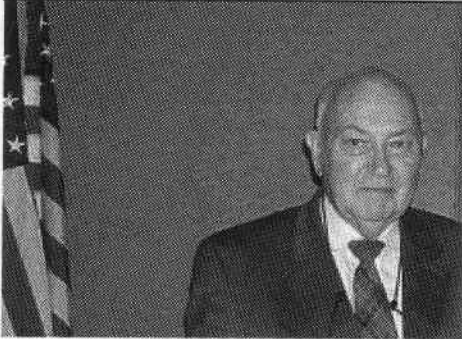




# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

**455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter**

**Fall, 2007** Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039  
**phone:** (817) 540-1068 **email:** ap hp@tx.rr.com **website:** www.awardphp.com



## Message from the President

I greet you all as the new President of the Vulgar Vultures. I feel as though it was a battlefield promotion, in that our Past President, Bill Gemmill, sent me an email message about ten days before the start of the San Antonio reunion telling me that he would be unable to attend due to the deteriorating condition of his health. He asked me to preside in his place.

I confess that I gulped when I read those words, but I quickly came to realize that it is the lot of the Veep of any organization.

As it turned out, things were in excellent shape as a result of the prior work Bill had devoted to the task, plus that of our Executive Director, Greg Riggs, and the folks at Armed Forces Reunions.

I think that all who attended the San Antonio reunion of the 455th Bomb Group Association would agree that it was a great success.

On Sunday morning, as we were preparing to return home, I found that everyone with whom I spoke seemed to have had a good time.

According to the attendance roster, 128 people signed up -- that's four more than were at the previous reunion in Kansas City. Only 40 were vets (there were 58 vets in Kansas City).

Another measure of our viability is the number of people who signed up to take the tours that were offered. All three tours were well subscribed and enjoyed, although there were a few folks that still preferred to continue to swap stories in the Hospitality Room on the Twentieth floor of the Omni Hotel.

The banquet on Saturday evening was also a big success. 101 people attended (compared to 128 in KC). Our enjoyment was enhanced by the enthusiasm of the speaker, Command Chief Master Sergeant Mark Luzander, as he told us about

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### Message from the President (cont.)

the Air Force Education and Training Command in which he serves.

It was a lot more interesting than what those words convey, but you had to be there to appreciate them.

Here is how we stand as an Association -- we're down to a total of 339 life members, 116 annual members and 115 widows. The treasury stands at about \$12,000, which would fund about four more years of the Cerignola Connection without any additional income. However, the members present seem determined to continue on with reunions, as is Craig Ward to continue editing the newsletter.

At our business meeting on Saturday morning, the members opted to meet again in 2008. Greg agreed to work with the Air Force Reunion folks in selecting a location and arranging interesting tours. Everyone seemed to recognize that time is short, so be prepared to respond to the sign-up documents in a timely fashion when you receive them.

The Board of Directors, chosen by the members, has two new faces -- Henry Paris of Colonial Heights, VA and Mark Mason of Vail, AZ. Mark is the son of a vet, the third of that stripe to serve on the board. They replace Bill Crawford and George Underwood, who did not attend. The new Vice-President is Frank Lashinsky, and the Past President is, of course, Bill Gemmill.

Recently, I discovered that the 455th is still active in the persona of the 455th Air Expeditionary Wing, based at Bagram, Afghanistan.

Go to their website:

<http://www.bagram.afnews.af.mil/>

You'll be delighted to learn that they are using the "*Vulgar Vulture*" as their patch, although it is a more modernized rendition from the one that once graced the area around San Giovanni air base.

I sent the 455th AEW Commander, BG James W. Hyatt, an email telling him about us and how much we like what he and his folks are doing. It reads in part --

"A quick note to let you know that the veterans of the original 455th Bomb Group (H) met at San Antonio, TX last week and instructed me, Association President, to send greetings to our modern counterpart.

"Having visited your website, I'm very favorably impressed with the scope and magnitude of your mission and activities, and the professional manner in which they are being carried out. It is gratifying to learn that the traditions of excellence we initiated back in 1943, and demonstrated in 1944-1945, are being continued by the men and women of today's 455th."

Best Regards,  
Roderick W Clarke  
Colonel USAF (Ret)  
President,  
455th Bomb Group Association

Santa's helpers are  
subordinate clauses.

### Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am Andras Pal Olah, a Hungarian historian, and I am writing an essay about the Group's July 27, 1944 mission, the target of which was the Manfred Weiss Armament Works, near Budapest. The essay will be published in the prestigious Hungarian Quarterly of Military History.

This was the mission in which Mr. Emick's plane was shot down (Gates's crew, plane serial number 41-29266, MACR6999). I got the crew members' list from NARA, but it would be very useful if you could please send me some more information about each of them.

We at the official Hungary Wreckage Researching Association have identified the crash sites of three planes out of the five that were lost in this mission.

If you or the veterans at the Association have any kind of photograph, documents or information about wartime Hungary, please share it with me.

Thank you very much.

Yours faithfully,

Andras Pal Olah, Historian  
6723 Szeged,  
Budapesti krt. 22/A, Hungary  
olahandraspal@yahoo.co.uk

Remember ...

You don't stop laughing  
because you grow old,  
You grow old  
because you stop laughing.

**455TH BOMB GROUP  
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P.O. BOX 93095  
AUSTIN, TX. 78709-3095**

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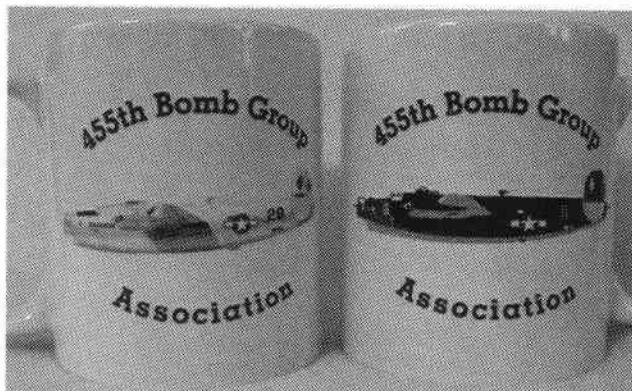
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Editor, *Cerignola Connection*



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### These Mugs Make Great Gifts!

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### Dear Editor,

I've created a new website for the Fifteenth Air Force ([www.15thaf.org](http://www.15thaf.org)). I don't currently have a lot of information on there, but am hoping I can get contributions from the member organizations. I created a page for the 455th BG. There isn't much on that page right now.

Would your association members be interested in supplying some information about the 455th? I would be willing to post whatever the 455th feels is appropriate.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Hughes Glantzberg, 461st Webmaster  
[www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org)  
P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230  
(970) 641-6071

**Editor's Note:** Your editor also has a website with pages dedicated to the men of the 455th BG (<http://www.awardphp.com/veterans.php>). I believe the stories of the heroism and dedication displayed by WWII veterans needs to be told in as many forums and media as possible. If you have any information, pictures, and / or photographs that you would like posted on the internet, I would invite you to send them to both myself and Mr. Glantzberg. Thank you.

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I hope a 455th BG Association member can help me. My cousin, Ralph C. Owens, was in the 742nd Squadron.

I am trying to get information about him for a journal I am putting together for the family.

Ralph was an officer from Delhi, New York. He was shot down on July 27, 1944 on a mission to the Budapest, Hungary Manfred Armament Works. I believe it was mission #313 on Aircraft Number #50497, MACR7527.

Anything you could forward would be greatly appreciated. My mother and I (I was fifteen at the time) were the last family members to see him before he left for overseas in 1943. He is buried at Ardennes American Cemetery in Belgium.

Until then, may God Bless and thanks for serving.

Best Regards,

Artie Maxim  
DAV Korean Conflict  
artmaxim@hotmail.com

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am looking to find any information on my father, (deceased August, 1990) S/Sgt. Leonard S. Skotleski (742), Army Serial # 33605194.

He was an Armorer - Gunner on board a B24 with the Army Air Forces during 1944 - 1945. On April 25, 1945, his 18th and last mission, his

bomber took heavy flak and was badly damaged over Linz, Austria. The pilot, 1st Lt. James E. Counsilman tried to bring it back but crash-landed at or near "Zara", a town on the eastern shore of the Adriatic Sea.

I think the bomber was called "Miss I Hope". I have searched in AAF documents on line, but found no record of the crash or the event, only notes on my father's navigational map on which he kept records.

After the war, and for the rest of his life, he would never talk about it. I would only hear bits and pieces from my uncles.

He went on to serve thirty two years with the Pennsylvania State Police stationed in Philadelphia, Pa., and passed away never to talk of his role in the AAF.

I would like to pass on information to his grandchildren about his involvement during that period. I would appreciate any information you or your readers could offer.

Thank You.

Karl E. Skotleski  
1569 Clayton Road  
West Chester, Pa. 19382  
610-436-8723  
karl.skotleski@lfg.com

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My Father-In-Law, Earl Bodenhorn, receives the *Cerignola Connection*.

In the Spring, 2007 edition, P. 24, Emmett Ledbetter, Jr. indicated that he flew on the "Leakin Deacon".

My Father-In-Law was on

the last crew that flew the "Leakin Deacon".

I would like to make contact with Emmett Ledbetter, Jr. Can you provide me with any contact information you have for Mr. Ledbetter?

Best Regards,  
Meredith Hughes  
mjcahughes@comcast.net

## Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I was excited to view the photos of the "Leakin Deacon", and Neuman's crew tents in the Spring, 2007 edition of the *Cerignola Connection*.

My brother, S/Sgt. Marshall William Hilgendorf, was in the crew and flew fifty missions with them.

He was, and still is, my greatest "hero", as are all of the men in the 455th BG.

I enjoy your newsletter. Thank you very much.

Best Regards,  
Robert E. Hilgendorf  
653 Flippin Rd  
Lowgap, NC 27024

## Dear Editor,

I served as Ball Turret Gunner on George Kahey's crew on the B-24 *Minni Ha Cha* Serial # 4252184. We were with the original crews that were formed in Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

We left for overseas on Christmas Eve, 1943 from Morrison Field, Florida. Our crew completed 50 missions and returned to the USA on August 4, 1944.

(continued next page)

### Minni Ha Cha (cont.)

We survived a scary occasion. One of our own B-24s turned over the lower element and dropped their bombs. We were hit just outside the number 4 engine.

We had to drop out of formation and were under heavy fighter attack. We managed to get in a cloud bank and limped back to our base in Cerignola.

We were on the Styer and Moosbierbaum missions and were awarded two Presidential Unit Citations.

Our nose gunner was the only member of the crew that lost his life. He was flying with another crew and was shot down on his 50th mission.

Jim Thiel (743)

### **Dear Editor,**

How surprised I was to see the photo on page 23 of the Spring, 2007 edition of the *Cerignola Connection!*

This is a photo of our B-24H with the cannibal on a white background. This bird is the one Gene Hudson (741) and I took over from Langley! Sgt. Groen (741) painted the nose after we got to Italy.

I have a picture of the plane on the ground, but NEVER have seen this picture with the P-51 alongside.

You did a great job on the Spring, 2007 issue. The info from Gen. Gene Hudson about the men still buried in Italy (pp. 19-20) was very stirring to this old fellow.

Best Regards,  
Jim Smith (741)

### **Can You Help?**

**Dear Editor,**

My name is Jeff Colton, and I, like yourself, am the son of a member of the 455th bomb group (740th squadron), Arthur S. Colton, Jr. ("Coak" to many who knew him).

My dad was a member of the same crew, and also imprisoned at Stalag VIIA with Frank Lashinsky, the past President of the Association. I have spoken to Frank over the telephone and also traded a few e-mails in past years.

Frank and his wife visited with my mom, Gerre, last year in Nashville, Tennessee. My wife Deb and I would like to escort my mom to the next gathering of the 455th in San Antonio, in October.

I would be honored and humbled to, at last, meet the men who flew with my dad, who took his final flight in 1982.

Thanks so much for your help, and I look forward to meeting you at the reunion.

Best Regards,

Jeff Colton  
1855 S. 1100 E  
Zionsville, IN 46077  
(317) 769-4227  
jeff@wilson-partenheimer.com

### **America is NOT at war.**

**The U.S. Military is at war.**

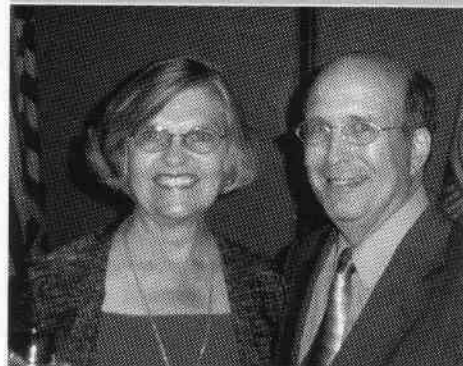
**America is at the mall.**

**The Executive Branch is at war with our enemies.**

**The Legislative and Judicial Branches are at war with the Executive Branch.**

*...An Editorial Comment,  
brought to you by your Editor*

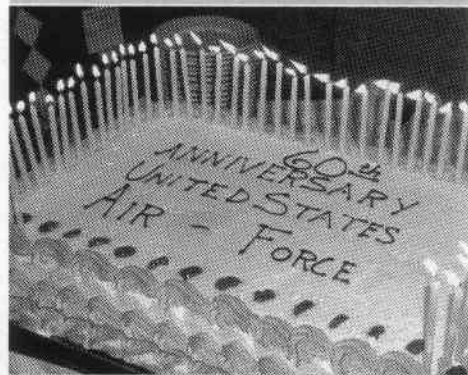
### **Reunion 2007 San Antonio, Texas**



Col. and Mrs. Greg Riggs ...  
Thanks, Greg, for the  
great job you're doing as  
455th B.G. Assoc. Exec. Dir.



Saturday Banquet Speaker  
Chief Master Sergeant Mark  
Luzander, U.S. Air Force  
Education and Training  
Command



Happy Birthday, U.S. Air Force!

# Reunion, 2007

# San Antonio, Texas



Col. Ed. Riggs (740), Association Exec. Dir. Greg Riggs, and Linda (Riggs) Boyd



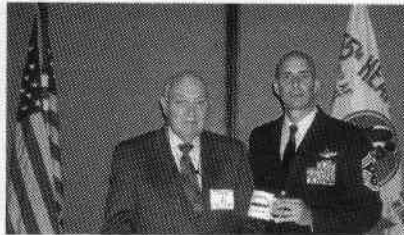
Thanks to Laura Flanagan, & Eunice & John Smoot, daughters & son-in-law of Ormond and Marie Buffington, for Keeping the Hospitality Suite Running Smoothly!



Col. and Mrs. John Davis (741), Gen. and Mrs. Gene Hudson (741), and Becky Gustafsson, daughter of Lt. J. T. Ward (740)



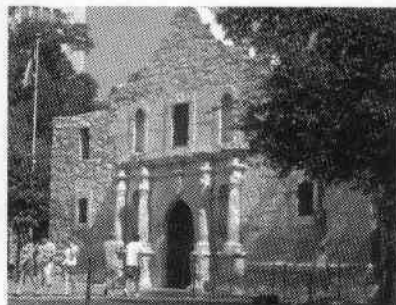
Your Editor, Craig Ward, with sister Becky Gustafsson (her first 455th B.G. reunion)



455th B.G. President Rod Clark with Saturday Banquet Speaker Chief Master Sargeant Mark Luzander



Sen. George McGovern (741) with his navigator, C. W. Cooper, at the 741st Squadron dinner Friday night



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Four Generations were at the Reunion