a map, small container of matches with a compass on top of the container, a small amount of US bills, an individual picture that could be used in a fake passport if needed and a few other items to aid us.

Our Navigator had been following our flight path while in the plane and ascertained from our escape map that we were near Trencin, Czechoslovakia.

2 young boys appeared – they didn't speak English nor did we their language. They motioned for us to follow them, and we did, through the hills and woods a mile or so to a barn where we hid in the haymow.

They left and shortly after 2 German Soldiers came into the barn but never bothered to look up in the haymow!!!

We bailed out about noon – near dusk one of the boys came back and brought an English speaking Czech (believe it was his dad) and he gave us bread and salami. He led us to where 2 of our crew were.

The 7 of us then traveled through the woods until we reached another barn about midnight Sept. 13, 1944. We stayed there that night, all the next day and then the next night shortly after dark, we were again guided through the woods. This time to a house where our first pilot was – so now there were 8 of us.

This was the house of a Czech minister who had lived in the US. He came home for a visit in 1938 and couldn't get out after the Germans took over. They had a "banquet" (or so it seemed to us) for the 8 of us. The minister explained that it was dangerous for us to continue to wear our uniforms and that it would be safer for us while we traveled with the partisans if we were in civilian clothes. He provided us with clothing to wear.

I learned by talking to the others that Ben Razka (gunner) had made it to the ground OK - so this meant that Harry Eddy (Radio Operator) was the one who fell out of his chute.

After dinner, we remained at the ministers house until about 8am Sept. 15, when a group of partisans led us to their camp in the low mountains. We remained there a few days and then started our

trip to Banska Bystrica. About half way to our destination, we were joined by 7 Americans who had escaped from a POW camp in Bratislavia.

We traveled by foot, wagon, truck and in a railroad boxcar (mostly at night) and arrived early in the morning of Sept. 20, 1944 in BB.

In BB we were met by Lt. Holt Green of the US Navy. We learned that he was with the OSS, he had arrived 3 days earlier and one of his assignments was to get downed airmen back to Italy.

We were housed, along with an additional dozen or more airmen, in barracks that formerly were used by the Czech Airforce. We were given US uniforms to replace the civilian clothing we were wearing. Lt. Green arranged for us to get passes so that we could move around BB while we were here. He also gave each of us a small amount of the local money to spend in town.

Thus, 8 of our crew and 18 other airmen were on the Oct. 7, 1944 flight out arranged for by Lt. Green and his "James" team.

After the war we learned that the Czech minister and partisans buried our Radio Operator. His grave remains near where he fell. The one crew member who wasn't with us when we flew out Oct. 7 made it to B after we left. He was one of the airmen who went into the mountains Oct. 26 and was eventually captured by the Germans and became a POW. He did return safely to the US after the war.

Our crew will be ever grateful to the "James" mission and the people of Czechoslovakia for their help in our rescue.

Thus ends the tale of the OSS Operation Code Name "James".

It's A Fact

The military custom of sounding taps before lights out originated in taverns. Drinkers were alerted that the tap room was about to close for the night by a signal known as "taps out."

Hello, Remember Me?



Some people call me Old Glory, others call me Star Spangled Banner, but whatever I'm called, I am your Flag. Something has been bothering me, so I thought I might talk it over with you. I remember some time ago people lined up on the street to watch me pass leading the parade. When your Daddy saw me coming, he immediately removed his hat and placed it over his heart--remember? And you, I remember you, standing there straight as a soldier. You didn't have a hat, but you were giving the right salute. Remember little sister? She was saluting the same as you--remember?

What happened? I'm still the same old flag. Oh, I have a few more stars since you were a boy and a lot more blood has been shed since those parades of long ago. But now when I come down your street, you just stand there with your hands in your pockets. Then I see the children running around and shouting--they don't seem to know who I am. I saw one man take his hat off, then look around. He didn't see anybody else with their hats off so he quickly put his back on. Have you forgotten what I stand for and where I've been? Anzio, Guadalcanal, Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm. Take a look at the memorial honor rolls of those who died to keep this Nation free. When you salute me, you are actually saluting them. It won't be long before I'll be coming down your street again. So, when you see me, stand straight, place your hand over your heart and I'll salute you by waving back--and I'll know that YOU REMEMBER!

Anon

FUNNY THOUGHTS:



"Ham and eggs - A day's work for a chicken; A lifetime commitment for a pig."
- Anon.

Vulgar Vulture - Group Emblem



The origin of the Group emblem, the Vulgar Vulture, is not known for certain. It is believed that Tom Mitchell, the Intelligence Officer for the 743rd Squadron, did the design work and wrote the specifications. These were given to the Walt Disney Studios for the artwork, thus the Vulgar Vulture. Tom, now deceased, is remembered for his early work in finding 455th Group personnel for the establishment of our Association. He organized the first meeting that was held for the Group following the end of WWII. The emblem, sometimes referred to as a "Patch," was worn on the left breast of flight jackets by the crew members and on other clothing by the support personnel. It was a distinctive item that helped give everyone a sense of belonging and pride in the organization.

Ed- The missile Group which inherited the 455th nomenclature, ie. 740, 741, and 742 missile squadrons, have adapted the 455th Vulgar Vulture emblem and patch. The 455th patch shows a black and white vulture, against a blue background, riding a red bomb. Some say that a different colored bomb symbolized each individual squadron. Others, it was only a red bomb for all. Your thoughts are appreciated, if other colors were involved, and for what squadrons.

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Going...Going...Still Going! Bill Disbrow, 85 Makes History on the Slopes.

Enclosed is a write up of my latest ski race at Squaw Valley, CA. The Western Regionals.

I have been racing now for about 16 years in the USSA Masters Racing.

When I was 69 somebody dared me to race in a seniors race at Sierra Ski Ranch while I was living at Lake Tahoe. I took 6th place and that did it. I have been racing ever since. I have won about 50 medals and trophies.

I am still flying and play golf almost every Friday and walk 18 holes.

I will be ski racing in the national Ski Races at Sun Valley on 3 to 7 April. Hope to win my class 85 and over.

Hope to be at the next reunion, I was in the 741st sqdn.

On February 2, 3 and 4, 2001, Bill Disbrow made USSA history when, at the age of 85, he competed in the U.S. Skiing Association's Western Regional Championship held in Squaw Valley, California.

Since no other 85 year-old had ever competed in the event's slalom races, a special category had to be created for the retired US Air Force Major from Canyon Lake. And since there were no other competitors in his age division, Bill naturally won first place in both Super Giant Slalom and in regular Slalom.

Winning the two gold medals, however, was still no easy feat, as simply reaching the starting gate for the slalom required ski hopping down cliffs from the 8,500 foot chairlift drop-off point.

Bill says in his attempt to reach the starting gate he fell three times and eventually had to return to the bottom of the slope where he demanded to be driven by snowmobile to the starting gate. Race organizers were happy to comply, especially since, as the oldest skier of the competition, Bill was scheduled to begin it.

In order to win, Bill also had to *complete* the two slalom courses. The regular Slalom required negotiating 47 gates; while the Super G (super giant slalom) dropped almost one mile from 8,000 feet to 6,200 feet. He figures he traveled between 30 and 40 mph.

That speed, of course, didn't compare to an event at Big Mountain, Montana, in which he went so fast he blew the visor off his helmet and was officially clocked at 54 mph. Unofficial estimates that day, he notes, had him reaching as much as 60 mph.

Bill has competed in numerous other championship events across the country since beginning Alpine racing at the age of 69. He is especially proud of the year he took second place in all three slalom events at the USSA Nationals, held at Sunday River, Maine.

Speed has always played a major role in Bill's life. Wherever he skis, the Canyon Laker is immediately recognized for the red auto racing helmet he wears during competition. That helmet, he notes, came from days long ago when he raced a sports car he built while serving in the military.

Speed on a different level was attained during his service as an Air Force test pilot, when Bill says he flew 68 different makes and models of aircraft before his retirement on January 31, 1961.

These days, when he isn't on the slopes, he contemplates the kit Ferrari 512 BB boxer sitting in his carport. He bought it last summer in Wisconsin while attending an air show in Oshkosh, and trailered it to his home on Skylink Drive. The fiberglass body sits on a Fiero chassis and awaits the installation of a 300 hp Northstar Cadillac engine Bill recently purchased for it.

Finishing the Ferrari will have to wait, though, until after the USSA National in Sun Valley, Idaho. Another of his skiing buddies turned 85 this year – his nemesis on the slopes – and Bill expects he'll have competition at Nationals.

At the Squaw Valley Lodge banquet hall following Regionals, how-

ever, Bill was the star of the show when he was introduced by race organizer Bill Skinner. He received a standing ovation from 200 skiers, ages 20 and up, for his accomplishment as the oldest competitor in USSA history.

By: Sharon Rice
The Friday Flyer

Stalag Luft III–Stalag 13-D–Stalag 7-A

Stalag Luft III located at Sagen (now in Poland), housed over 10,000 U.S. airmen at the time of evacuation in January 1945. The camp was first occupied on Oct. 19, 1939. It consisted of 25 tents. At its peak, Luft III housed 160,000 inmates and 10,000 guards and administrative staff. The evacuation, by foot, took place at midnight on Jan. 28, 1945, as the Russian spearhead moved closer. Snow fell for four days in near-zero temperature. Some were headed for Moosburg, while others were going to Nürnberg. The camp at Sagen has been totally razed, It is now in agriculture.

At Nürnberg, the POW's were housed in the Langwasser area, at Stalag 13-D. This camp was a short distance from Hitler's famous parade grounds, stadiums and congress halls. The food shortage and prevalence of bugs and lice made Stalag 13-D a miserable experience.

Again the POW's were in the path of advancing forces. On April 4, 1945, the prisoners were marched 91 miles to Moosburg, arriving at Stalag 7-A on April 13, 1945. 16-days later, on April 29, the 14th Armored Division liberated these brave soldiers.

Thoughts For The Day...

• The worse day fishing is better than the best day working.

• How sweet it is to do NOTHING all day long and after having done so to REST.



Score One!

Through your publication efforts to find members of my crew proved successful. I recently was contacted by our tail gunner, Bud Morrello. Bud had a copy of our crew photo.

The pilot was Capt. Barnhill of the 741st BS, crew #13. I hope you can publish in the next issue of the Cerignola Connection with the possibility of finding more crew members. Thanks so much.

*R.J. Pepin
7 Red Oak Dr.
Johnston, RI 02919*



I don't think these are in service anymore!

Bombs Bursting In Air!

The spring 2001 issue of the Cerignola Connection, pg 3, Charlie Stark article stirred up a hornet's nest. It questioned the accuracy of 15 Air Force Bombing. Now I print them as I receive them...and now I am in the middle of a war...a bombardier's war, and this is an area I know nothing about. Well, very little! Whistling bombs won't kill you. Blue bombs are practice bombs and make good ash trays. and don't ride in the front turret during

a rainstorm, they leak! If you put a bombardier, a navigator, and a turret gunner in the nose plus 3 flak helmets, 3 flak suits, 3 parachutes, a bombardier's kit and a navigator's kit plus all that other stuff then you are crowded.

No sooner had the Cerignola Connection hit the newsstand than the telephone started ringing and the mail box filled to overflowing even as far away as Switzerland (see George Konzel's articles elsewhere in this issue). Some said there were no Norden bomb sights in a B-24, only Sperry. Some said the Sperry sight was far superior to

the Norden and it was deadly accurate. Dave Brother's called and said to look at the strike photos, especially February through June of 1944. (and if you have copies send them to **Dave at 4 Maple Lane, Lexington, Virginia, 24450**, some of his set is missing.)

I know this issue has not been put to bed. Give me your thoughts and I'll print them in subsequent issues. Mark the envelope "bombardier" so I can quickly identify them in the anticipated voluminous mail.

Ed

At Last Success!

Through the Internet I was able to find and contact my tail gunner, Bud Morello. He had been in contact with the waist gunner, Bill Crawford who died last year. He is also exchanging Christmas cards with our nose gunner, Doc (Michael) Dougherty. I will attempt contact with him soon. Through Bud, the names of our crew members are known, they are included with a good scanned picture of our crew. Hope this will be helpful to you.

For your info, in the book "B-24 Liberators Units of the 15th AF" by Robert F. Dorr, there is a picture of our plane called the "YO-YO 199". Bud has a picture of this plane with some of our crew members in the foreground.

R.J. Pepin

Dear Colonel Ramey,

Thank you very much for your kind letter of April 5th and for the listing with the addresses of members of the 455th Bomb Group Association who finished the war in Switzerland. I will try to contact them, hoping they can supply additional information about the aircraft they flew.

It has been a surprise for me to learn that you almost could have been interned in Switzerland subsequent to one of the Friedrichshafen missions; To the best of my knowledge, only two missions were flown against this target by the 15th Air Force, one on the 20th of July and another one on the 3rd of August 1944. Since I could find no Missing Air Crew Report for any 455th Bomb Group aircraft on the former date and only one for the latter, I conclude that you must have been one of the crew members aboard B-24G-10-NT, serial #42-78312 that ditched in the Adriatic on the 3rd of August 1944. The Missing Air Crew Report # is 7526. I have no copy of this report however and I wonder if you remember whether this specific aircraft carried a nickname or not and what combat number it carried on the fuselage near the waist win-



Standing L to R: Pilot: Joel Barnhill, Forth Worth, TX, Co-Pilot: J. Hazelett, OH, Bombardier: Dave Duncon, PA, Navigator: Roland Pepin, Johnston, RI. Front Row L to R: Engineer: Bill Dean, Memphis, TN, Radio Operator: Tom Chambers, Youngstown, OH, Ball Gunner: Lew Law, CA, Nose Gunner: Doc Dougherty, Pittsburg, PA, Tail Gunner: Bud Morello, Waist Gunner: Bill Crawford, Kansas City, MO.

dow. Ditching a B-24 certainly was a very risky affair because of the B-24 bomb bay structure and the high wing configuration and survival chances were slim. On the same day, only one B-24 from the 15th Air Force force-landed in Switzerland, this being B-24G-17NT serial #42-78439 belonging to the 484th Bomb Group, 825th Bomb Squadron, flown by 2nd Lt. Harry Schulz.

Georges "Gino" Künzle
Via Pragee 4
6877 Coldrerio, Switzerland
E-mail: ginoux@bluewin.ch

Bob Newberg Sends an Answer to Peter Kassak Slovak

I was Ed's co-pilot and was with him on all of his 13 missions as a member of the 743rd Squadron of the 455th Bomb Group. Did you meet Ed while he was on the ground in Czechoslovakia? Our crew consisted of ten men and all got out of the plane OK but one (radio operator) was killed in the jump. After several days 7 of us were joined together and 1 by himself. The 7 of us were guided by the partisans via various means to Banska Bystrica where we met up

with Captain Green and his team of OSS men. We remained there until Oct. 7, 1944 when 6 B-17s were brought in and rescued us and 19 others. The 1 member who didn't get out with us was captured and became a POW until the end of the war.

Upon return to Italy, we were then returned to the US. After the war Ed remained in the Air Force and attained the rank of Major. Unfortunately he was killed in a small private plane while on a hunting trip.

This is a pretty brief write-up on our time in Slovakia - I have a detailed one if you would like it. Also, the mail address of Ed's widow and one of our other crew member's (Roy Madsen). Roy has made 7 or more trips to Slovakia over the years to join in the celebration of the uprising of the Czechoslovakia Army.

I'm glad to make contact with you and willing to send additional information if you want it.

HELP!

W.R. Contratto, 2550 Via Viesta, La Jolla, CA 92037-Phone-858-459-3430, Pager-619-82-1553.

Wants to locate former 455th member David Stedman formerly of Oklahoma.

From John McBain

This is just a line to let you know we do think of the lonely Editor up there in the Wisconsin winter.

I appreciated your Report From S2, page 15 of the Fall 2000 issue.

Frank Pappalardo of the 743rd was able to fill us in with the name of the field in northern Italy where we hauled cargo to the British Army after our mission had ended.

I had no record of the field's name in my files but now thanks to Frank I can add Gowza-Opina. It was interesting to learn that the field was currently used by our Forces in the Kosova bombings.

Mission Report From William Hess

April 17 - Cerignola Italy To Bolonoga Italy, Mission #15 "453" 1020 - Take off C.I.
1620 - Landed C.I.

We took off without nose or R-waist. We got up there pretty fast but had quite a bit of trouble with the bomb racks. We dropped one bombay full on the left front door and last the whole door over enemy territory. Demo and I were out in bombays. We took the fuses out of most of bombs, couldn't get one tail fuse out. We strapped it up so we could land.

From Switzerland

A lot of thanks for your kind letter of April 23rd and the enclosed copy of the Cerignola Connection. It was great news to read that a new book dealing with the B-24s of the 15th Air Force "The Wild Blue Yonder" by Dr. Stephen Ambrose will be published later this year and I will rush to purchase a copy as soon as it becomes available.

Regarding Mr. Charlie Stark's letter on page 3, you may wish to inform him that a book titled "Target Ploesti" published by Presidio Pres, 31 Pamaron Way, Novato, CA 94947, was written by a former bombardier of the 460th Bomb Group, 763rd Bomb Squadron Bombardier named Leroy

W. Newby. Appendix A of this book gives a brief description of both the Norden and the Sperry bombsights and ends with the following comment. "Very small errors in any phase of the bombing procedure could become large errors on the ground," which seems a fitting conclusion. The appendix is also accompanied by sketches showing the problems facing the Bombardier and I think this could be a good start for former 455th Bomb Group Bombardiers!

Last but not least, thank you for sending me a copy of Missing Air Crew Report #7526, thus confirming that you were indeed the pilot of B-24G-10-NT, serial #42-78312 on that fateful day of August 3rd, 1944. Do you by any chance know the name of the Crew Chief in the 743rd Bomb Squadron who took care of this plane? If he could be located, maybe he could give the combat number and the nickname (if any) of this particular ship.

Again, thanks for all of your kindness.

*Georges "Gino" Künzle
Via Pragee 4
6877 Coldrerio
Switzerland
e-mail: ginox@bluewin.ch*

VA Benefits for Former Prisoners of War

Former American POWs are eligible for special veterans benefits, including medical care in VA hospitals and disability compensation for injuries and diseases caused by internment. These benefits are in addition to regular veterans benefits and services to which they, as veterans, are entitled.

Nearly a third of the Americans held prisoner in the last five conflicts are now living. Records show that 142,232 Americans were captured and interned during World War I, World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the Somalia and Kosovo conflicts. This includes 81 women seized on Guam or in the Philippines during World War II,

and two during the Gulf War.

Of that total, an estimated 46,417 were living as of Jan. 1, 2001. This includes one from World War I, 43,194 from World War II, 2,593 from the Korean War, 602 from the Vietnam War, 23 from the Gulf War, and one from Somalia and three from the Kosovo conflict.

American Prisoners Of War

	Total	WWI	WWII
Captured & Interned	142,232	4,120	130,201
Returned to US Military Control	125,207	3,973	116,129
Refused Repatriation	21	0	0
Died while POW	17,004	147	14,072
Alive, Jan. 2001	46,417	1	43,194

	Korea	Vietnam	Gulf
Captured & Interned	7,140	744	23
Returned to US Military Control	4,418	660	23
Refused Repatriation	21	0	0
Died while POW	2,701	84	0
Alive, Jan. 2001	2,593	602	23

	Somalia	Bosnia	Kosovo
Captured & Interned	1	0	3
Returned to US Military Control	1	0	3
Refused Repatriation	0	0	0
Died while POW	0	0	0
Alive, Jan. 2001	1	0	3

Congress defines a prisoner of war as a person who, while serving on active duty, was forcibly detained by an enemy government or a hostile force, during a period of war or in situations comparable to war.

Statistical Information on American Ex-POWs courtesy of Charles A. Stenger, Ph.D. - Legislative Consultant

Credit EX-POW Bulletin

From Georges "Gino" Künzle – Switzerland

Please accept my apologies for the belated reply to your kind letter of February 9, 2001, informing me (much to my regret and disappointment), that the book titled "*The Story of the 455th Bombardment Group (H) WWII*", of which you are one of the co-authors, is no longer available for sale.

About myself: I'm a Swiss citizen born in 1948 and one of my deeper interests lays in World War II aviation matters, with a "soft spot" for the B-24s of the 15th Air Force in particular. At this point, I'd perhaps better explain that, along with my friend Hans-Heiri Stapfer, I was co-author of a booklet titled "*Strangers in a Strange land - Vol. II - Escape to Neutrality*" published in 1992 by Squadron/Signal Publications Inc. 1115 Crowley Drive, Carrollton, TX 75011-5010, U.S.A. This modest work dealt with the U.S.A.A.F. crews and aircraft interned in Switzerland during WWII. Out of the total, seven aircraft belonged to the 455th Bomb Group, six making regular landings and one crashing in Germany. Below you will find some details about these seven ships:

MACR #8359 September 12, 1944, 13.37 Hrs. Landing in Dübendorf/ZH – B-24H-20-#T – serial #41-28989 combat #44 – 742nd BS – Nickname: "Reddy Teddy Too" crew listing:

P	RIDDEL	William C.	1st Lt	O-677294
CP	ROUNDS	Finis L.	2nd Lt.	O-711247
N	DONAHUE	James F. Jr.	F/O	T-126456
B	LEACH	Reginald G.	1st Lt.	O-694468
E	EDDINGFIELD	Russell D.	T/Sgt.	16122855
RO	SHOEBOTTOM	Robert L.	Sgt.	36585768
G	JACKSON	Lorance M.	Sgt.	37682105
G	RODDEY	John B.	Sgt.	34652430
G	JEROSKI	Edward B.	Sgt.	13171743
G	MORITZ	Paul F.	Sgt.	12089249

MACR #8352 September 12, 1944, 13.40 Hrs. Landing in Dübendorf/ZH – B-24J-15-CF – serial #42-99748 combat #7 – 740th BS – nickname unknown—crew listing:

P	HUBER	Richard A.	2nd Lt.	O-568714
CP	CRAWFORD	Milton N.	2nd Lt.	O-825114
N	DIAS	Ronald A.	2nd Lt.	O-717882
B	WARD	John N.	1st Lt.	O-708974
E	LAVIN	Thomas J.	S/Sgt.	31158329
RO	BIELINSKI	Walter R.	S/Sgt.	32669928
G	VAUGHN	Winston E.	S/Sgt.	38406789
G	THURSBY	George E.	Sgt.	33706675
G	SCHULTZ	Lawrence J.	Sgt.	37549834
G	ECKLES	Sylvester (nmi)	Sgt.	33706514
PHO/CARRAHER	Robert P.		Sgt.	32728492

MACR #8353 September 12, 1944, 14.08 Hrs. Landing in Payerne/VD – B-24H-20-DT – serial #41-28994 combat #13 – 740th BS – nickname: "Chattanooga Choo Choo"—crew listing:

P	BOWLING	Theodore H.	2nd Lt.	O-760236
CP	BIRMLEY	Dean W.	1st Lt.	O-741576
N	OTTO	Frederick P.	F/O	T-126396
B	PATTON	William E. Jr.	2nd Lt.	O-723815
E	CHAPA	Amancio J.	Cpl.	38458262
RO	ERDEL	Albert (nmi)	Cpl.	35067813
G	STAMM	Neal E.	Cpl.	33612214
G	PETERSON	Wayne M.	Cpl.	39916826
G	DUSTIN	John P. Jr.	Cpl.	31400296
G	LIMB	Byron (nmi)	Sgt.	19010938

MACR #12484 February 27, 1945, 14.18 Hrs. Landing in Altenrhein/SG – B-24J-20-FO – serial #44-48775 combat #47 – 742nd BS – nickname: - none - crew listing:

P	GROOMS	Ray M.	1st Lt.	O-823505
CP	CONNOLLY	James J.	2nd Lt.	O-2001259
N	DE PIANO	Angelo W.	2nd Lt.	O-2001260
B	MUISE	George A.	2nd Lt.	O-2001262
E	ALFINO	Felice J.	T/Sgt.	32899739
RO	HAMMER	Robert J.	T/Sgt.	17050603
G	SINK	Robert E.	S/Sgt.	36778204
G	STINE	David E.	S/Sgt.	33731827
G	WEST	Marshall F.	S/Sgt.	7070807
G	SILES	Joseph P.	S/Sgt.	36767114
PHO	CLAYTON	Wynfield S.	Sgt.	32076093

MACR #12481 February 27, 1945, 14.37 Hrs. Landing in Dübendorf/ZH – B-24J20-FO – serial #44-49928 combat #55 – 742nd BS – nickname: - none - crew listing:

P	FOTHERINGHAM	Donald K.	1st Lt.	O-775850
CP	EICH	Joseph M.	2nd Lt.	O-718594
N	TOLLMAN	Lewis A.	2nd Lt.	O-703410
B	REINHART	Donald G.	2nd Lt.	O-777935
E	FREDERICK	Robert P.	T/Sgt.	16175873
RO	WALTER	Arnold H.	T/Sgt.	37493205
G	MYLES	Thomas E.	S/Sgt.	15337224
G	KOSINSKI	Hipolis P.	S/Sgt.	35527801
G	WEST	Grover C. Jr.	S/Sgt.	34730845
G	HOSTETTER	Ralph L.	S/Sgt.	37579637
PHO	VOCHATZER	Herbert C.	Pvt.	37499443

MACR #12482 February 27, 1945, 14.38 Hrs. Landing in Dübendorf/ZH – B-24J-15-FO – serial #42-51974 combat #26 – 741st BS – nickname: "Sissy Lee" - crew listing:

P	CLAYTON	Joseph C.	1st Lt.	O-710448
CP	MOORE	Olin H.	F/O	T-62834
N	GIRARD	Francis J.	1st Lt.	O-2058465
B	BROBST	Russell L.	F/O	T-6835
E	GILL	William L.	T/Sgt.	3850584
RO	GROSS	Walter H.	T/Sgt.	18177443
G	GAGOLA	Edward T.	S/Sgt.	32844180
G	MALAVICH	Charles (nmi)	S/Sgt.	35417092
G	COOK	William T.	S/Sgt.	32754715
G	JEFFRIES	Ralph W.	S/Sgt.	35701222
G	MAZUR	John (nmi)	Cpl.	32927712

MACR #13712 April 11, 1945, time unknown – crew parachuting over Wil/SG, plane crashing somewhere in Germany – B-24L-5-FO – serial #44-49312 – combat #unknown – 742nd BS – nickname; – none – crew listing:

P	AUFDERHEIDE	John	H.	2nd Lt.	O-2059436
CP	MANBECK	Roland	K.	2nd Lt.	O-2067623
N	MITTON	Randolph	L.	1st Lt.	O-716511
B	HAGUE	Robert	F.	F/O	T-5700
E	WOLINSKY	David	S.	Cpl.	12178031
RO	POWELL	William	A.	Cpl.	35725152
NG	WEEKS	Roy	L.	Cpl.	34884614
TTG	MATTINGLY	Scott	J.	Cpl.	35245440
BTG	BOWERS	Russel	W.	Cpl.	31368822
TG	BROWN	Ronald	A.	Cpl.	35922614
SJ	RAINS	Sidney	A.	T/Sgt.	15108157

Both in relation to the above and also just to learn more about the 455th Bomb Group, I was hoping to be able to obtain a copy of your book, from which I could collect additional background information. Even though the book is no longer available, do you think that a second-hand copy or even just a Xerox copy might be available for purchase? In addition, I would **love** to get photographs depicting B-24s of the 455th BG, especially of these 7 ships, possibly taken at San Giovanni **before** they met their demise in Switzerland.

Particularly, ship serial #42-99748 combat #7 – from the 740th BS was the only one of the seven B-24s from the 455th BG in Switzerland to be painted in Olive Drab/Neutral Gray camouflage, the other six being in Natural Metal Finish. This, I know, may look a rather irrelevant matter, but this is an important factor when you try to associate a nickname to a specific serial number and I have been wondering for years whether this specific B-24 did bear a nickname or not.

There is a rumor according to which #42-99748 was named "Late Frate" and perhaps it is correct. But at an Internet website with the following URL:

www.b24bestweb.com, you can view the picture of a B-24 by selecting the name: "Late Frate". This picture-

©Photo Credit: Lewis L. White, contributor: Dave White - shows a noseart of a nude female below the co-pilot's window. According to the accompanying caption, the picture shows "Late Frate" and links this name to #42-99748; yet this seems doubtful, because:

- this nickname is not visible on the picture and worse:

- the B-24 shown on the picture is in Natural Metal Finish, which is definitely not the case for ship #42-99748.

I'm therefore looking for people in the 455th BG Association who may be in possession of reliable information about this particular aircraft and would appreciate to read from them. At the same time, is there anybody who could supply me with the unknown combat # for ship #44-49312?

Please let me know if you have an E-mail address, as I would have liked to send you a "nose art" picture in JPEG format as an attachment. It bears the nickname "Shack Job" and was seen on one of the B-24s interned in Switzerland; I was wondering if, by any chance, it might have belonged to #42-99748 instead of the name "Late Frate" (or in addition to it).

Hoping to read from you about the above matters and thanking you for your kindness, I send you my very best regards.

*Georges "Gino" Künzle
Via Pragee 4
6877 Coldrerio
Switzerland
e-mail: ginox@bluewin.ch*



What's the News?

"Doctor, doctor, what's the news?" answered Hal when his doctor called with his test results.

"I have some bad news and some really bad news," admitted the doctor. "The bad news is that you only have twenty-four hours to live."

"Oh my god," gasped Hal, sinking to his knees. "What could be worse than that?"

"I couldn't get ahold of you."

Famous Last words

- This will be a short meeting
- I don't burn. I tan.
- Don't worry, I *never* forget the tickets.
- The train isn't coming *that* fast.
- We'll only stay five minutes.
- Of course, there's film in the camera.
- This won't hurt at all.
- Don't worry. You can't miss it.
- One more cookie won't ruin my diet.
- When the gas tank reads "empty," there's always a gallon or two left.

The Mystery of SPAM!

SPAM, trademarked on May 11, 1937, is a combination of words "spiced" and "ham."

By 1944, 90% of Hormel's SPAM sales (150 million pounds) was consumed by the U.S. Armed Forces.

The military purchased SPAM because it was nutritious, filling, affordable, and storable. Unopened, can meat **needed** no refrigeration.

Distribution difficulties and wartime emergencies, plus large initial shipments, resulted in GI's having to eat SPAM twice, even three times a day. It soon became regarded as the "most hated food stuff of World War II."

The one-billionth can of SPAM was packed in 1959.

SPAM's primary ingredients are pork shoulder and ham. It does not contain non-meat fillers, or pig snouts, lips, ears, tongue or hearts. Salt acts as a preservative and adds flavor and firmness. Sugar is added for taste, as is sodium nitrite, which also acts as a preservative, and gives SPAM its pink color. Water blends the ingredients **together**.

The oldest can of SPAM known to have been consumed (safely) was 25 years old.

Hormel Foods is building a larger, more extensive SPAM museum and visitor center in Austin, Minnesota, opening July, 2000.

Excerpts from SPAM Mania, Credit by A. Bartholomew.

VA Sets Rules For Purple Heart Recipients

Veterans awarded the Purple Heart for combat wounds will find it easier to get medical care from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Under new VA rules, Purple Heart veterans now have a higher priority for healthcare services than before. Also, they don't have to make out-of-pocket payments, technically known as "co-payments", for either inpatient or outpatient VA medical services.

"VA has always recognized and

appreciated the contributions of those who hold the Purple Heart," said Dr. Thomas L. Garthwaite, VA's Acting Under Secretary for Health. "Now, we are according those veterans a priority befitting their service to this nation."

The new rules authorize VA to reimburse Purple Heart recipients for any medical co-payments made to VA for care given after November 29, 1999. Purple Heart recipients are still responsible for making co-payments of \$2 for each 30-day supply of prescription medicine given to outpatients or conditions that are not related to military service.

"We urge Purple Heart recipients who have medical conditions they believe are related to their military service to contact VA for help in filing a claim," said Joe Thompson, VA's Under Secretary for Benefits.

By itself, the Purple Heart doesn't qualify veterans for VA disability compensation. That requires a separate screening process. Nor does the Purple Heart affect eligibility for long-term nursing care.

VA's new eligibility rules for Purple Heart recipients were approved last year by Congress in the Veterans Millennium Health Care and Benefits Act. The change affects the seven-step priority system that Congress set up for VA health care.

It moves Purple Heart Recipients who were in VA's priority groups 4 through 7 into priority group 3. Purple Heart recipients who qualify for priority groups 1 or 2 by virtue of service-connected disabilities will stay in those higher groups.

Anyone claiming benefits as a Purple Heart recipient must prove that they have been awarded the decoration. VA will accept the following as proof: Defense Department Form 214, discharge papers, military personnel records, orders or award certificates.

The Purple Heart is the nation's oldest military medal. George Washington presented the first medals in 1783. Today, there are approximately 600,000 living veterans who were wounded in combat and received the medal, according to the Military Order of the Purple Heart.

Credit WTVFW News

From The Files—



When the 455th Bomb Group left Langley AFB, 868 went by air and 1,136 by ship. There were a total of 64 crews, but only 62 airplanes. Destination was San Giovanni, Italy, by the way of Africa. The 455th was stationed with the 454th on a strip at San Giovanni, Italy, about 5 miles west of Cerignola and 20 miles southeast of Foggia. The 455th flew 255 missions during the 15 months of combat. One-hundred forty-seven airmen were killed in action; 268 missing; 173 prisoners of war. New assignments to the group, 2,478. Injured, returned to duty, 112. Total group personnel, 3,374. Twelve-hundred completed their tour of duty. The 455th was the last group to be inactivated after the war and did not leave Italy until September 1945.

THANKS!

Dear Colonel Asch:

On behalf of the Smithsonian Institution Libraries, I thank you for your recent donation of the following material:

Asch, Alfred, et al. *The Story of the Four Hundred and Fifty-fifth bombardment Group (H) WWII: Flight of the Vulgar Vultures*. Appleton, WI: Graphic Communications Center, Inc., 1991.

Gifts to the Libraries are an important source of research material and are used by Smithsonian scientist, researchers and visitors as they go about their work. Researchers using SIS's National Air and Space Museum Branch Library will find this donation especially useful. We appreciate your generosity.

For your information a copy of our brochure, Gift Information for Donors, is enclosed.

Sincerely,
Nancy E. Gwinn
Director

8th Air Force's Second Air Division Contributes

In June 2000, three World War II aviators from the Second Air Division, 8th Air Force presented Major General John Herrling, USA (Ret), secretary of the American Battle Monuments Commission, with a \$10,767 donation for the World War II Memorial.

After the presentation, the aviators, Colonel Al Asch (Ret), regional vice-president, Second Air Division Association, and association members Dave Thompson and Charles Freudenthal, delighted the memorial staff with personal remembrances of some of their wartime exploits. They also gave an account of the units history.

The Second Air Division's B-24s flew over 94,000 sorties in 493 operational missions in the European Theater of Operations. The division flew in Norway, Poland and Northern Africa, as well as Central Europe. Six groups were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation and five Division airmen were awarded the Medal of Honor. Almost 6,700 members of the Second air division gave their lives in the line of duty.

The Defender-level Gift by the Second Air Division represents the most significant donation that the campaign has received from any World War II Army Aviation association and sets an excellent example for all reunion groups.

Ed-Col Asch is also the 455th Group Historian. Al flew two tours-England and Italy. The 455th Group contributed \$1,000 to the memorial.

Happiness Tip Today

Here is a day that has been given to me

to use as I will, however that be.

I can see all the good, or see all the bad.

I can be joyful or I can be sad.

I can show love or I can show hate.

I can be impatient or learn how to wait.

I can abuse this day, given to me
Or make it the best that ever could be.

I can see beauty that the world holds,

Or only ugliness wherever I go.

I can help others who are in need,

Or I can ignore them and show only greed.

I can make much of this day if I choose,

Or make it one in which only I lose.

So, however this day may turn out to be

Will depend on a choice made only by me.

A Little Perspective

Pythagorean Theorem: 24 words.

The Lord's Prayer: 66 words.

Archimedes' Principle: 67 words.

The 10 Commandments: 179 words.

The Gettysburg Address: 286 words.

The Declaration of Independence: 1,300 words.

The U.S. Government regulations on the sale of cabbage: 26,911 words.

Stumpy Wanted to Fly!



Stumpy and his wife Martha went to the State Fair every year.

Every year Stumpy would say, "Martha, I'd like to ride in that there airplane."

And every year Martha would say, "I know, Stumpy, but that airplane ride costs ten dollars, and ten dollars is ten dollars."

This one year Stumpy and Martha went to the fair and Stumpy said, "Martha, I'm 71 years old. If I don't ride that airplane this year I may never get another chance."

Martha replied, "Stumpy, that there airplane ride costs ten dollars, and ten dollars is ten dollars."

The pilot overheard them and said, "Folks, I'll make you a deal. I'll take you both up for a ride. If you can stay quiet for the entire ride and not say one word, I won't charge you, but if you say one word it's ten dollars."

Stumpy and Martha agreed and up they go.

The pilot does all kinds of twists and turns, rolls and dives, but not a word is heard.

He does all his tricks over again, but still not a word.

They land and the pilot turns to Stumpy, "By golly, I did everything I could think of to get you to yell out, but you didn't."

Stumpy replied, "Well, I was gonna say something when Martha fell out, but ten dollars is ten dollars."

Credit-The 461st Liberator



More of Joe Hunts Representations

In The Shadow of the American Airmen Memorial In Poland

Over 50 years ago thousands of aircraft flew over the territory of the Europe that was suffering under the Nazi reign. Although the fierce and bloody aerial battles disappeared long ago in the shadows of the past, one shadow will remain here forever. Anyone who flies or drives along the road from Warsaw to Biala Podlaska (Poland) will pass in Woroniec, 10 km away from Biala Podlaska, a full-size B-17 outline that commemorates all 41 802 USAAF airmen who died over Europe in WW2.

The shadow – the American Airmen Memorial – was unveiled on Sunday, July 9th 2000. The location of the Memorial is symbolic. Within a kilometer of the Memorial there is a B-17 crash site that is most remote from any wartime American base in Italy or Britain. It represents the reach of the USAAF offensive over Europe in WW2 and the price this force had to pay in its efforts to bomb the Nazi industry out of the war.

Standing above the shadow, a full-size replica of the Fortress tail bears the markings of the aircraft shot down on June 21st 1944 – the B-17G number 42-38202 “BTO in the ETO” of the 452nd Bomb Group, 8th Air Force. The bomber fell to the Luftwaffe fighters during the first “shuttle” mission from England to Ukraine. The “shuttle” missions used the USSR air bases that were made available to the USAAF on the permission from Stalin. The names of the crew are engraved on one side of the rudder. The other side carries a dedication in Polish and English to all American airmen who gave their lives in the war, and a statement of thanks from the Polish people.

The “BTO in the ETO” crew was much more lucky than the thousands of young Americans commemorated with the Memorial. All ten crew members managed to leave the burning machine. Just as they hang under their chutes, a fierce race began on the ground

between the German army and the Polish soldiers of the “Zenon” Partisan Party of the 34th Infantry Regiment, AK (Home Army). The freedom of the Americans was at stake. Seven allied airmen were saved by the Polish underground. The remaining three were captured by the Nazis and spent the rest of the war in the POW camps. The rescued airmen took part in the battles of “Nenon” partisan unit for six weeks until the Red Army overrun the area. Then they were transferred to the Russians who secured their return trip to Britain.

The unveiling ceremony gathered Polish resistance veterans, witnesses of the June 21st 1944 events, representatives of the local authorities, and representatives from the US Embassy in Warsaw. The American and Polish national anthems were played by a Polish Air Force band and a PAF representation company fired a salute to the memory of the fallen airmen. Letters from the Poland’s Prime Minister, Jerzy Buzek, Head of the National Security Council, Marek Sivic and the Vice-Secretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Radek Sikorski, were read. Naval Reserve Capt. Donna L. Hopkins spoke on behalf of the US Embassy. She said: “...It is indeed important to recognize the deeds of those who went before us. As a member of the military, it is an honor to be invited to do so, particularly and especially on Polish soil. It is a rare opportunity to be able to participate in the birth of a monument, especially one that commemorates the sacrifices of over 40,000 United States servicemen and women during the Second World War.

In light of the recent christening of the American-built Polish frigate Kazimierz Pulaski and Poland’s accession into NATO, I feel that this ceremony is particularly meaningful. For just as Kazimierz Pulaski risked and ultimately gave his life fighting shoulder to shoulder with our forefathers for freedom, the servicemen we are commemorating dedicated their lives to a similar cause. Indeed, I understand the airmen from the plane that gives this monument its

form were rescued nearby by the 34th regiment of Allied Forces, thus joining all those Americans who returned the favors of Kosciuszko and Pulaski.

Polish and American servicemen and women have since stood together in Southwest Asia, Bosnia and as NATO allies in Kosovo, and we will continue to do so as we face the future. On 21 June 1944, Louis Hernandez, Thomas Madden, Joseph C. Baker, Alfred R. Lea, Anthony Hutchinson, Herschell L. Wise, and Robert L. Gilbert took their places among the national heroes who served the Polish cause, paying back our debt for the sacrifices of Kosciuszko and Pulaski for the people of America. And while we hope that Poland shall never again experience the tragedy of war, we stand in readiness and solidarity to support her if called.

This monument is meaningful on many levels. It is an excellent monument for American flyers who gave their lives in the skies over Europe. It is also an artifact and memorial of an American B-17 crew who fell to escape their burning aircraft and were lifted up in the historic spirit of Polish-American military cooperation which now has a 224 year tradition. I want to thank you again for allowing me to participate in such an auspicious event. It is certainly an honor I will remember always.

Szymon Serwatka

Szymon Serwatka is looking for information on the following:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Target</u>
7 July '44	Odertal
7 Aug. '44	Blechhammer South
22 Aug. '44	Blechhammer
27 Aug. '44	Blechhammer
13 Sept. '44	Odertal
13 Oct. '44	Blechhammer
13 Oct. '44	Odertal
12 Dec. '44	Blechhammer
17 Dec. '44	Blechhammer
26 Dec. '44	Auschwitz (Oswiecim)

He can be reached at:

Szymon Serwatka
UL. Ksiązkowa 7a/413
O3-134 Warszawa, Poland
e-mail: sserwatka@yahoo.com



Mario is a special kind of person!

Maryanne Cerra...

Maryanne Cerra of Davie, Florida, tells of an American G.I. and a young victim of the war.

"My dad, Major Riccardi, is the child of immigrant parents from Italy. During WWII my grandparents had five sons on active duty. My dad was stationed in Italy as a bombardier and his daily bombing missions were over the land of his parents. One of the many poignant stories my dad has shared was one of a little Italian boy named Mario, who, during the war, would hang out at the barracks helping the G.I.'s in hopes of earning a nickel or a piece of food to share with his family. My dad took Mario and his family under his wing. Before his daily missions my dad would teach Mario several English words and then review them when he returned. After several months, my dad was transferred and eventually lost touch with Mario.

On the 40th anniversary of the end of WWII, my dad organized the first reunion of the 454th Bomb Group and amazingly was able to locate over 500 men. (The reunion continues yearly.) Incredibly, one of the men had Mario's address. On a subsequent trip to Italy my parents were able to meet with a delighted Mario and his family, but it was not until I traveled to Italy that I realized the impact of those

long-ago English lessons. Mario is now the manager of two hotels, and in fluent English he told me that had it not been for my dad's influence and English lessons, he, Mario, would have been a "bum" (his words) and his life was forever changed.

Cerignola, Italy...Expo 2000

Mario Capocéfalo in all his glory is the best PR man for our organization's in Italy.

He recently wrote "Suddenly, I find myself with too much to write about for what I consider the greatest week in my life for the remembrance of the two American Bomb Groups that shared the San Giovanni Air Field during World War II...the 454th and the 455th Bomb Groups.

I cannot begin to tell you how much time and effort that was spent to realize my first exposition of those two groups that operated out of the olive fields of Cerignola.

The exposition was a large success with many, many visitors looking at photographs and trying to find any indications of old friends and familiar sites of the old air field.

I had received a lot of help from friends who feel that a real museum should be realized.

Many posters and other notices were placed around and in Cerignola's main streets and public places by many friends, with a promise to develop a small video tape to remember the opening ceremonies.

The opening ceremonies had taken place on 25 April 2000 with many dignitaries present, including the new mayor of Cerignola, Antonio Siammatempo at the exposition opening.

Mario's Special Exhibit in Cerignola, Italy

The newly elected Mayor, Dr. Antonio Giannatempo, officially opened the display of various mementos on April 25th. The many items were from Bomb Groups located near Cerignola during WWII. They included the 454th and 455th Bomb Group of San Giovanni, the 459th BG of Torre Giulia and the 461st and 484th Bomb Groups of Torretta di Pavoncelli.

Many people visited the display and tried to find their friends in pictures.

We commend Mario for his time and expense in making this 55th year remembrance of our days spent there a memorable one.

Mario Capocéfalo Writes—

Can't write how much I enjoyed receiving your Cerignola Connection. Returned from two weeks tour to St. Louis first and California after. As an honorary lifetime member of the 454th B.G. I attended the reunion and was pleased to see so many good friends after 55 years.

While in St. Louis I talked once again with Stephen Ambrose and glad to learn about his new book. Senator George McGovern and Stephen Ambrose visited me last year. I was happy to be interviewed and told all about my 18 months experiences at San Giovanni airfield.

For the first time I have been able to have my first show at the city hall of all the material I have preserved from the bomb groups stationed around Cerignola area. Both 455th and 454th had a special side of the room with photos, maps, *Flight of the Vulgar Vultures* book (kindly brought to me when Col. Lou Hansen visited April 1995.)

I'm still working hard trying to get any kind of exhibits of the war tying in all the airfields of the 15th Air Force. I hope to realize my dream of having a small museum at the former 455th head quarter Castle to be shown to the future generations.

Ambassador George McGovern made me a special present which I was proud to have at the exhibit.

Please write in your next Cerignola Connection that Mario loves all the members of San Giovanni airfield. If someone comes to visit Cerignola they may contact me in time, so I can show

them around and have them as my favorite guests.

Happy to be in touch with you Tom, and once again close to the 455th B.G. Association.

Sincerely
Mario
PS My phone number is 0885-429006.

Ed: Mario wants to thank all his friends of the 455th who came to Cerignola, who have written letters and made telephone calls throughout the year. He can't write or call all of them but sends his love.

Missing Records!

Do you know where to turn when you need replacement medals, copies of separation papers or medical research?

To expedite your request for separation papers or other documents, fill out the SF180. If you do not have internet access or were unable to obtain an SF180 from your department service officer, call the relevant reference branch. Leave a message stating the name and address where the form can be mailed. It is also important to state in the message if there is a medical emergency involved.

Your Air Force Reference Branch (1964-present and 1947-1963 for individuals with last names of A through Hubbard, James D.) 314-538-4243.

Records Reconstruction Branch (Army, 1912-1959 and Air Force, 1947-1963 for individuals with the last names after Hubbard, James D.) 314-538-4261.

Personnel and medical records are available to veterans or next of kin of deceased veterans free of

charge. The signature of the veteran or next of kin is required for the release of information.

When requesting medals and decorations, original or replacement awards, contact the Air Force (includes Army Air Corp and Army Air Forces) by writing to:

National Personnel Records Center

Air Force Reference Branch (NRPMF)

9760 Page Ave.

St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

Your medals will be mailed from **Headquarters Air Force Personnel, Center, AFPC/DPPPR, 550 C Street West, Suite 12, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4714.**

Appeal or problems, contact **Headquarters Air Force Personnel, Center, AFPC/DPPPR, 550 C Street West, Suite 12, Randolph AFB, TX 78150-4714.**

REMEMBER THIS!



Cover from the 741st Squadron Monthly Newsletter



The Luftwaffe's Next to Last Liberator... Shot Down By Their Own Flak!

Related to Karl Koessler by Former Luftwaffe Oberfeldwebel Rauchfuss

The date: 5 April 1945, Germany. In the East the Russians are at the River Oder. In the west, it is one day before British and American forces have reached the Weser near Hameln. Only about 30 miles east, on Hildesheim airfield, a few aircraft remain, well camouflaged in splinterproof bomb shelters. They do not fit with the other Luftwaffe machines like He.111s and FW190s, spread over the field. Although sporting swastikas and black crosses, they originated on the other side of the Atlantic.

The three B-17s and one B-24 belong to I. Gruppe KG 200, a unit covered by an especially dense veil of secrecy due to their equipment and still more due to their tasks. All four planes still show their original colors, only having had their markings and codes overpainted and replaced by German ones. The B-24s serial number, 41-28779, on the vertical tail has been retained. No sign of unit identification is used. The only codes are four letters, painted in white besides the large Balkenkreuze on the lower surface of the wing. Only a few of the aircraft still have their original armament. The B-24, for example, has all guns removed, the turrets sealed and overpainted.

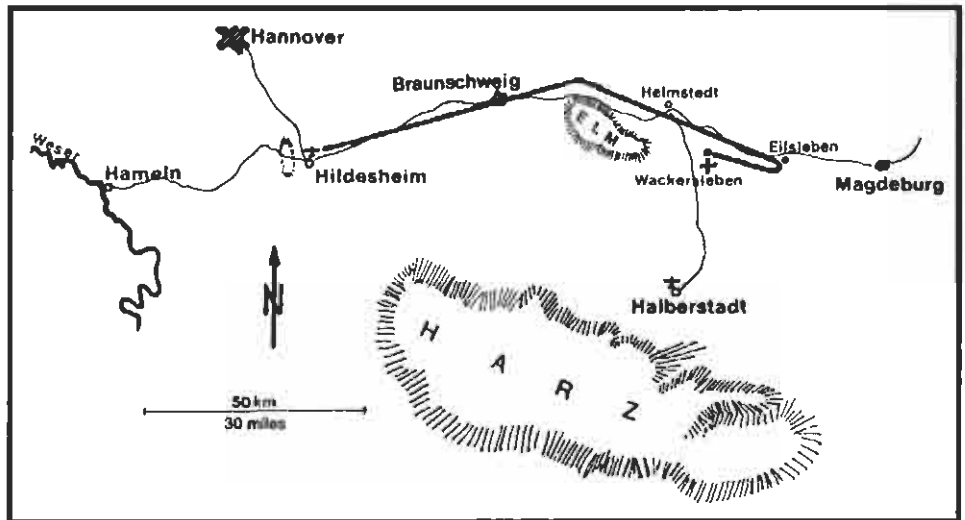
BRIEFING

On this evening the flying personnel are gathering in the mess to receive their orders. The deputy Staffelführer of 1. Staffel, Oberleutnant Wache, explains their tasks for the following day. In order to prevent capture by advancing enemy forces, the aircraft are to be taken to Fürstenfeldbruck near Munich. They are to fly separately, taking off at dawn. No payload will be carried apart from some ground equipment.

In the bomb shelters, the maintenance personnel are working hard in the light of carefully dimmed lamps. The valuable and scarce fuel is tanked; other units



The Luftwaffe's Liberator seen in its bomb shelter at Hildesheim a few days before the flight recorded in this article. Note the apparent haphazard use of camouflage netting.



have not had any for weeks.

The B-24s crew consists of Oberfeldwebel Rauchfuss as pilot, Oberfeldwebel Moenkemeyer as radio operator, Feldwebel Lange as flight engineer, and the ground crew chief, an Unteroffizier. They all are very experienced, highly decorated men.

At 5:30 on 6 April the first engines are run up. The weather is rather bad. During the second half of the night it had rained heavily; cloud cover lies at about 2,000 feet. Underneath, low visibility and large areas covered by fog. Not good, certainly, but the danger of enemy fighter attack as decreased considerably. The greatest problem will

be their own anti-aircraft guns.

When Rauchfuss and his crew arrive at the B-24, they are in for a surprise. Only a small amount of equipment was decided upon as load, but what do they find? The cargo is there, but in addition there are no less than 29 passengers, a few officers, soldiers and some Wehrmachthelferinnen. They all obviously want to go to Bavaria, considered to be more safe instead of being captured within the next few days by British or American forces, or even worse – to fall into Russian hands.

All of the pilot's protests about the overloading of the aircraft and the poor condition of the wet air-

Continued From Page 18

field are unheard, so he taxis to the starting point. Nobody yet knows that of all the machines taking off in front of or behind him, only one, a B-17, will reach its destination.

TAKEOFF

Starting from the farthest eastern point of the airfield, the Liberator moves forward heavily when the Oberfeldwebel releases the brakes. Slowly it speeds up on the soggy ground. The rudders bite the slipstream but the end of the field is approaching quickly. Just before the fence, the pilot lifts off the heavy plane and manages to pass over the obstruction.

Not far in front, the terrain rises to a wooded chain of hills. With little space left to accelerate and with the landing gear still disappearing into the wings, Rauchfuss has to make a left turn with considerable bank disregarding the low speed, in order to avoid a collision with the slope. They get their breath back — just made it!

Passing low over the city of Hildesheim, whose ruins still show the signs of the bombing attack a few days before, the Liberator climbs slowly to about 1,700 feet and heads for Braunschweig. A few hundred meters ahead, an He.111 is observed having taken off shortly before. To fly via Braunschweig is in fact a deviation, but considering the weather situation it is preferable, as they can avoid the Harz mountains and the hilly country to the south and route over low and



Oberfeldwebel Moenkemeyer, the radio operator, poses in front of the B-24 together with a local policeman and other soldiery. The broken nose wheel is on the ground.



The flak damage that forced the Liberator down can be seen on the fuselage. Oberfeldwebel Rauchfuss, the pilot, obviously has not lost his sense of humor.



The end of the Liberator. After takeoff attempt failed and with the nose badly damaged, it was decided to set the aircraft on fire.

rather flat farmland. Just here and there small hills penetrate the fog. The hills near the Elm, to their right, have disappeared behind; the Heinkel is no longer to be seen.

Roughly half an hour after take-off the fog starts to lift, villages can be recognized, and a railway with a station. Suddenly, all around the aircraft, black puffs of shell bursts—their own flak! Having not seen a Luftwaffe plane for weeks, Germans are shooting with everything they have on every plane they see, and this one, even under such bad visual conditions, was already spotted from afar as a Liberator. Who would have expected this one to have black crosses. By the time the gunners have seen them it is too late.

A few direct hits shake the aircraft. No. 4 engine immediately starts leaving a dark trail of smoke behind, and the rudder control lines have been damaged. Rauchfuss turns away, cuts the smoking engine and flies a reciprocal course.

From the rear, one of the passengers comes into the cockpit shouting, "The plane is on fire!" and "We have wounded!" the first remark soon proves to be wrong, but two of the passengers are badly injured. With the three engines remaining and without rudder controls, they have to go

down. There seems no chance to find an airfield within a reasonable time so Rauchfuss decides to make an emergency landing.

FORCED LANDING

The fog has not yet completely disappeared. There, beside a village with a windmill, which later turns out to be Wackersleben, the crew sees a large field suitable for a forced landing. Twice the Oberfeldwebel makes low passes before he selects gear and flaps down and approaches. In the very last moment he notices a high tension line across the landing direction he has not seen before. By vigorously pulling the stick back, they are over it. However, the Liberator now touches down some distance from the edge of the field and with brakes fully actuated it bumps all the way down to the opposite edge and some 25 meters beyond into a recently ploughed field, having almost come to rest, a hard shock is felt, the nose pitches down a little more, and the aircraft comes to a stop.

Having provided first aid for the two wounded—one of them died on the transport to hospital—the extent of the damage is quickly determined. The nose wheel had obviously sunk into the wet ground, was forced to rotate into an oblique position, and was broken off just over the fork. In the rear of the fuselage were several large holes caused by the accurate anti-aircraft fire. One of the shells had also destroyed the rudder cables. No. 4 engine had fortunately suffered only minor damage, one oil line being hit and thus having produced the smoke trail. Otherwise the Liberator was intact.

The decision to repair the damage and to make a second attempt to reach the destination was quickly made. With wooden planks the ground was made capable of bearing the Liberator's weight until it reached the edge of the field. With the help of two tractors it was then pulled to one corner where it could be jacked up.

The nose wheel oleo strut was removed and taken to the nearest

airfield at Halberstadt, where it was welded and reinforced by a small collar around the break.

In the meantime, mechanics of a Luftwaffe maintenance unit had spliced the rudder cables and repaired the damaged oil line. In spite of all endeavors, the aircraft was not airworthy until 12 April, and the Americans were already approaching Braunschweig. The Liberator's passengers had not waited, and taking their opportunities, had continued their journey, leaving the crew behind.

In view of the rather short take-off distance, they made the aircraft as light as possible during the night of the 13th. Everything not absolutely necessary was removed, including the radios, which in any case had proved to be unserviceable during the first trip. At dawn the Oberfeldwebel started the engines in the farthest corner of the field. Full power, brakes released! Again the Liberator started to move, gaining speed. Twice the pilot attempted to lift off the ground, but every time it touched down again. The second time, unfortunately, the wet ground was reached. The sudden resistance pressed the nose wheel down and—again the grating noise, the pitching down of the nose and a full stop! The weld had not withstood the repeated stress. All their hard work had been to no avail.

This time the damage was extensive, leaving no alternative but to destroy the aircraft. Fuel cocks were opened, filter covers were unscrewed. Then, one shot with the signal pistol, a flash of flam...and the burning aircraft was quickly engulfed. The white code letters on the wings lower surface appeared and had suddenly a symbolic meaning: KO + XA!

A huge cloud of black smoke overhead, a few smoldering pieces, melted metal and a heap of ash on the ground—not much more was left.

The crew nevertheless managed to reach Bavaria. On 18 April they were in Mühlendorf, their former base, instead of Fürstenfeldbruck.

For their endeavors they were given a written appreciation. At the same time they were told the only one B-17 had reached the destination. One of the others had collided with a hill in the Thuringer Wald; another was shot down with no survivors by the flak near Altenburg.

It was the last flight for all of them. Three weeks later the war was over.

Editors Note: Les Willis of Norwich England, friend of the 2AD and the B-24, submitted this article which is reprinted from the British periodical "Aviation News" circa late 1970. The publication ceased in 1983. Despite some claims to the contrary, the B-24 in this article was not the last B-24 in Nazi hands as it burned on 13 April 1945. The B-24 in the Spring 2000 Journal was last seen just after the German surrender on May 8, 1945.

Only In America...

- do people order a double cheeseburger, large fries and a diet soda.



- do drugstores make the sick walk to the back of the store to pick up their prescriptions, while healthy people can buy cigarettes at the front.

- do banks leave both doors open, but chain the pens to the counter.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING 'MAR-VELOUSLY MATURE' WHEN.....

- You finally get your head together and your body starts falling apart.
- You wonder how you could be over the hill when you don't even remember being on top of it.

THE DOLLAR BILL



Take out a one dollar bill and look at it. The one dollar bill first came off the presses in 1957 in its present design. This so-called paper money is in fact a cotton and linen blend, with red and blue minute silk fibers running through it. It is actually material. We've all washed it without it falling apart. A special blend of ink is used, the contents we will never know.

It is overprinted with symbols and then it is starched to make it water resistant and pressed to give it that nice crisp look. If you look on the front of the bill, you will see the United States Treasury Seal. On the top you will see the scales for the balance—a balanced budget. In the center you have a carpenter's T-square, a tool used for an even cut. Underneath is the Key to the United States Treasury. That's all pretty easy to figure out, but what is on the back of that dollar bill is something we should all know.

If you turn the bill over, you will see two circles. Both circles, together, comprise the Great Seal of the United States. The First continental Congress requested that Benjamin Franklin and a group of men come up with a Seal. It took them four years to accomplish this task and another two years to get it approved. If you look at the left hand circle, you will see a Pyramid. Notice the face is lighted and the western side is dark. This country was just beginning. We had not begun to explore the West or decided what we could do for Western Civilization. The Pyramid is un-capped, again signifying that we were not even close to being finished. Inside the capstone you have the all-seeing eye, and ancient symbol for divinity. It was Franklin's belief that one man couldn't do it alone, but a group of men, with the help of God, could do anything. "IN GOD WE TRUST" is on this currency. The Latin above the pyramid, ANNUIT COEP-

TIS, means "God has favored our undertaking." The Latin below the pyramid, NOVUS ORDO SECLORUM, means "a new order has begun." At the base of the pyramid is the Roman numeral for 1776.

If you look at the right-hand circle, and check it carefully, you will learn that it is on every National Cemetery in the United States. It is also on the Parade of Flags Walkway at the Bushnell, Florida National Cemetery and is the centerpiece of most hero's monuments. Slightly modified, it is the seal of the President of the United States and it is always visible whenever he speaks, yet no one knows what the symbols mean.

The Bald Eagle was selected as a symbol for victory for two reasons: first, he is not afraid of a storm; he is strong and he is smart enough to soar above it. Secondly, he wears no material crown. We had just broken from the King of England. Also, notice the shield is unsupported. This country can now stand on its own. At the top of that shield you have a white bar signifying congress, a unifying factor. We were coming together as one nation. In the Eagle's beak you will read, "E PLURIBUS UNUM", meaning "one nation from many people." Above the Eagle you have thirteen stars representing the thirteen original colonies, and any clouds of misunderstanding rolling away. Again, we were coming together as one. Notice what the Eagle holds in his talons. He holds an olive branch and arrows. This country wants peace, but we will never be afraid to fight to preserve peace. The Eagle always wants to face the olive branch, but in time of war, his gaze turns toward the arrows.

They say that the number 13 is an unlucky number. This is almost a worldwide belief. You will usually never see a room numbered 13, or any hotels or motels with a 13th floor. But think about this: 13 original colonies, 13 signers of the Declaration of Independence, 113 stripes on our flag, 13 steps on the

Pyramid, 13 letters in the Latin above, 13 letters in "E Pluribus Unum", 13 stars above the Eagle, 13 plumes of feathers on each span of the Eagle's wing, 13 bars on that shield, 13 leaves on the olive branch, 13 fruits, and if you look closely, 13 arrows. And for minorities: the 13th Amendment.

Credit: Bernie Strobmier, Ex-POW Bulletin

POW/MIA Numbers from all US Wars:

War of the Revolution:		
	POW-18,152	MIA-1,426
War of 1812:		
	POW-20,000	MIA-695
Mexican War:		
	POW-46	MIA-238
Indian Wars:		
	POW/MIA-Many, few survived	
Civil War - Union:		
	POW/MIA-194,743	
Confederacy:		
	POW/MIA-214,865	
Spanish-American War:		
	POW-8	MIA-72
World War I:		
	POW/MIA-7,470	
World War II:		
	POW-124,079	MIA-30,314
Cold War Era:		
	POW-Unknown	MIA-343
Korean War:		
	POW-7,140	MIA-8,177
Vietnam War:		
	POW/MIA-2,583	
U.S.S. Pueblo:		
	POW-82	
Grenada:		
		MIA-4
U.S.S. Stark:		
		MIA-1
Persian Gulf War:		
	POW-29	MIA-20
Somalia:		
	POW-6	MIA-2
Kosovo:		
	POW-3	

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Craig Ward Traces His Father's Footsteps

I am writing to you to tell you about my wife's and my memorable trip to Cerignola, Italy and the San Giovanni airfield May 16-17, 2001.

I've included all this in the hopes that if any members of the 455th BG Association are planning a trip to Cerignola, maybe some information about our trip would be helpful to them.

Mario was our tour guide during our stay. (As you know, Mario was a "Tent boy" for the 454th and 455th during 1944-45). Mario and his lovely wife Tina were the most gracious, warm, & interesting hosts any visitors could have ever had. He has a love for the memory and legacy of the American airmen that is inspiring. I have an observation and request regarding Mario that I'll cover further down in this letter. First, some information about the trip logistics.

Anyone planning on driving to Cerignola should know that the roads are excellent (toll roads, \$15 US) the whole way. Be forewarned, there's a speed limit of about 80 MPH that is not enforced by police. Many times, I was going 90-100 MPH, and was being passed by vehicles going over 120 MPH. It took about 4 hours, 30 minutes with stops to get to Cerignola.

I would suggest arranging your rental car through the Hertz franchise near the Vatican (Via Gregorio VII20, phone is 011-39-06-3937-8808). They are close to the loop that takes you out of the city, so you'll have minimal city driving. Rome is the worst place in the world to drive, so renting close to the loop is the easiest way to go. The cost for a good little Opel sedan (automatic with air) for two days) to and from Cerignola was approx. \$450.00 US.

If you don't want to drive yourself, there's reasonably priced train and bus service to and from Rome.

Mario met us at the Cerignola

exit from the Naples - Bari tollway, and we followed him into town. He stopped at some ancient grain silo foundations, and told us how the people at the time made their version of concrete. We then went to the Grand Hotel, with very nice, reasonably-priced rooms, and some of Mario's homemade wine, cherries, and pastries. We then went on a brief tour of the historical areas within the city limits. These included the churches, part of the Apian Way, theater, city square, and old red cross building. It was interesting to hear his stories of the ancient history of some of these sites, and how they related to WWII and the airmen in 1944-45.

After a delicious dinner prepared by Tina, we went to his home-based museum dedicated to the American airmen. Letters, papers, clothing, photos, plaques, and other items dating back to the war were shown to Marsha and me. Mario's stories relating to these items were fascinating.

The next day, we went to the site of the San Giovanni airfield. Many of the buildings that the 454th and 455th used during the war are still there, now used for agricultural purposes. HQs buildings, chapels, briefing rooms, administration buildings, emergency medical facilities, and even shower facilities are still there. Again, Mario's stories of his youth at the airfield, and his interaction with the airmen, were very interesting and moving.

I cannot express how meaningful it was to hear Mario's recollections, and to visit the sacred ground where these brave men flew off into combat. I could close my eyes and see my father walking these grounds so many years ago. I shed some tears of gratitude and pride for all the men who did their part to defeat tyranny.

May I close with a request? Mario needs help to carry on the legacy of the American airmen. His museum needs to be expanded from his living room to a more prominent place in Cerignola. He's trying to get the city leaders to

help him in this effort to educate the citizens of Cerignola about the 15th AF. He's not getting much cooperation from them, due to politics and lack of funding. Could the 454th and 455th BG Associations set up a fund to help him? I'm personally willing to do my part, but I'm just one person. Also, he's not planning on coming to St. Louis in October for the reunion due to the expense involved. Could any of the association members help in this regard? I think the attendees would enjoy hearing his stories as much as I did.

Craig Ward
Son of Lt. J.T. Ward
Associate member of the 455th BG Association
813 Peterstow Dr.
Eules, TX 76039
817-540-1068
craigandmarsha@home.com

Cerignola was the site of the first battle in the western world with firearms (guns and cannons) (1500-1510). This was between the French and the Spanish. The first battle at Cassino between the French and the Spanish (1506) ended in the same result as 1944.



A fellow was invited to an old friend's house for dinner. The host preceded every request to his wife by calling her "sweetheart," "honey," "darling," "my love," etc. The guest was quite impressed since they had been married almost 70 years.

While the wife was in the kitchen, the guest remarked how nice it was that he still called her those pet names. "To tell you the truth, I forgot her name about 10 years ago," the friend replied.

Credit-VFW Magazine

Cerignola Revisited



Craig and Mario at the old base.



Mario's museum.



The cathedral-downtown Cerignola.



You can never get lost in downtown Cerignola.



The old base certainly has changed.



Church call!

Familiar sites – How many do you recognize?



455th E-Mail Roster

Below is a listing of e-mail address* of 455th members that were sent to us for publication in the Cerignola Connection.

*Indicates a new listing since last published in the Cerignola Connection. If you want your e-mail address included in this roster, please send it to us;

Tom Ramey, Editor, Cerignola Connection, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, WI 54915.

Harry W. Anderson (740), San Antonio, TX. **pomganny@aol.com**

* Gene V. Benson, (740) Livingston, Mt. **dayflyguy@mcn.net**

Jack Blum (741), New Port Richey, FL. **jblum 15677@aol.com**

Marlin L. (Bud) Brown, (742), Lake Placid, FL. **barbud@htn.net**

Robert Caldwell (741st), Prescott Valley, AZ. **rc7306@aol.com**

Howard Cooper, Staton Island, NY. **howgladcoop@worldnet.att.net**

Robert (Bob) Collette, St. Petersburg, FL. **dotybob1@juno.com**

* James A. Cowden (742), Tascaloosa, AL. **jcowden@earthlink.net**

William (Bill) Crim (741), Lakewood, CO. **brcrim@aol.com**

James P. Daly (740), Aberdeen, NJ. **panadaly@aol.com**

Jack Dekker (743), Grand Rapids, MI. **jdek@gateway.net**

Theodore Deppe (741), Bloomington, IN. **tdeppe@indiana.edu**

* Curtis Diles (740), Dayton, OH. **budynez@aol.com**

Paul H. Ditchett, (742), Safety Harbor, FL. **paul546@juno.com**

Bob Emick (741), Battle Creek, MI. **rfemick@aol.com**

James A. Fedewa (743), Dunnellon, FL. **jcfedewa@cs.com**

* William B. Gemmill (740), Spring Hill, FL. **wgemmill@tampabay.rr.com**

William C. Graves (742), Jacksonville, FL. **wgraves210@aol.com**

Lou Hansen (743), Spencer, IA. **lohansen@nwiowa.com**

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Walking With Grandma



I like to walk with Grandma,
Her steps are short like mine.
She doesn't say "Now hurry up."
She always takes her time.

I like to walk with Grandma,
Her eyes see things like mine
do...

Wee pebbles bright, a funny
cloud,
Half hidden drops of dew.

Most people have to hurry,
They do not stop and see...
I'm glad that God made
Grandma,
Unrushed and young like me!

∞ § ∞ § ∞

A Special Poem

He was getting old and paunchy
And his hair was falling fast,
And he sat around the Amvets,
Telling stories of the past.

Of a war he had fought in
And the deeds he had done.
In his exploits with his buddies;
They were heroes, everyone.

And 'tho sometimes, to his neigh-
bors, His tales became a joke,
All his buddies listened,
For they knew whereof he spoke.

But we'll hear his tales no longer,
For old Bob has passed away,
And the world's a little poorer,
For a Serviceman died today.
He won't be mourned by many,
Just his children and his wife.
For he live an ordinary,
Very quiet sort of life.

He held a job and raised a family,
Quietly going on his way,
And the world won't note his pass-
ing,
'tho a Serviceman died today.

When politicians leave this earth,
Their bodies lie in state,
While thousands note their pass-
ing,
And proclaim that they were great.

Papers tell of their life stories,
From the time that they were
young,
But the passing of a Serviceman,
Goes unnoticed and unsung.

In the greatest contribution,
To the welfare of our land,
Some jerk who breaks his
promise,
And cons his fellow man?

Or the ordinary fellow,
Who in times of war and strife,
Goes off to serve his Country
And offers up his life?

The politician's stipend
And the style in which he lives,
Are sometimes disproportionate,
For the service that he gives.

While the ordinary Serviceman,
Who offered up his all,

Is paid off with a medal
And perhaps a pension small.

It's so easy to forget them,
For it is so long ago,
That our Bob's and Jim's and
Johnny's
Went to battle, but we know.

It was not the politicians,
With their compromise and ploys,
Who won for us the freedom,
That our Country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in danger,
With your enemies at hand,
Would you really want some cop-
out,
With his ever waffling stand?

Or would you want a Serviceman,
Who has sworn to defend,
His home, his kin, and Country,
And would fight until the end?

He was just a common
Serviceman
And his rands are growing thin,
But his presence should remind
us,
We may need his like again.

For when countries are in conflict,
Then we find the Serviceman's
part,
Is to clean up all the troubles,
That the politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor,
While he's here to hear the praise,
Then at least let's give him
homage,
At the ending of his days.

Perhaps just a simple headline,
In the paper that might say:

"OUR COUNTRY IS IN MOURN-
ING, FOR A SERVICEMAN DIED
TODAY"

Author Unknown

Mark Flora Asks?

Glamor Gal #494

Who was the pilot? Names of the
crew. What missions did it fly on?

Ed—if you know, send me your
answer and I will forward.

Looking Back

The 455th Bomb Group partici-
pated in the following campaigns:
Air Combat, Eame Theater; Air
Offensive; Europe: Anzio; Rome-
Arno; Normandy; Northern and
Southern France; North Apennines;
Rhineland; Central Europe; and the
Po Valley.

Group Commanders were:
Colonel Kenneth A. Cool, July 1943
to September 1944; Colonel William
I. Snowden, September 1944 to
May 1945; Lieutenant Colonel
William R. Boutz, May 1945 to July
1945; Major Jerome Hoss, July 1945
to July 1946; and Major John C.
Smith, July 1946.

Colonel Kenneth A. Cool

Colonel Cool was a native
Ohioan, residing in Cleveland. He
attended flying school at Randolph
Field, Texas in the late twenties fol-
lowing graduating from Rutgers
University. After receiving his com-
mission, he flew the US Air Mail as
well as being a member of the
Ohio National Guard during the
thirties. In 1941, Colonel Cool was
called to active duty to serve his
country for command duties as a
senior pilot. He served in com-
mand positions with the 93rd
Bombardment Group and flew
combat missions in B-24's from
England, North Africa and the
Middle East during the latter part of
1942 and the first half of 1943.
Colonel Cool was then selected to
return to the United States to
assume command of the 455th
Bombardment Group. He led the
Group through training, equipping
and deployment to Italy where he
remained in command through
more than 100 combat missions.
Colonel Cool was transferred to the
304th Wing Headquarters as
Operation Officer on 28 September
1944.

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B-24 Liberator Bronze Memorial

Many of you will remember the sponsorship by WWII B-24 veterans of the B-24 Liberator Bronze Memorial gifted to the United States Air Force Academy. The money collected, over \$200,000, came exclusively from WWII veterans, their families and friends. There was not a single profit making organization that contributed although several requests were made. Those of us who worked on the project are most proud of this; it adds special meaning to the beautiful bronze model that stands majestically in the Honor Court of our Academy with the uniquely designed cadet chapel in the background.

Remember, original dedication was September 25, 1998. It was rededicated in May of this year by a group of B-24 veterans representing the Second Air Division Association (2ADA). The 2ADA had operational control of the B-24's of the Mighty Eighth Air Force flying from England during WWII. The organization that originally sponsored the project was: The B-24

Groups Memorial, Inc. of the Army Air Forces. It raised the money through donations and contracted to build the bronze sculptor of the B-24. The cost was \$150,000 plus a bit for expenses for a Book of Remembrance and dedication costs. We raised over \$200,000 from B-24 veterans who served in all theaters of the world during WWII.

Members of the 455th were major contributors. Colonels Cool and Snowden were sponsored by the 455th Bomb Group Association and fifteen others contributed generously. The dedication statement on the bronze plaque mounted on a blue granite pedestal reads: A gift to the United States Air Force Academy to honor the brave airmen we lost, the valiant ones who survived and to all who designed, produced, maintained and flew this stalwart aircraft. Other information shown: B-24 Liberator, World War II heavy Bomber, Combat Operations in All Theaters. There were 19,257 of all types produced, more than any other US aircraft in the history of aviation.

Of importance is how the excess money has been used. We donated \$25,000 to the Mighty

Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum at Savannah, Georgia to sponsor the bell tower of a new chapel just beginning construction on the museum grounds. Another \$25,000 was donated to the United States Air Force Memorial foundation to build our Air Force Memorial which is long overdue. Appropriate recognition will be given for this donation. Finally, over \$6,000 has been donated to help support the 2ADA Memorial Library which will be dedicated this November at Norwich, England.

I personally received a great deal of satisfaction and pleasure of having been a part of this project. Although my name appears on the donor plaque of the model under the 93rd Bomb Group, it shows in parenthesis (455th BG) that I also served in the 455th Bomb Group of the 15th Air Force during WWII. It was a delight to make contact with 455th members during the development of this project. Our bronze B-24 model will stand at the Academy for many years to come and it seems to get better with age.

Al Asch



Two Tours – Two Bomb Groups – One Historian

Ed—Colonel Al Asch completed two tours overseas, one out of England. One out of Italy. He serves both the 455th and the 93rd as group historian. I thought you would be interested in this recent dedication.

Today, we pay special tribute to the members of the 93rd Bomb Group who served in the Second World War, and in particular, to those who gave their lives to preserve our freedoms. Our generation had a rendezvous with destiny. We were engaged in a life-and-death struggle against extremely oppressive forces that threatened to extinguish the light of freedom, not only for our country but for others as well.

Mere words alone cannot express the significance of dedicating this memorial in memory of those airmen who lost their lives. It has special meaning to all of us. Many of us lost crew members, classmates and close friends to enemy action. The family members and friends so well represented here today share our feelings for those who served so well. Many of our downed airmen became prisoners of war and suffered extreme hardships of Nazi POW camps. So, it is to all airmen and others who lost their lives or have since died that we pay special tribute and dedicate this memorial.

I vividly remember, as some of you do, our first mission briefing on October 9, 1942 by our Group Commander, Colonel Edward J. "Ted" Timberlake, who said to us, "This is the day we've been waiting for; I know you 'Joes' can do it." His personal courage and leadership qualities and his puckish sense of humor endeared him to the men of his command and the aircrews were never reluctant to follow him into combat. Our Group became known as Ted's Travelling Circus because of the three trips made to North Africa to support the war effort by bombing Nazi sup-

ply shipping in Mediterranean Sea ports and by hitting airfields and other strategic targets in Southern Europe, North Africa and the Balkan States.

On one of these trips, we joined an armada of 178 B-24's to bomb at low altitude the oil refineries in and around Ploesti, Romania. Of the 39 B-24's of the 93rd that took off from Benghazi, 34 reached the target. Only 15 came away from the target in formation and of those only five escaped with little damage. This was probably the most vicious air/ground battle in the history of aviation warfare. Of the five groups that participated, 310 airmen were killed, or one in five of approximately 1,600 men reaching the target area. The 93rd received the Distinguished Unit Citation, and Lt. Col. Baker and Major Jerstad received the Medal of Honor posthumously. Distinguished Service Crosses were given to George Brown, Ramsay D. Potts, Kenneth D. McFarland, John Roche and Walter Stewart for extraordinary heroism and gallantry in action over the target, and 13 Silver Stars were presented for gallantry in action. A total of 318 received the Distinguished Flying Cross for distinguished and meritorious achievement while participating in operations against the Ploesti oil refineries of Rumania on 1 August 1943. And there were an untold number of Purple Hearts given. This may be the most decorations given an organization for a single combat operation in the history of aerial warfare. Some of you here flew that operational mission known as Tidalwave.

We had many other intrepid and exemplary leaders in our group in addition to General Ted. Two enlisted men stand out. One was a crew chief, M/Sgt Herbert "Pop" Hastings and the other, T/Sgt Fred Anderson. Sergeant Hastings was an older man (32 years) so we all called him "Pop." He was crew chief of the *The Duchess* which flew 54 missions without an abort before she was shot

down. She was called "Queen of the Liberators" in a Stars and Stripes article February 10, 1944. She flew on all the tough ones, including the Ploesti low altitude raid. When Pop cleared *The Duchess* for flight, the crews knew it was ready to go. Sergeant Anderson distinguished himself as the aerial engineer for Packy Roche on the Ploesti mission. Prior to that, he had shot down at least one JU-88 German fighter while flying on submarine patrol with Ramsay Potts. He received the Silver Star for gallantry in action when he was wounded very painfully from a burst of flak in the face and head while operating the top turret over Ploesti. "He was knocked from his turret but he got back into it and continued to fight. After leaving the target area, Sergeant Anderson made repairs on the damaged B-24 so that it could return to its base. His citation read: His performance of duty under fire, when seriously injured, constitutes heroism of the finest sort. His courage and the dedication to duty by Sergeant Hastings was symbolic of that of all the aircrews and other members of our Group."

The 93rd Bomb Group, made up of four squadrons—the 328th, 329th, 330th and the 409th—flew more combat missions than any other heavy bombardment group during WWII, whether B-17, B-24 or the B-29. We were the first B-24 group to arrive in England and we pioneered many high altitude bombing and combat techniques that set the standards for those arriving later during the war. We operated from several bases from 1942 to 1945: Alconbury, Hardwick and Holmsley South in England and four different bases on our three tours in North Africa. We flew 396 combat missions and lost 670 airmen, either killed or missing in action.

Let this memorial remain for generations to come as a reminder that the preservation of our freedoms required hardships and sacrifices by all who served during World War II. Thank you ladies and gentlemen.

Gus Wendt

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