



CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Spring 1998 – Editor, Tom Ramey, 1211 Montclair Ct., Appleton, WI 54915 (920) 731-2500

From Your President

After almost two years of plans and preparations, the Dayton, Ohio area reunion is now history. As usual, there were a few minor glitches, but no major problems occurred. The reunion committee did a fine job in arranging for the tours, entertainment, and dinners. The weather cooperated beautifully.

The Saturday night banquet held among the aircraft at the Air Force Museum was attended by approximately 350 people. It was most gratifying to have so many attending for the first time and also having so many children and grandchildren in attendance. Lt. Col. Ross Strode arranged for our banquet speaker, Col. Robert Tipon of the Aeronautical Systems Center at Wright-Patterson AFB. He was an interesting speaker and his message was well received.

There was also a note of sadness to this reunion. After ten years of very dedicated work for the Bomb Group, due to some serious health problems, Col. Louie O. Hansen is retiring as our Executive Director. He and his wife, Frances, have kept our membership records, handled our finances, arranged for all of our reunions, and in general, just "ran the business."

This past summer Louie spent about two months in the hospital, and if it hadn't been for Frances' continued work for us, this reunion could not have been held. She was assisted by Associate Bornelle Shaw during the summer and also in Dayton. The Hansen's daughter, Barbara, came from Connecticut to help at the reunion. We all owe these ladies a big thank you. At our business meeting the members voted unanimously to name Col. Hansen our "Executive Director Emeritus."

The Group is fortunate in locating a new Executive Director so soon. Lt. Col. Gus Wendt of the 741st Squadron has agreed to take

over this job. He will have the assistance of S/Sgt Frank Lashinski of the 740th Squadron. You will be hearing more about them and from them later.

I wish to personally thank all involved in the reunion planning and all of the retiring officers and directors and to extend a welcome to all incoming officers and directors.

Ed Riggs

Lou Hansen Retires

Louis O. Hansen, Col USAF (Ret), has been the Executive Director and Treasurer of the 455th Bomb Group Association, Inc. since its beginning. Last summer Lou asked that he be relieved of his duties. Health problems forced him to make this request. Lou volunteered to take the Executive Director/Treasurer job when the 455th Bomb Group Assn was formed in 1987 and he had the job ever since that time. He, and his wife Frances, have been instrumental in arranging reunions and handling the day to day business of the Association.

During the Dayton Reunion, Gus Wendt was elected to replace Lou. Everyone felt that Lou was still of considerable value to the Association and it was decided that Lou would be given the title of Emeritus, Executive Director/Treasurer. Gus says that it is going to be a very hard act to follow Lou and he expects that he'll be talking to the Hansens frequently for advise and information. Gus stated that Lou's wife, Fran, is the hidden asset that Lou had on his side. Gus, secretly and very quietly, points out that he couldn't do the job if his wife, Marie, wasn't there to help with details. (Another case where us men take things for granted.)

The Hansens still maintain a P.O. Box in Spencer, IA. For those desiring to write the Hansens, their address is; **P.O. Box 296, Spencer, IA 51301.**

455th Bomb Group Assn Has New Address

The 455th Bomb Group Association has a new address. Since Gus Wendt was elected to become the new Executive Director/Treasurer of the 455th Bomb Group Association, the address had to be moved to Gus' home town in Sierra Vista, AZ. So now when you write to the Association please address it to the **455th Bomb Group Assn, Inc. P.O. Box 4043 Sierra Vista, AZ 85636**

Also, Gus requests that all **checks be made out to 455th Bomb Group Assn, Inc.** and not to him. Mail to the above address.

FINAL FLIGHTS

Ardon "Junior" Fichtner 12/7/96
S/Sgt 740th Squadron

Jim Comuniello S/Sgt 740th
Squadron

Robert "Bob" Skinner 10/28/97
S/Sgt POW 6/9/44-5/1/45 743rd
Squadron

Raymond C. Perry 9/6/97 Sgt. S2
743rd Squadron

Raymond Nyquist 9/14/97 S/Sgt
Waist Gunner, Wayne Smith's Crew
740 Squadron

Ethridge "Putt-Putt" Preston 7/11/97
S/Sgt Flight Engineer, Clifford
Kolberg's Crew 740th Squadron

Robert J. Kafka 4/7/97 Capt. 741st
Squadron

Memories...of David Matheson

Reading the spring issue of the Cerignola Connection, I revisited the area in my memory and as I read the articles, I recalled some of the activities I was involved in while there as a nose turret gunner on the bomber crew led by Lt. Grant N. Mendenhall. We were the first replacement crew for the 742nd Bomb Squadron arriving on the 2nd or 3rd of May 1944 and flying our first mission on the 5th and again on the 6th of May. One has only to check the flight log to know those missions were to Ploesti and were counted as doubles.

Our story as a crew started in March of 1944 at March Field, Riverside, CA where I was assigned as a gunnery instructor having just returned from a tour of duty in the Aleutian Islands with the 38th Composite Group, 404th Heavy Bomb Squadron (B-17s and B-24s). I had arrived in Alaska as a replacement crew member and as a fill in gunner, I was surplus to the regular crews so after flying several observation and weather missions from Adak Island, I transferred to the 406th Medium Bomb Squadron (B-25s, the plane on which I had received my initial training) in Columbia, SC and the Aleutian war had ceased for the B-25 which was no longer a viable force there due to its range, so the Squadron was transferred to Portland, OR and deactivated. My resultant assignment led me to the start of this story and the crew with which I flew to Cerignola.

I met the enlisted crewmen while training them in depth perception and aircraft recognition and mentioned I would much rather be going with them than sitting where I was. It only took a short interview with Lt. Mendenhall and a trip to the Group operations officer to have me assigned to the crew to replace the right waist gunner who was in the base hospital. We departed March Field very shortly as the crew was already trained

and went to Hamilton Field to pick up our overseas gear and a brand new B-24. We left there shortly for our trip to Morrison Field, FL stopping for overnight layovers at Davis-Montham Air Field at Tucson, AZ, Love Field, TX, and Memphis Naval Base, TN.

We were at Memphis on the 1st of April, 1944 and since it was a Saturday, the crew wanted to go to town for one more fling before leaving the States. I volunteered to remain behind and guard the A/C as I wanted to listen the the "Grand Ole Opry" out of Nashville, TN. I cranked up the "Putt-Putt" and turned the radio compass to 630 settling in for a time of relaxation. After a short time the already threatening weather took a sudden turn for the worse and the rain came down in torrents. The hail that accompanied it was huge and in the midst of the hail storm, the "Putt-Putt" died. I remained at my post, which inside the plane sounded like we were being pelted with rocks, and early next morning, ground crews and flight crews alike came out to survey the damage. Old "938" had 110 holes in the control surfaces and was totally out of commission and we were still in the States! We remained at Memphis long enough so "baseball" patches could be put on our torn fabric and then took off for Morrison Field, Florida.

We had barely shut the engines down at Morrison, FL, when a crew arrived to remove the complete left landing gear which they were going to install on another B-24 for a crew ready to take off for overseas. We remained at Morrison Field while our control surfaces were being recovered and another landing gear obtained after which we took off for Puerto Rico and Borrenquin Field. We were able to open our orders once we were far out over the Ocean and found out we were going to Italy via British Guyana, Brazil, Dakar, West Africa, Algeria, and Tunisia.

We stayed at Forta Leza Brazil long enough for our crew to pull a 50 hour inspection including load-

ing about 50 rounds of ammo per gun on the plane. One of the unfortunate events of our journey happened here as the bombardier was cleaning one of the guns in the nose turret and either he or the radio operator put a bolt stud in backwards. This caused no problems until we reached Cerignola, where after our plane was serviced, we as a crew took it up for a test flight of all systems and while T/Sgt. Chris Bakos was test firing it, the bolt stud came out and flew around the turret like an angry hornet. Chris left the turret and wouldn't go back to clear his guns. The Pilot called me to go clear the guns which I did and when we landed, he took me aside and informed me that I would fly the nose turret from then on. Chris became the right waist gunner from the first mission and as far as I know, the incident was never discussed within the crew.

We were the new crew on the block and had not been issued heated flying suits in the states so since there were not enough to go around, I was issued a "British Bunny Suit" and only had heated mittens. On our second mission, something hit the top of the nose turret right at the front edge while we were over the target area leaving a hole large enough for me to crawl through. It was rather windy and cold in spite of the "Bunny Suit" and heated gloves but I managed to remain at my guns until we left the danger zone and dropped back down below "Oxygen Altitude".

When we first arrived at Cerignola, our crew did a fast shuffle with the pilot being seated as co-pilot and our co-pilot being placed with more "Seasoned" pilots in other crews for a few missions after which they returned to their regular crew positions. As the first replacement crew in the squadron, our plane was assigned to the ground maintenance crew of the plane our crew replaced. They were with the squadron when it came overseas and well able to care for our plane.

Our mission logs were typical of the other crews in the Squadron and as the older crews began to arrive at their 50 mission destinations and were replaced, our crew gradually became one of the older crews and began to assume a leadership role flying as Squadron and Group Lead Crew usually with the Squadron or Group commander as Pilot. One of our tougher missions was as lead crew for the 15th Air Force with Lt. Col (then Maj.) Ambrosen as lead Pilot. He was flying the B-24 he had flown overseas and had named the "Virginia Princess". As we were over the target, we took a direct hit with an 88 dud which entered the A/C directly in front of the outside bomb bay door handle and exited about 6 inches behind Col. Ambrosen's head taking the small window out behind him. It also cut the radio, electrical, and main hydraulic lines which didn't affect the operation of the plane except that we now had no power or communications. Col. Ambrosen made all kinds of signs to our assistant lead ship to assume the lead position and finally someone got the message across to take over while we dropped back to second position.

Our trip home was uneventful once it was established that the hydraulic system could not be repaired to hold pressure and the electrical system had been cut back to reduce the danger of a fire. When we approached the field, we of course circled until everyone else had landed and then took our turn. The gear and flaps had to be hand lowered which became a very difficult operation, and the crew was unable to get the flaps below the half way point because of the terrific amount of air pressure. When we landed, our brake pressure consisted of the emergency air bottles which were probably enough except in the excitement of the moment, the brakes were applied and then released, losing all the air pressure.

The crew members except for the pilot, co-pilot, and engineer,

were all in the rear or waist section of the plane as it landed and some began tying their chest pack parachutes to the gun mounts. When the rip cords were pulled, the chutes were released, were almost immediately torn to shreds and more chutes were deployed. These also ripped and they began to ask for more but when they asked me for mine, I refused as I had a backpack and knew if I lost it, I would have a hard time replacing it. The plane had decelerated to about 40 or 50 MPH when we hit the end of the runway and down over the hill we went crossing the main road into our area and through a rock fence which knocked the left gear backwards dropping the plane on its belly. We managed to deplane in a hurry and there was only one visible sign of injury in the whole crew. Somehow, Maj. Ambrosen had cut his little finger climbing out the top of the cockpit. (The other five enlisted men were awarded the Purple Heart for bruises!)

As we came to the realization that we were safe and the plane wasn't going to explode, an incident occurred which I have always cherished. One of the Headquarters Clerks had been following the plane with a jeep and rushed up to Maj. Ambrose to give him the good news that he had received orders while on the mission and had been promoted to Lt. Col.

As most of the other crews before us, we went to the Isle of Capri where I explored the Isle a bit more than some of the other crew members. I climbed the hill which held a Catholic building which was very hard to get to and as it was empty, I roamed through it noting the names of the German soldiers who like us had been on the isle for a rest and had also climbed this hill but chose to leave their names etched into the walls before departing. We spent one day of our time being rowed around the isle by one of the fellows living there and as it was supposed to be a sailing jaunt, it was a total flop because the sail folded soon after we started and we were

slowly rowed completely around the isle. We did rent Kayaks and went to the Grotto Azure swimming past the money grabbers trying to charge for an entry to the grotto. They looked official in their uniforms but we swam on in anyway.

I could write a book about the rest of our missions and the things I saw there including one unfortunate mission where the groups became crossed up while bombing the airfields around Wels Austria and a disabled B-24 from another squadron, in an attempt to leave the area, crossed below a group on their bomb run. Unfortunately the plane strayed directly into the path of the fragmentation bombs which in just a flash wiped out plane, crew and all. What can one do after witnessing such a tragedy except to report the event during debriefing as it was one of the great tragedies I witnessed and could do nothing to prevent.

The war had its light side at times and since the following is all hearsay, it could be untrue but from the sources from which I obtained it, I would take it as truth. We were all segregated by area when we left Italy to return to the states and when we finally loaded on board the Gen. Gordon for the trip home, I was assigned to the central states section and separated from the rest of the crew.

Our Radio Operator, Chris Bakos was down in the Galley as we went through the Straits of Gibraltar and headed into the open Atlantic ocean. The shipboard Antiaircraft gun crews chose this exact time to have some gun practice and without announcing it to the passengers, released some balloons and began to shoot. Chris was always a very high strung nervous young man and when he felt the ship tremble and heard the faint noise of the guns, he assumed we had been torpedoed. He did not intend to go down with the ship and began to make his way topside with all haste.

Gen. Nathan S. Twining was being rotated from commander of the 15th AF to the States and was

aboard. He had been on deck and started back to "Officer Country" with several other officers going in the opposite direction of Chris. When they met, Chris had his head down and was full steam ahead plowing into Gen. Twining and knocking him down. The General jumped up, and told someone to grab Chris and supposedly had him thrown into the ship's brig until we reached the States. Now Gen. Twining never released this to me so I can only take the word of those who did.

With such a large number of men aboard, it was a joyous occasion when I found out my 2nd cousin Lt. Edward R. Tinker, a P-38 Pilot from the 82nd Fighter Group and a returning POW was aboard. Being an officer, he had a state-room very close to Gen. Twining's and once we found each other, he related some of his experiences during his tour and we had some very interesting short talks while on our way home. We rode the same train from Camp Patrick Henry, VA to Camp Chaffee, AR.

*David G. Matheson
742nd Squadron*

Ed - David writes that most of his crew is deceased. Including the Pilot, Radio Operator and others. Lt. Mendenhall died in Las Vegas, Chris Bakos in Bowling Green, VA. His Bombardier lives near Houston and the Ball Gunner in Warner Robbins, GA. The Engineer is a Catholic Priest, whereabouts unknown.

These Photographs Need a Home!

The following crew photographs do not have a complete legend or forwarding address. If you are a member of the crew, let me know and I will forward the photograph on to you.

Carl Higginbotham
William Hall
Lester Pinkley
Robert Kafkas
Mullineaux
Bob Baker
Jack Montgomery
Blankenship

The Last of the Bombardiers

Down a lonely road on a cold black night,
A miserable beggar trudged into sight,
And the people whispered over their beers,
There goes the last of the Bombardiers.

What is a Bombardier?—No reply,
But men grow silent and women sigh,
As a death-like silence fills the place,
With the gaunt gray ghost of a long lost race.

Furtive glances from ceiling to floor
Till someone or something opens the door,
The bravest of hearts turn cold with fear
For the thing in the door is a Bombardier!

His hands were bony, and his hair was thick
His back was curved like an old bent pin.
His eyes were two empty rings of black,
And he vaguely mumbled- "Shack! Shack!"

This ancient relic of the Second World War
Crept 'cross the room and slouched at the bar,
And in a hollow tone from his sunken chest
Demanded a drink and only the best.

The people said nothing but watched in the glass
As the Beggar produced his bomb-sight pass.
The glass to his lips, they heard him say,
"Bomb bay open, - Bombs away!"

Then speaking a word he slouched to the door,
And the last of the Bombardiers was seen no more.
But all through the years this phrase has stuck,
When you say Bombardier, you add, "Hard Luck!"

Author unknown

Who---What Squadron?

On page 7 Cerignola Connection, Fall 1997 the unidentified crew is William Arnolds. 743 Squadron, 455th Group.

Front row left to right:
William Arnold, pilot; Richard Dunscomb, co-pilot; Ingar Anderson, navigator; Stephen Drasco, bombardier.
Back row left to right:
Matthew Spencer, ball turret gunner; Roland Keith, top turret gunner; *Donald Petrie, nose turret gunner; Charles J. McArthur, tail turret gunner; Alex Herbert, waist gunner; Sebastino Manzitto, waist gunner; *(KIA May 6, 1944 over Polesti - after bombing at Campina, Rumania)

On page 245, flight of the Vulgar Vultures, this crew is identified and on page 249 it appears again as an unidentified crew.

Crew was formed at Boise, Idaho in 1943 and then went to Langley Field, VA.

Missing Crew Picture!

Charlie Wells, 740th Squadron, never received his "only" crew picture back after submission. If any of you received it by mistake - or have a copy, send it to your editor and he will forward it on to Charlie.



Leave It To Naomi!

Al Asch writes "Naomi and I enjoyed reading the 1997 Fall edition of the Cerignola Connection. I read it first and then handed it to Naomi without saying anything. When she got to page 16, she said "Why, here's a picture of Tom Ramey when he was an Aviatron Cadet. He hasn't changed a bit!" I agreed. Tom, you have to do better on mystery pictures in the future. This one was too easy to identify."

Al Asch, Historian Writes—



The Air Force Association and Turner Publishing have joined forces to publish a commemorative, desk top (9 x 12 inch) hard cover book honoring the people and events of AFA's celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the United States Air Force in Las Vegas, Nevada, April 22-26, 1997. I contacted the editor, Mr. Mark A. Thompson, to learn more about its publication and was informed that Turner would accept two double spaced pages and two pictures from each group as their history. I wrote the history and sent it with the pictures to Mr. Thompson at the request of our President, Ed Riggs.

Al Asch

Ed: Al's article appears on pages 5 and 6

A Record Fish?

Irv Rubin writes and states that he hooked, played, and netted this monster record fish in less than 3 minutes!

*At the next reunion I want to hear one of Irv's war stories.
Ed*



Jim Scott Asks For Help!

I was the bombardier on a crew that flew on our mission No. 117, Sept. 15, 1944 to Tatoi Airdrome, Athens, Greece. I am trying to locate some other crew members who can verify this flight, and as usual I don't have a clue regarding who else was there. A number of you fellows were extremely helpful in getting the facts about "the second Ancona landing" (ref. Cerignola Connection, Winter 1992), with special thanks to Ormond Buffington and Tom Conroy. I really regret not keeping better records during WWII. The truth is that after working in a shipyard covered with "loose lips sink ships" signs and later being half brain washed at Tonapah, NV while fooling around with bat bombs, I became a security kook. The only info I ever recorded was the date and where we had gone the day before. I tried getting verification of the above mentioned mission from the National Records Center in St. Louis, but they had a fire and part of our group records were destroyed.

*Jim Scott
119 Swan Drive
New Braunfels, TX 78130*

455th Bombardment Group (Heavy) By Colonel Alfred Asch, USAF Ret

The 455th Bombardment Group (Heavy) was a World War II United States Army Air Force combat organization. It was activated in June 1943 at Clovis, New Mexico with four squadrons: 740th, 741st, 742nd and 743rd. The Group trained in the United States with Consolidated B-24 Liberator heavy bombers and then moved to Italy during January and February 1944, where it served in combat with the Fifteenth Air Force (AF) from February 1944

through April 1945. The Group shared an improvised airdrome with another B-24 group at San Giovanni, about 5 miles from Cerignola, Italy.

The 455th engaged primarily in daylight, high altitude bombardment of strategic targets such as factories, marshaling yards, oil refineries, storage areas, harbors and airdromes. These targets were in France, Italy, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Austria and the Balkans. The Group received a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for an important mission on 2 April 1944 for bombing a ball bearing plant at Steyer, Austria. Another DUC was received for attacking the Moosbierbaum oil refinery at Vienna, Austria on 26 June 1944. The results were highly successful for both targets, but the costs were high. The Group was under severe fighter opposition and heavy barrages of flak and lost several bombers, four on the Steyer raid and ten at Moosbierbaum from a standard formation of 36 B-24's.

The Group was also used in direct support of the ground campaign in Italy by bombing enemy troop concentrations, bridges, marshaling yards and airdromes during the fall of 1944 to hamper the German's withdrawal from the occupied countries. It also supported Allied ground forces at the Anzio beachhead and Cassino, Italy during March 1944 by bombing troop concentrations. It knocked out gun positions in preparation for the Allied invasion of Southern France in August 1944 and assisted the final Allied drive through Italy in April 1945 by hitting bridges, gun positions and enemy troop concentrations.

During 15 months of combat, the Group completed 255 missions, dropped 14,702 tons of bombs and the gunners destroyed 119 enemy fighter aircraft. Another 78 were probably destroyed by them. Casualties were 147 killed in action, 268 missing, 173 prisoners of war and 112 injured and returned to duty. This outstanding performance can be attributed to

the dedication of the air crews and the ground support echelon.

The 455th participated in and supported the following battle campaigns: Air Combat, EAME Theater; Air Offensive, Europe; Anzio Beachhead; Rome-Arno Campaign; Normandy; Northern and Southern France; North Appennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; and the Po Valley campaign. The group commanders during combat operations were: Colonel Kenneth A. Cool, July 1943 to September 1944; and Colonel William I. Snowden, September 1944 to May 1945.

The officers and men suffered extreme hardships in Italy the first few months after arrival. There was nothing prepared for the Group's arrival except for a clay and gravel runway and hardstands for the aircraft. At the beginning, each man had a shelter half and chose a partner with another half to have a full pup tent that gave some protection from the weather. This was in January 1944 when Italy had its worst winter weather: cold, rain, mud and sometimes snow. The men made camp in farmers' olive groves and eventually all were housed in pyramidal tents for the duration. Crew mission briefings were held in an old Italian animal stable. The building was sunken into the ground, made of Italian stone with no windows. The men had to clean out the manure what seemed to be years of accumulation. The building was later used as a movie house. It was unpleasant for a time as the men had to fight off the fleas left over from the animals. Yankee ingenuity was used to acquire Italian building materials and labor to build a few permanent buildings to house common functions of messing, administration, maintenance and clubs.

When air combat ended in April 1945, the mission of the Group changed. Many of its planes were used to carry supplies to Northern Italy but the principal mission was to transfer personnel and equipment back to the States. This took until 9 September 1945 when the Group was deactivated.

The Story Behind Taps



It's a bugle call that easily evokes tears on Memorial Day and at other times when Americans formally honor their war dead.

Taps. Few of us know the origin of how it came to be one of America's most inspiring pieces of military music. The composer, strangely enough, was not a musician nor did he have any formal knowledge of music or notes. His name was Daniel Butterfield and he was a union general in the Civil War. Butterfield's unit had taken part in a fierce battle at Gaines' Mill near Richmond, VA, on June 26, 1862, and he was seriously wounded. If his unit would have broken, the Army of the Potomac could not have withdrawn safely and the North would have suffered yet another defeat.

President Lincoln arrived and stated no reinforcements could be committed and the morale sank to a low ebb. Butterfield must have sensed the mood and began turning over in his mind the phrases which would express the strange quietude – the hush that hung over the thousands of tents where men slept. The next morning he called in his brigade bugler and whispered his melody to him. Other buglers from different units came by and inquired about the music they heard.

The effect was magical and soon taps was being played throughout the Army of the Potomac. Taps was officially adopted by the Army in 1874. General Butterfield was a Medal of Honor recipient during the Civil War and died in 1901. He was buried in the U.S. Military Academy Cemetery at West Point with full military honors and to the saddest song of all, his beloved Taps.

TAPS

Day is done, gone the sun,
From the lakes, from the hills,
From the skies.

All is well, safely rest.

God is nigh.

From EX-POW Bulletin

When the Mickey's Flew!

A fine radar section was attached to Group Headquarters for providing all the maintenance of the radar equipment installed in the "Pathfinder" aircraft. The section also provided the radar operators called "Mickey" who flew in the Pathfinder airplanes each time radar bombing was scheduled over targets covered by clouds and/or smoke. These Mickey operators flew with the pathfinder trained crews of the Squadron and Group Headquarters leading the mission that day. The radar section made a major contribution for the Group's success in bombing the smoke-covered oil refinery and storage targets at Ploesti and other major targets in Germany and Austria when they were obscured by smoke and clouds.

ARLINGTON MEMORIAL



The 455th BG plaque and oak tree are doing well at the Arlington National Cemetery. With a tree and plaque for the 93rd B-24 group dedicated 10 October, there are now four B-24 memorials on the corner of Grant and Roosevelt Avenues. This is a short distance from the Kennedy grave site. There is not a B-17 marker in sight.

Courage

Courage is not limited to the battlefield or the Indianapolis 500 or bravely catching a thief in your house. The real tests of courage are much quieter. They are the inner tests, like remaining faithful when nobody's looking, like enduring pain when the room is empty, like standing alone when you're misunderstood.

Interment in Arlington National Cemetery

a. Eligibility

(1) Persons who die on active duty in the Armed Forces;

(2) Retired members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard who: (a) have performed active Federal service; (b) are carried on official service retirees lists; and (c) receive or are eligible to receive retired pay stemming from service in the Armed Forces;

(3) Persons otherwise eligible by reason of honorable military service who have also held elective office in the U.S. government or served on the Supreme Court or in the Cabinet or in an appointive office compensated at Level II under the Executive Salary Act;

(4) Former members of the Armed Forces separated for a physical disability of 30% or greater prior to October 1, 1949, who had served on active duty (other than for training) and who would have been eligible for retirement under the provisions of 10 U.S.C. 1201 had that statute been in effect on the date of separation.

(5) Former members of the Armed Forces whose last active duty (other than for training) military service terminated honorably and who have been awarded one of the following decorations: Medal of Honor, Distinguished Service Cross, Air Force Cross, Navy Cross, Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star, or Purple Heart.

(6) Chiefs of missions who were at any time during their tenure classified in class I under the provisions of 411 of the Act of 13 August 1946, 60 Stat. 1002, as amended (22 U.S.C. 866, 1964 ed.) provided their last period of active duty as a member of the Armed Forces terminated honorably.

(7) The spouses, minor children, and dependent adult children of the persons listed in subparagraphs (1) through (6) above, and of persons already buried in Arlington.

b. Discharge Other Than Honorable. A person whose last

separation from an Armed Force was under other-than-honorable conditions is not eligible for burial even though he or she may have received veterans' benefits, treatment at a VA medical center, or died in a VA medical center.

c. Arranging an Interment in Arlington. The person, usually a funeral director, making arrangements for an interment should communicate as soon as possible with the Office of the Cemetery Superintendent. The office is open **6 days a week – Monday through Saturday.** The phone number is **(202)695-3250, 3253, 3255.** The cemetery personnel will verify the decedent's eligibility for burial and notify the funeral director or the decedent's family. The remains are not to be shipped to Arlington until such notification is made. The date, time, and place of interment are not to be announced in newspapers until specifically confirmed by the Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery.

Ed – I've been asked for additional information regarding interment in Arlington National Cemetery. The above is an excerpt from the EX-POW Bulletin.

Charles Wills Writes –

Received a nice letter from **Chuck Wills** plus a crew picture. Several of his crew are listed in this issue's "Final Flights." He says that the remaining members of his crew have been unable to locate Herb Hert, crew engineer. If any of you out there can help it would be appreciated. **Chuck's address is: T. Smith, Farm Trail, Lynnfield, Massachusetts 01940.** Chuck states they were a lead crew and had the honor to fly with Colonel Cool several times. Toward the end of their missions Lou Polan was operations officer. Their first mission was flown 10/4/44 and the last 4/2/45.



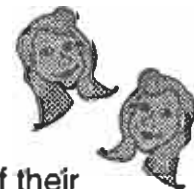
Let's Not Abort a "Milk Run"

Combat crews hated to abort a potential "milk run" and Joseph J. Dreher's crew from the 743rd Bomb Squadron was no exception, according to T/Sgt. Bernard McRoberts, the crew's radio operator/gunner.

Sergeant McRoberts wrote, "I flew a mission in a B-24L, Miss Dorothy, and used a glove for an oxygen mask. It was a milk run and the navigator had forgotten his oxygen mask. As the radio room was above the bomb bays in the "L" model, the pilot, Captain Dreher, could not see us and to this day does not know about it. The rest of the gunners kept an eye on me.

"The flight engineer, T/Sgt. George Champeau, helped fix the glove – cut the thumb out, hooked on the oxygen hose and, with a piece of string, tied the glove over my mouth and nose. I cracked the oxygen a little and away we went. Because we were flying lead, I didn't have to leave the radio room. I think if the pilot had known, we may have turned back." McRoberts said they got the idea for the glove oxygen mask from "Yank Magazine."

Two blondes were in a parking lot trying to unlock the door of their Mercedes with a coat hanger. They tried and tried to get the door open, but they couldn't. The girl with the coat hanger stopped for a moment to catch her breath, and her friend said anxiously, "Hurry up! It's starting to rain and the top is down."



Chip Turtzo Tells His Story

My story is about Ed Mlcak's crew of the 742nd squadron and Sgt. Philip Sabatine, tailgunner who was killed in action on Feb. 1, 1945.

My wife is a younger first cousin of Philip's and for many years we knew sparingly little about the circumstances of Phil's death in World War II. His mother, who died in 1995, never seemed to want to talk about it and the rest of the family knew some bits and pieces as a result of an early communication from pilot Mlcak. Being interested in WWII history I became increasingly curious and fascinated over the circumstances of his death, but I didn't know where or how to begin. How many missions had he flown? Where was he stationed? Were any members of his crew still living?

After checking at the County Veteran's Affairs office I found out that he was with the 455th Bomb Group of the 15th AAF but didn't know where to go from there. Then one day, I happened to see a notice in the American Legion Magazine that there was a reunion being planned for the 455th Bomb Group. That led me to Lou Hansen who was very helpful. To my pleasant surprise Lou was able to identify Philip's crew and gave me the names of six surviving members who flew with him.

My first contact was with Clark Dudley who shared a tent with Philip. I stated my relationship and my personal family reasons for the call and Clark was very nice to explain his recollections of Philip and how he was killed when their crippled liberator crash landed returning from a mission. I can't explain my feelings knowing that I was talking to a friend and crew member of Philip's after more than 50 years ago who was there at that fateful moment. It was both gratifying and sad to finally uncover the details and to pass along this information to the rest of Philip's family.

A couple of days later while relaxing in the evening at my home, the phone rang and it was Ed Mlcak, the pilot of Philip's plane! We had a long discussion and he also was very helpful in explaining the details of that mission and his recollections of Philip. But, the best was yet to come.

A couple of weeks later, again while sitting at home one evening, my phone rang, and it was Ed Mlcak calling from Washington D.C. while attending the 1996 reunion of the 455th Bomb Group Association. To my complete surprise he proceeded to put each of the four other crew members attending the reunion on the phone to speak with me: Co-Pilot Karl Anderson, Navigator Bill Doyle, Bombardier Franz Gerber, and Clark Dudley. I still can't get

over the fact that I talked to all five men that evening and how nice they were. It's a tribute to the men of the 455th and very comforting to families such as mine.

Since then I have kept in touch with everyone including Joe Romako who is in ill health and was unable to attend any reunions. The men autographed a crew picture for me, I was invited to be a member of your association, and I was happy to have made T-shirts for them prior to the 1997 reunion. My wife and I would like to offer our personal thanks to a great bunch of guys for their kindness and cooperation.

*Edmund "Chip" Turtzo
Bangor, PA*

From Al Asch – Group History

The group history submitted to the Turner Publishing Company last summer has been accepted for publication of the history book on the Air Force 50th Anniversary. All group histories have been written, typeset and proofed by Turner. The publisher allowed two pictures to go along with this account. If you want additional information about publication, contact: **Mark A. Thompson, Publisher; P.O. Box 6802; Evansville, IN 47719-0802.**



"That was not a double mission. That was a milkrun. You cannot get double credit for a milkrun." L to R: John Martsching, Charles Miller, Charles Rosenberg, Tony Corsello. Far right unidentified.

The B-24 Liberator



This history would not be complete without covering the origin of the B-24 Liberator, designed and built by the Consolidated Aircraft Corporation, San Diego, California. The French Government in May 1938 gave Consolidated specifications for a heavy bomber. Then the United States Army, in early 1939, developed a requirement for a heavy bomber of better performance than the existing B-17. The Army specified a bomber capable of top speeds of 300 m.p.h. with a range of 3,000 miles and a ceiling of 35,000 feet. From these, Consolidated initiated further design studies which led to the development of the B-24.

Consolidated's initial study was to develop a land-based bomber version of their new Model 29 flying boat, designated PB2Y, which accounted for the large rounded fuselage and high wing design of the B-24. The engineers continued design studies, designated XB-24 which incorporated Davis R. Davis' high aspect ratio wing (The Davis Wing) and twin-finned tail empannage used on the Model 31 flying boat, the P4Y-1. On 26 October 1939, The Davis Wing was married to the fuselage and on 29 December 1939, the Liberator flew for the first time.

In its day, the B-24 was by far the most complicated airplane and certainly the most expensive. One of the most unusual features was the tricycle undercarriage. The main gear was long to accommodate the tall bomb bays and it retracted outward by electric motor power. Equally unconventional was the roller/shutter bomb bay doors covering the 8,000 lb. bomb load which was stowed vertically in the two halves of the bomb bay, separated by a catwalk connecting the flight deck and the tail section where the gunners operated. The high wing loading of the Davis airfoil was also unique at that time.

The French entered into a production contract in September 1939

for 139 aircraft designated LB-30, the first overseas version. After the fall of France to the Germans in June 1940, the English assumed deliveries of the French order of 139 airplanes and increased it to 165. They started using these in a variety of roles. The United States AAC placed an order for seven YB-24's on 11 April 1939 for service testing. This was soon increased to 38 additional airplanes designated the B-24A, enough at that time for a bomber group. The combat experience of the French and English, and service testing by the AAC led to several major modifications. These included 50 caliber machine guns in the tail in place of the 30 caliber guns, self-sealing fuel tanks, additional armor plate, and engines upgraded from Wright to the Pratt and Whitney R-1830-41 with turbo superchargers. Gun turrets were added to the tail and above the flight deck. With these improvements, the designation progressed from YB-24 to B-24D, the first version to see combat service by the United States AAC. Its gross weight had gone from 46,400 to 56,000 lbs. with a service ceiling of 28,000 ft. and operational cruising speed of 175 m.p.h. Modifications became so numerous that it became impossible for implementation on the production lines. Modification centers were established to handle the changes.

The name "Liberator" came from the British and was endorsed by Consolidated through a company-wide naming contest held in 1942. It became a very versatile airplane. Apart from its bombing role in all theaters of operation, it hauled fuel to France during the push toward Germany, carried troops and fought the U-boats in the Atlantic Ocean. It served as Prime Minister Churchill's personal airplane for his frequent trips to other countries and combat theaters to carry out foreign policy and coordinate the war effort. It also made a major contribution in winning the war in the Pacific. Throughout its relatively short operational career, the B-24 was

overshadowed by the B-17 Flying Fortress. It did not receive the notoriety in press and other media that it deserved. The B-17 "glory boys" looked upon the slab-sided B-24 with disdain, referring to it as "the crate our's came in." Some affectionately called it "the pregnant cow." It is probably best remembered for its use in the low altitude raid on the Ploesti oil refineries and storage facilities during August 1943. A total of 18,188 were built, more than any other aircraft before or since WWII.

Other companies built B-24's from the Consolidated design: Convair and Douglas Aircraft Companies at Ft. Worth, Texas, and Tulsa, Oklahoma respectively; the Ford Company at Willow Run, Michigan, where the latest production line techniques were employed; and the North American Company at Dallas, Texas. Construction at the Ford plant started in 1941 and, at completion, cost 165 million dollars and was a quarter mile long with 70 assembly lines. Although North American did not go into production until 1943, they were the first to introduce the nose gun turret with 50 caliber machine guns. Additional improvements were made resulting from early combat experiences. The belly turret, with 50 caliber machine guns was also added. The bomb sight was tied into the auto pilot to improve bombing accuracy. The bombardier was able to make course corrections with the system rather than the pilot manually making them by following the pilot directional indicator (PDI). There were three other improvements made which were important for high altitude bombing operations, seldom if ever, written about. The first was a change to the oxygen system. The early version, operating from England, had a pressure feed system whereby oxygen flowed constantly to the face mask. The mask had a rubber sack at the bottom to collect the oxygen. After a few hours at high altitude in frigid weather, the mask tended to freeze up from the collection of

moisture from a man's breath, cutting off the oxygen supply. The radio operators, having the least to do in and out of the target area, saved many crew members by feeding them oxygen from a "walk-around" bottle while restoring the operation of the mask. The installation of the demand system and redesign of the oxygen mask corrected the problem. Another improvement was the addition of electronic supercharger controls, replacing the manual type. After reaching altitude, the pilot changes the power for formation flying by changing the setting of the superchargers rather than the throttles. The problem was that the control handles to the superchargers had to be staggered to get uniform power from all four engines. If the pilots used the throttles for changing power, it would sometimes "blow" the supercharger gaskets, thus loss of power. The electronic controls, operated by turning a knob on the throttle pedestal, synchronized the four superchargers to the engines. This feature made it considerably easier to fly high altitude formation.

The introduction of the electric flying suit, including gloves and boots, saved crews from frostbite in the frigid weather at high altitudes. Unfortunately, they often shorted out and caused burns at the most crucial times. Crews that would use them, wore them inside flying suits and jackets in case of failure. Also, if a man had to bail out over enemy territory, he needed more than an electric flying suit to survive prison camp or escape enemy capture. Another important improvement was in the sights of the 50 caliber machine guns. Although the gunners were making high claims for shooting down enemy fighters, actual results were disappointing. The sights were simplistic, amounting to only a spike at the end of the barrel and a sighting ring at the stock. The gunners had to judge the distance and speed of the incoming fighters. Although every fifth bullet was a tracer to assist the gunner's accuracy,

there wasn't time to make aiming adjustments during the attack. The gunners were instructed to lead the fighters more in their sighting. There was no account taken of the fact that both the bombers and fighters were moving forward. One could observe the tracers going behind the oncoming fighters. Mathematicians and armament officers designed new gun sights that had a series of circular rings to aid the gunners in determining range, speed, and direction. Improvements in accuracy resulted overnight.

Bill Conlin Writes—



My fellow crew member, REUBEN NYQUIST, died September 14, 1997 from cancer. We were on Wayne Smith's crew starting in Willow Run, Michigan; through Belm, South America; and on to Cerignola, Italy. He was waist gunner as well as my best friend and probably saved my life when he tossed an extra flack suit over to me so that I was somewhat protected from the very exposed tail position while photographing action over the target where I suffered a direct hit from shrapnel. S/Sgt. Reuben Nyquist 9/14/97
Left Waist Gunner
Wayne Smith's Crew
740th Bomb Squadron

I would like to take this opportunity to compliment you on this very fine Newsletter (Cerignola Connection) which is very readable and informative and extremely well done.

The B-24 in Early Combat

The first group of B-24's, the 93rd Bomb Group, to fly combat arrived in England during September 1942. The B-24 remained in the shadows of the B-17 Flying Fortress for some time. Over 100 Fortresses, enough for

three groups, had been flying high altitude bombing missions over France since 17 August 1942. The maiden B-24 mission from England was flown on 9 October 1942 against the Fives-Lille steel works in Belgium. The Group came under heavy fighter and anti-aircraft fire. In October 1942, the 44th Bomb Group was the second B-24 group to arrive in England. It fell to the B-24 and B-17 Groups to prove conclusively that daylight precision bombing could succeed in the deadly skies over Europe. The British Royal Air Force (RAF) remained unconvinced. In November 1942, even American instructors doubted their crew's ability to bomb in daylight and survive German opposition.

Daylight high altitude precision bombing started gaining credibility after making equipment and operational improvements which led to good bombing results on the early missions. The first equipment change was the installation of two additional 50 caliber machine guns in the vulnerable nose section to combat head-on attacks by Luftwaffe fighters. The Luftwaffe soon learned they could make quarter head-on attacks without being fired upon. This modification was concocted by enterprising armament officers and installed by a small company in Northern Ireland. The guns had a ball joint, making them movable for sighting by the navigator and bombardier. One pointed forward and one out each side of the plexiglass nose section. The navigator and bombardier had to lie on their stomachs to sight and operate the guns. Also, automatic belt feeding systems were installed on all gun armament through field modifications, replacing the cumbersome process of changing 36 round drums during the heat of battle. The Luftwaffe soon developed a respect for the new armament and their losses started to mount from the B-24 gunners' improved fire power and accuracy. Consolidated started adding these improvements to

future production models.

Experimentation was undertaken to determine optimum altitudes, flight formations and bomb run methods to destroy targets and counteract German defenses of flak and fighters. In November 1942, B-24's and B-17's were sent to Saint Nazaire in France to destroy submarine pens. Thirty-one B-17's went in first, followed by 12 B-24's. All flew at 500 feet to avoid enemy radar detection before climbing to bombing heights ranging from 7,500 feet for the B-17's to 18,000 feet for the B-24's. The B-17's suffered heavy losses which included three airplanes missing in action (MIA) with 32 crewmen, 22 damaged, one crew member killed, 11 wounded, and one aircraft crash landing on the return. The B-24's, bombing at 18,000 feet, suffered no aircraft losses with only one slightly damaged. This raid confirmed that the bombers could not attack a target from low levels and come through without suffering unacceptable losses. This and earlier raids also confirmed what the planners knew all along. The B-24, with its high wing loading, made it difficult to maintain a tight formation above 21,000 feet, even though its service ceiling was 28,000 feet. In addition, its operational cruising speed of 175 m.p.h. made it 10-20 m.p.h. faster than the B-17's. This made it difficult for the B-24's to follow the B-17's to bomb a common target.

After experimentation, the flight formation settled on a three flight arrangement with a lead flight of six aircraft and a high flight stacked to the right and low flight stacked to the left of six aircraft each. Each flight had three aircraft in a diamond formation. When the group strength reached 36 or more aircraft, a second section of 18 aircraft was added. This formation carried over from the 8th Air Force to the 15th for operation from Italy.

The method of making bombing runs changed with experience. The pilot in the lead airplane fre-

quently took evasive action to avoid flak from the initial point (IP) to the target and at the last moment would follow the PDI at the direction of the bombardier operating the Norden bomb sight. The evasive action was a series of small turns to the left and right. This made it difficult to hold a large formation together and only the best pilots could conduct this maneuver, then follow the PDI at the last moment and hit the target. All airplanes dropped their bombs in formation with each bombardier setting the range in the bomb sight. Results were often unsatisfactory and the bomb strikes tended to be scattered. Changes were made whereby all groups were ordered to fly straight and level from the IP to the target and only the lead ships in each flight were to drop their bombs from the bombardier's setting of the range. All others were to drop their bombs when the bombardiers visually observed the bombs dropping from the lead ships in their flight. Bombing results improved and much better concentration of strikes occurred in the target area.

The accuracy of high altitude daylight bombing started taking its toll on German targets. Some called it "pin-point" bombing. The bombers were getting through in spite of enemy opposition, but they suffered heavy losses on some missions. They were getting through, nevertheless, without fighter escort. The Germans started to realize that a large buildup of the American bomber forces could wreck havoc on their military/industrial complex. A defense had to be developed. To defend against the bombers, they moved many fighter aircraft from the Russian front and the Mediterranean area to Germany, France, Belgium, and Holland. This relieved pressure from the air in these active war area and greatly assisted the Russians on their front and also helped the British and Americans in the African campaign. The German fighters started inflicting heavy losses on the B-17's and

B-24's, especially on those missions that were beyond the coastal targets of France, Belgium, Holland and Germany.

The RAF provided some escort, but its Spitfires had very limited range, thus providing protection for bombing only the coastal targets of Europe. American P-38 and P-47 aircraft were in production, but had not been fitted with external fuel tanks nor were there enough numbers for effective bomber escort on long missions. The lack of escort fighters resulted from an error in planning in 1941 and 1942. By August 1943, the P-47's were fitted with auxiliary fuel tanks which gave them the capability of longer range bomber escort. Shortly thereafter, up to 200 of these aircraft were dispatched to fly bomber escort, but they were greatly outnumbered by the Luftwaffe. It was not until the fall of 1943, that the P-38 started flying escorts in small numbers. This fighter aircraft had early design problems with its twin engines and tail booms and external fuel tanks had not been fitted.

The P-51 became the most effective escort fighter. It evolved from a British design in 1940 and the AAC became interested in the fighter. With a change in the engine from the British-built Allison to the British built Rolls-Royce, the North American Aircraft Company went into mass production. By December of 1943, the P-51's were used in limited number for long range bomber escort of the 8th Air Force in England. By the time the 455th started operations from Italy during the spring of 1944, it enjoyed long range escort by the P-51, P-47 and P-38 aircraft on most missions where fighter opposition was expected. External fuel tanks had been added for long range bomber escort and the design problems for the P-38 had been corrected. Even so, the Group lost a significant number of B-24's from enemy fighters.

SoSoSoSoSo

Finally Recognition

This letter has been sent to Ed Riggs asking for individual donations from 455th members to install a bronze model of our beloved B-24 in the Honor Court of the USAF Academy at Colorado Springs.

Dear Ed;
Smarting from the 55 year charade that the B-17 won the war, a corporation has been formed by some B-24 veterans to fund the sculpting of a 19 foot wingspread B-24. When completed, this bronze replica of the plane that brought us home will reside in the Honor Court of the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs.

The corporation, formed in Wisconsin, is entitled "B-24 Groups Memorial of the Army Air Forces." It is a 501 (C) 3 nonprofit corporation, so donations will be tax deductible.

With \$112,000 in pledges to date toward our goal of \$175,000 we have a good start. BUT WE NEED THE HELP OF ALL WHO FLEW, MAINTAINED OR BUILT OUR BELOVED B-24.

We solicit your help in spreading the word of our endeavor, so in 1998

our B-24 will fly in the Honor Court along with the B-17, P-38, P-40, P-47 and P-51; all of whom are occupying a niche in the Honor Court.

*Sincerely,
Neal E. Sorensen
Treasurer*

The Project Has Already Started

The wood model is almost completed and the contract has been signed by the principals. The wood model is needed for mold taking for the bronze memorial. After it is no longer needed, the wood model will be placed in the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia. The specifications are for the B-24J at 1/6 scale size, with a wing span of 18.33 feet, the fuselage 11.27 feet and the stabilizer/rudder 3 feet; its weight approximately 1 ton. The base will be blue colored, polished granite and weigh approximately 3 tons. There will be two bronze plaques on the base; one 16" x 16", another approximately 21" x

50". The large size plaque will be for the etching of names for those who contribute more than \$450.00. We expect the model to be completed and installed at the Academy by September 1998 with dedication ceremonies to be held September 25, 1998.

Since the above letter was sent, a brokerage account has been established with **Merrill Lynch, Account Number 673-04k02, Minneapolis, MN** where one can transfer securities, e.g., appreciated stock, as their donation. We have had several donors use this account. Using appreciated stock is a "painless way for making donations for this important project. I would like to see the management of the 455th approve a donation from treasury funds so that at least the names of Colonels Cool and Snowden will appear on the plaque. We estimate there will be about 300 names as the final count. I am an officer of the tax free corporation. If anyone has questions, they can call me: 301-881-1376.

Al Asch

.....
A B-24 LIBERATOR IS MISSING FROM THE HONOR COURT OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE ACADEMY
What Can You Do About It? CONTRIBUTE NOW!

SEND YOUR TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO: **B-24 Groups Memorial Inc., of the Army Air Forces
Neal Sorensen, Treasurer
133 Peninsula Rd; Minneapolis, MN 55441-4112**

Make checks payable to: **B-24 Groups Memorial**. A receipt will be mailed for every contribution of \$250 or more as required by the Internal Revenue Service to make you eligible for an itemized deduction under Sec. 501 (c) (3) of the Federal Tax Code.

LIST NAME THE WAY YOU WANT IT RECORDED:

Name _____ Grade _____ Group _____

Address _____

___ \$450 or more - name or other honor to be on bronze plaque at base of the bronze B-24

___ \$100 or more - name to be listed on the Honor Roll in the Book of Remembrance

___ I just can't afford to be a big contributor, but I would like to get in on the action. Put me on the donor's list in the Book of Remembrance. Here's \$ _____

IF DONATION IS IN HONOR OR IN MEMORY OF SOMEONE, LIST THE DONOR'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

Donor: _____

Address: _____

Combat Log of the B-24

"It's a good feeling to have taught an elephant to do a ballet."

To the newly commissioned Second Lieutenant with his shiny silver wings, receiving orders for the B-24 Transition School can be a sobering jolt...

Bomber losses in Europe during World War II were continually fearful, and the need for replacement crews cut short the dreams of many a cadet who had plans of tearing up the skies in his P-51 or A-20. Furthermore an airplane called the B-24 was increasingly moving into the predominant role over that gallant lady, the fabled B-17 Fortress, and although often overlooked, was faster, had greater range, and could carry a heavier load.

After the usual struggle through the training phases of Stearmans, BT-13s and the Beach AT-10s, it was awesome to walk up to a B-24 for the first time. There it sat; squat, heavy, pregnant, solid, very homely, and all business.

Despite the first "walk around" to inspect the ship for external flaws, there really was not much that could be determined from the outside, and so, with the instructor seriously outlining things to avoid, it was time to board and aviate this unhandsome, awkward freight train.

The B-24 was entered through the bomb bay. One had to bend over to do it as the belly was not much more than knee high. The pilots stepped up to the "halfdeck," the upper story of the nose section. Nose gunner, bombardier and navigator slithered through the tunnel under the flight deck to their offices, in the company of the nose wheel. The remainder of the crew moved rearward to the more spacious areas of the waist. The nose boys had to be continually mindful of one great hazard. When the wheel extended it would merely push the doors open, and when retracted small springs snapped the doors shut. We all remember the

bombardier who came hurtling out, arms flailing, his bundled chute and fluttering magazine behind him. He had intended to lie back in comfort, using his chute as a pillow. No one had warned him about the doors.

The flight engineer would start the small lawn mower engine, the auxiliary power unit, or APU. This would furnish power to fire the four mills. From that point on, it was a routine aircraft start. The main power switch and energizers were on the copilot's right. Number three would always be started first, as all bleed off power came from that engine. Following would be numbers one, two, then four.

With all instruments jumping to life, and gyros uncaged, the airplane was ready to get on with it. The engineer would report in that all looked good from the waist window view, and would clamber up to his taxi position, head and shoulders popped out of the top hatch, much in the fashion that the armor boys ride in their tanks. This top hatch was for emergency exit on the ground, but caution was the work in utilizing it. Slipping into a whirling prop on either side was all too easy. We saw it happen twice.

Taxiing began with the usual blast away from standstill. Then it got complicated. Out board engines were used for steering, and it was a real job to learn how. Considerable lead time was necessary to anticipate corrections. Also, after goosing number one throttle and neutralizing its turn effect with number four, the novice pilot would not notice that his ground speed had built up considerably. That's when brakes came into play, and they were always sure, effective, and positive.

After the routine 45° position for run up, to keep from blasting the plane behind, mags were checked, -- and checked carefully. We would also run the engine up to full bore to see if it was going to deliver; then on to the next mag. At this stage tools or rags fell out of the nacelles (three time running) a dandy little confidence builder.

With check list completed, props up full, half flaps, and the assorted electrical and meter checks it was time to "light the fuse." As all throttles were eased slowly up to the stop the copilot would reach up and manually hold them. As the roll began, cowl flaps were closed. This was really important. Should even one engine have cowl flaps stuck open the buffeting would be fearful. I recall a strato-cruiser ditching in Seattle because of severe vibration immediately after takeoff. When we lifted from the water all four engines had wide open cowl flaps.

The engineer by this time had positioned himself behind the pilot's right ear, into which he shouted the increasing speed. This allowed full attention by the pilot to the recommended procedure of going down the runway.

Nose wheel off at ninety, main gear at one hundred. The noise by now was deafening, and hand signals for gear up were necessary. Making darn sure the wheels were actually off the deck, they would be braked firmly two or three times, to prevent their vibrating by spinning in the wheel wells. Then throttle back, props back (always in that order) to climb setting. Now that the aircraft was airborne for sure the flaps up signal would be given. They would be milked up in short jerks, to prevent the plane from sinking back to the deck. And sink it would!

The engineer would carefully check all dials and hurriedly disappear to the waist to see if the gear was full up, flaps were retracted, and checked for any oil trailing back or gas siphoning in its teiltale, white ribbon. His return with an OK was always welcome.

The smarter pilots would crack the bomb bay doors about now. There were always fumes in the bay, and more than one 24 was blown up by a careless engineer who had lit a cigarette up front and went back through the bomb bay without thinking about it. Earlier models used U shaped tubes which were plugged into one tank to

transfer gas to another. The leakage was awful. This was re-engineered in later models, but the stark lesson remained. Most B-24s never flew with closed bomb doors.

If flying alone or as leadership on a mission the auto pilot was now brought into play. It could take quite awhile to fine tune it down to holding the exact altitude, course, etc., and once set up it would take an act of Congress to turn it off.

Driving along was now quite pleasant. The even hum of the huge engines just outside and behind became a song to those who loved to fly. Then too, there was always a playful navigator who would appear in the bubble out front and grimace like a baleful spook. You could even figure on the bombardier sneaking back from his post over the Norden sight to playfully reach up from the underneath and pull on a rudder pedal. The sudden yaw was exactly the same as losing an engine, and the pilot's eyes would dilate as he dropped his paperback for emergency procedures. Real clowns those nose dwellers.

It was formation flying that changed everything regarding the 24. Routine and normal flying was one thing, but now a different element entered. Formation flying was unbelievable. Trying to wrestle that anvil through an eight hour mission was a real ordeal. The controls fought back and moved hard — real hard. And only one hand could be used, as the other was on the throttles. The usual pattern was fifteen minutes of flying at a stretch. It was even worse when the lead ship was on your opposite side. This meant aligning through the copilot's window. Worse, yet, new side windows appeared late in the war that had huge "bubbles" bulging out, apparently so the pilot could lean over and look straight down. These added to formation problems, as the lead ship became distorted, bent, humpbacked or generally warped. We hastily replaced them with the old flat windows.

After getting into Germany six hundred miles deep, one began to ponder the impossibilities of getting out of the bird if necessary. This is where World War I and II share a common horror — going down in flames. We had chutes, yes, but unplugging oxygen, radio jacks, heated suit, seat belt etc., and then lifting your legs by hand over the pedestal between the seats, while the copilot was doing the same thing was just not possible. If one did get free and the plane was diving it would be necessary to climb up to the bomb bay. It's no wonder we usually counted on only eight out of the ten chutes, coming from a stricken ship.

The loss of an engine was also fun and games. Two engines out on one side would require both pilots, total counter trim, and fervent prayer. Holding those two platter rudders against the rushing wind was really beyond a man's strength. We flew three hours once with one and two both out, at an altitude or roughly fifty feet. The copilot drove while I used both hands to keep my knees from buckling. It took both feet on one pedal. My legs did not quit burning for a week. Yes, we made it, but the plane never flew again. Incidentally, it was the mark of a good pilot if he brought much of his fuel back. The jerky formation jockey would continually add and retard throttles, eating up gas like stop and go driving. Our gas consumption was read to us like exam grades, to promote smoother formations.

The Davis airfoil wing was a cutie, too. Without power to pull it along, it quit flying. So all landings were rather strong on power. The standard rule for landing a 24 was, "Open a window, drop a brick, follow it down."

The "gliding" ability was just about like that. Usually we would drop half flaps and the gear on downwind, fly past the end of the runway thirty seconds and turn on the base leg, 3/4 flaps then. The check list would be completed by

now, and the engineer back up front ready to call out airspeed. It was a good idea to aim a little short, to touch down as soon after round out as possible. Sometimes "just enough power to flush the commode" would get us over the fence, followed by the massive pull needed to lift the nose. The common trick was to crank in substantial up trim and hold the nose down against it. Then by relaxing the yoke, trim would bring the nose up, effortlessly. The 24 required a good spacing, by the way, behind the ship on final just ahead. It laid down a tornado of prop wash. It only took one such experience to allow plenty of room in the pattern.

I supposed we envied the B-17 boys in some ways. Their airplane was much more gentle. It would glide, it would ditch, it would land wheels up. Ours would not. But they left before us and returned after we did, and we liked that. An effort was made late in the war to make the B-24 into a more gentle type. We picked up one such modification at the repair depot at Bari. Of all things, it had ball bearing controls. When I hauled that thing off the ground we almost did a loop. Despite this joyous innovation, however, that particular plane, 313, lasted only two weeks. It went down over Bologna with six of its ten crew members.

The 24 was the last plane of such a size built without a flight engineer's position. We had to fly it and read the meters too. The next one, the B-29, had another enviable feature. Hot food. Our brown waxed ration boxes always froze solid. When we got to them on the way home we usually shattered the brick hard chocolate on the throttle quadrant and sucked the chips.

Once on the ground we had to be careful of "torching." Raw orange fire would trail out of the exhaust, but could be killed by a rapid throttle blast. It was a live hazard and the tower constantly monitored all landing planes, as the pilot could not see it from his seat. We had one plane, "Suzy Q,"

burn and blow up from torching.

Maybe the legion of drivers of B-24s have collective memories of some of the agonies described herein, but I'll bet they all feel in their hearts as I do. It's easy to stand there and throw rocks at the stubborn beast, but more than once I stopped to look over my shoulder at that plodding truck, and felt a surge of compassion as I reflected on her ungirdled figure. It's a good feeling to have taught an elephant to do a ballet.

Editor's Note: This article was lifted from the 461st Liberator who stole it from the Air Classics, Vol. 5, No. 4, April 1969. Author Unknown.

Distinguished Flying Cross Goes to Ex-Airmen for '44 Bombing Run

It took almost 53 years, but two American airmen have received awards promised them for heroism during World War II.

Their actions came during a strike by their bomber wing against a railhead at Sopron, Hungary, on Dec. 18, 1944. Their bombs blasted railroad cars loaded with munitions intended for Nazi forces on the Western Front.

Belatedly, John H. Carey Jr., now a Houstonian, and James R. Walsh of Bronxville, N.Y., have been awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses.

Lifelong friends, they grew up together in the Bronx in New York City and had the remarkable luck to be assigned to the same aircraft.

During the bombing run — the pair's 15th mission of the 35 needed to complete a tour of duty — T/Sgt. Carey, then 20 and the aircraft's radio operator, served in his additional job as a waist gunner.

After the bombs-away command

was given, he started back to his radio to report the raid's success.

As he began to cross the catwalk through the bomb bays, he made a shocking discovery: One pair of bombs had not dropped.

He remembers thinking, "My God, we've got an emergency here."

Spinners on the bombs that primed them for ignition were revolving, and Carey knew that jolts caused by hitting an air pocket or making a rough landing might shake the bombs loose and trigger a blast.

And if his four-engine B-24 Liberator, the lead plane in the formation, should blow up, it might knock down other bombers flying with it.

Quickly Carey reported the situation on the plane's intercom. S/Sgt. Jim Walsh, 20, the plane's tail gunner and armorer, was called upon to assess the problem.

It was his job to arm the bombs to explode on a raid.

The two young fliers knew something needed to be done quickly. They had to work on a narrow catwalk running through the bomb bay where the two 500-pound bombs were suspended.

Below them, the bomb bay doors were still open, but because of their cramped quarters, they couldn't wear parachutes.

Their bomber was flying at 27,000 feet, and the temperature was 50 degrees below zero. But they had to take off their insulated gloves to work on freeing the bombs.

Carey found a spent .50-caliber shell casing, and Walsh used it to free the bombs from their shackles.

"We stood up and leaned our shoulders against some bomb bay support posts," Carey said, "and I would guess that in less than five minutes the bombs were freed. Those were very scary minutes."

Walsh, who still operates a family tile and carpet company, remembered the cheer heard over the plane's intercom after they reported the bombs had been dropped.

When their B-24 returned to their base, the pilot and a colonel who flew as co-pilot for that mission commended Walsh and Carey and promised they would be rewarded.

But no award came. Two years ago, Carey, now a retired Exxon employee, remembered it had been forgotten and set in motion the confirmation process that led to their DFCs.

They served in the 743rd Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group, 304th Bomb Wing, 15th Air Force.

Carey got his DFC at Randolph Air Force Base at San Antonio in September. McGuire Air Force Base in New Jersey offered to hold a formal presentation for Walsh, but he requested the medal be mailed to him. So it was.

"After we came back from that mission, everybody was glad to be alive, and that's all I thought about," Walsh said. "I had despaired of living through all the missions we had to fly."

*By Bob Tutt
Houston Chronicle*

Use your time—and LIVE!

I would rather be ashes than dust!
I would rather that my spark
should burn out in a brilliant blaze
than it should be stifled by dry rot.
I would rather be a superb meteor,
every atom of me in magnificent
glow, than a sleepy and permanent
planet. The proper function of man
is to live, not to exist. I shall not
spend my days trying to prolong
them. I shall use my time.

—Jack London

THE 455TH BOMB GROUP IN COMBAT (a continuing series)

Mission 104, August 27 Another long mission to Bleckhammer, Germany, these were long, usually very rough and were always over seven and one-half hours in duration. That was tough on all crewmen and their support crews back at the base. This day we sent 28 B-24's loaded with 500# GP bombs. They bombed with good results but as usual the flak was very heavy and intense over the target. We lost another plane. It was last seen with one engine feathered losing altitude off to the left of the formation. Ten crewmen were reported missing in action.

Mission 105, August 28 We sent 31 B-24's to bomb the railroad bridges in northern Italy. Our assigned bridges were at Avisio and Pescheria. Their destruction was to disrupt the German retreat but we did not do a very good job. Only one bridge was identified and we missed that one. One aircraft was severely damaged by flak but all returned safely.

Mission 106, August 29 On the last raid for August we were briefed to bomb the Moravaska Ostrava Tank Works in Hungary. Thirty B-24's dropped over 77 tons of 1,000# GP bombs on the target area. We had an escort of P-38's which were always welcome. Bombing was accomplished by pathfinder methods and the results appeared to be good as smoke was seen coming through the overcast. Flak was light at the target and we suffered no casualties.

August was over and the results of our bombing this month were improving. We flew 19 missions with 563 aircraft over the targets. We dropped over 1,275 tons of bomb on the enemy. Our losses were nine aircraft with 92 crewmen missing in action. Enemy fighters were getting scarce, as we saw

fewer and fewer of them. We claimed no fighter victories this month, the first such month since we started combat.

SEPTEMBER 1944

With winter coming, there were changes made in mission planning to avoid reduced activity because of bad weather. The formations of our B-24's would become smaller and thus more manageable in marginal weather. Some bombing strikes were single airplanes flying in bad weather and bombing by pathfinder. Pathfinder methods were used to a good advantage during bad weather months, continually disrupting the enemy's capability to wage war.

In September, the German Air Force fighters disappeared from the sky as far as the 455th was concerned. If they were there, we did not see them. We continued with our attacks on the enemy's oil production and their aircraft industry. The war against oil was not over yet, as this month would prove, although one big target was eliminated from our list, Ploesti. Our targets would be the enemy's communication lines as well as his factories. We hit the marshalling yards and ports, along with the oil refineries.

Mission 107, September 1 We sent 30 B-24's to bomb the marshalling yards at Novi Sad. They bombed the target with good results. Flak at the target was light and accurate but we had no losses. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Mission 108, September 2 Thirty B-24's took off to bomb the marshalling yards at Nis, Yugoslavia. No aircraft returned early so that all planes dropped a total of 75 tons of 500# GP bombs on the target. Flak was light and not very accurate. All aircraft returned to base without incident.

Mission 109, September 3 The Group was sent to bomb a railroad

bridge at Szeged, Yugoslavia. Twenty-eight B-24's carrying 1,000# RDX bombs had a very good bomb run on the target with excellent results. Over 45% of the bombs fell within 1,000 feet of the target. Flak was encountered at the target but all returned safely.

Mission 110, September 4 Thirty-one B-24's loaded with 1,000# GP bombs were after bridges again. This time it was the railroad bridge at Tagliamento, Italy. The results were even better this time, with almost 60% falling into the 1,000 feet circular range. There was no flak at the target and all aircraft returned safely.

Mission 111, September 5 We were having such success in the bridge demolition missions that we were at another one. This time a bridge at Szolnok. Again we loaded 30 B-24's with 1,000# RDX bombs. The results improved again as we dropped over 68% within 1,000 feet of the target. With light flak and no fighters, all planes returned to base safely.

Mission 112, September 6 We had excellent weather and had flown six missions in as many days. The marshalling yards at Novi Sad, Yugoslavia were the target for the second time this week. Thirty B-24's loaded with 1,000# RDX bombs hit the target with over 75% of the bombs falling within 1,000 feet of the aiming point, which was remarkable bombing. Flak at the target was moderate and accurate but we came home with no casualties.

Mission 113, September 8 After a day of rest, we sent 30 B-24's loaded with 1,000# RDX bombs to the bridges and marshalling yards at Brod, Yugoslavia. Flak at the target was heavy and intense, and we lost one of our planes to the flak batteries. Nine men were reported missing in action. The results were only fair with three of our planes receiving severe flak damage and three slight damage.

Mission 114, September 10 The weather deserted us as we sent 30 B-24's loaded with fragmentation bombs to the airdrome at Horschine, Austria. Weather turned the Group back over Austria and it returned to base. Half the airplanes jettisoned their bombs over the Adriatic while the rest returned theirs to the base. It was a judgment call either way as they were very "touchy" bombs.

Mission 115, September 12 This time, 27 B-24's were loaded with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the airdrome at Lechfield, Austria. Flak at the target was very heavy and intense. We lost four of our airplanes to flak with 41 crewmen missing in action. The bombing results were not that good for those losses. Two of our planes suffered severe damage as well.

Mission 116, September 13 We loaded 30 B-24's with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the oil refinery at Odertal, Germany. This was another long mission. We bombed the target by pathfinder and dropped 68 tons of bombs. Flak at the target was moderate to intense and very accurate. We lost three ships over the target. One pilot brought his plane back to Allied territory and the crew bailed out successfully. Nineteen crewmen were missing in action.

Mission 117, September 15 We had a day of rest, then 29 B-24's dropped 69 tons of fragmentation bombs on Tatoi airdrome in Athens, Greece. Flak en route was light and inaccurate. At the target it got a little rougher and the flak was moderate to intense. One airplane received heavy damage from flak but we suffered no casualties and all planes returned to base.

Mission 118, September 17 We sent 27 B-24's loaded with 1,000# GP bombs to the marshalling yards at Rakos, Hungary. The results were not satisfactory as we had no bombs within the 1,000

foot range. Flak was moderate at the target but we had no losses.

Mission 119, September 18 We loaded 29 B-24's with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the marshalling yards at Czegled, Czechoslovakia. We encountered no flak en route nor at the target area but we still did not do a good bombing job as only 26% fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. All planes returned to base without casualties.

Mission 120, September 20 Twenty-nine B-24's loaded with fragmentation bombs attacked the airdrome at Malacky, Hungary. Sixty-five tons of bombs were dropped on the target with good results as 18 enemy aircraft were destroyed on the ground. Flak was moderate and heavy but not accurate. All our planes returned safely.

Mission 121, September 21 We were again loaded with fragmentation bombs, which meant another airdrome. This time it was the Riem Main airdrome at Munich, Germany. Thirty B-24's dropped 62 tons of bombs on the target area with good results. Flak was heavy and intense at the target but we came through with no losses.

Mission 122, September 23 We were back to attacking railroad bridges. This time 31 B-24's carrying 1,000# RDX bombs attacked the railroad bridge at Dona Di Piavi, Italy. We encountered no flak at this target and we got excellent results. Over 67% of the bombs fell within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. All planes returned safely.

Mission 123, September 24 We were back to the Tatoi airdrome at Athens, Greece. This time 32 B-24's were loaded with 100# GP bombs. Flak at the target was moderate to intense and heavy, and we were fortunate to suffer no losses. We did destroy four enemy planes on the ground. All planes returned to base safely.

No missions were flown in the last week of September and the Group got a well deserved rest. During the month we flew 17 missions with 502 planes over the target, dropping 1,173 tons of bombs. We lost eight aircraft with 69 crewmen missing in action. Twenty additional aircraft were damaged by flak. We destroyed 32 enemy aircraft on the ground, so it wasn't a bad month for the Group. The war continued as we move into October.

OCTOBER 1944

October brought bad weather for the first three days. Although missions were scheduled, none were flown until the 4th of the month. While we still were hitting oil refineries, we also concentrated on the marshalling yards that transported the oil. Oil refineries would only be 23% of our missions this month while over 60% would be against marshalling yards. Missions from here on would be affected by weather as much as anything else.

Mission 124, October 4 Twenty-six B-24's dropped 500# RDX bombs on the marshalling yards at Munich, Germany. Flak at the target was intense, accurate and heavy. The barrage lasted over four minutes, which made it seem like hours. Two of our aircraft received flak damage, but all returned safely.

Mission 125, October 4 While one portion of the Group was bombing Munich, the Group also sent 17 B-24's to bomb the viaduct at Avisio, Italy. These planes were loaded with 1,000# RDX bombs. No results were observed due to cloud-cover. Flak at the target was moderately accurate and heavy. Six aircraft received damage from the flak but all returned safely.

Mission 126, October 7 We were assigned another split mission. Our first contingent was loaded with 500# RDX bombs to hit the Vienna Winterhafen oil storage facilities. Bombing was rather good

considering the amount of flak thrown at the Group, which was intense, accurate and heavy. We lost one airplane to flak with ten crewmen missing in action. Six aircraft received slight damage from flak.

Mission 127, October 7 Our second mission this day was an attack on the airdrome at Gyor, Hungary. We loaded 18 B-24's with 500# RDX bombs. Bombing accuracy was not very good as we failed to hit the target. Flak was light, inaccurate but of the heavy variety. We all came home safely.

Mission 128, October 10 Twenty-nine B-24's were loaded with 500# RDX bombs to attack the railroad bridge at Latisana. The mission was aborted due to bad weather at the target. All planes returned to base.

Mission 129, October 11 We again loaded up with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the harbor at Trieste, Italy. Our bombing was much better this day, as we got over 64% of the bombs within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. Flak at the target was light and inaccurate. All planes returned safely.

Mission 130, October 12 Thirty-nine B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs struck the marshalling yards at Bologna, Italy. Flak at the target was light and inaccurate but still of the heavy variety. Bombing was only fair as we got less than 30% within 1,000 feet of the target. All planes returned to base.

Mission 131, October 13 This was another day for double missions. We loaded the first mission with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the oil refinery at Blechhammer, Germany. Flak at this target was always intense and accurate, and this day was no exception. We lost two aircraft to flak. One plane managed to make it back to allied territory and the crew was recovered. We reported 11 crewmen missing and one killed in action. It

was a rough mission as six airplanes received heavy damage and four with slight damage. The flak at Blechhammer was indeed accurate.

Mission 132, October 13 The second mission for this day was to the marshalling yards at Szekesfehervar, Germany. Twenty B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs dropped 45% of their bombs on the target with no flak, fighters or casualties. All planes returned without incident.

Mission 133, October 14 The Group was scheduled to bomb the oil refinery at Odertal, Germany. Thirty-five B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs dropped 78 tons of the refinery by pathfinder method. Flak at the target was intense, accurate and heavy. We lost one aircraft over the target and two more resulting from flak. Thirty-one crewmen were missing in action and eight planes received damage another long, rough mission.

Mission 134, October 16 We bombed the marshalling yards at Graz, Austria, with 39 B-24's carrying 1,000# RDX bombs. Although the flak at the target was intense and accurate, we managed to get through the mission without any losses.

Mission 135, October 17 We sent 27 B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs to bomb the marshalling yards and factories at Miribor, Hungary. Flak at the target was moderate, accurate and heavy but we managed to come through it without a loss.

Mission 136, October 20 We sent 33 B-24's carrying fragmentation bombs to the marshalling yards at Innsbruck, Austria. Flak at this target was moderate and inaccurate, and we escaped without any damage. All planes returned to base.

Mission 137, October 21 We sent 25 B-24's to bomb the marshalling yards at Szombathely, Hungary. We dropped 62 tons of 500# GP

bombs on the target with over 57% falling within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. A few days after this mission we received a communication from the C.O. of the 304th Wing. It informed the Group that General Twining was very pleased with the results of the bombing effort by the Group, as the attack on these marshalling yards did a great deal of damage. It was a great feat of bombing by the lead bombardier and the Group as a whole. There was no flak at the target and all planes returned safely.

Mission 138, October 23 We were back in the oil business. We loaded 24 B-24's with 500# GP bombs and struck the oil storage facilities at Regensberg Winterhafen. We bombed by pathfinder method, so there was no way to tell if we did a good job except from the fires we started. Flak at the target was moderate, accurate and heavy. We brought all planes home safely.

Mission 139, October 23 We loaded 16 more B-24's with 100# GP bombs for the second mission of the day. They were scheduled to bomb the Motor Transport Park at Ossopo. Weather again made the target unreachable and all planes brought their bombs back to base.

October was a month that saw bad weather effect our efforts. We flew 16 missions in only 13 days of flyable weather. The coming months look the same as far as weather is concerned. We managed to put 425 aircraft over the targets. We dropped over 793 tons of bombs on the enemy. We lost five aircraft from enemy action with 52 crewmen missing in action. We had one man killed in action and one man wounded.

NOVEMBER 1944

Winter time brought on weather problems that not only hindered bombing efforts, but also maintenance and other ground support functions. This month would be a harbinger of what to expect in the

next four or five months: bad weather, bad weather and more bad weather. But the Group would nevertheless fly almost 20 missions. Four of these would be aborted and nine would bomb by pathfinder method. Still it was remarkable for the Group to take off on that many missions; a real credit to the support personnel and crews.

Mission 140, November 1

Twenty-eight B-24's took off loaded with 100# incendiary bombs. Twenty-one aircraft bombed Cakovek marshalling yards as a target of opportunity. One aircraft returned when it lost the formation in a cloud bank. Six aircraft returned to base without dropping their bombs as they could not line up on the target. There were no fighters or flak in the area and all planes returned safely.

Mission 141, November 3 Three B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs took off to bomb the aircraft factory at Klagenfurt, Germany. One aircraft returned early because of ice on the wings. Two aircraft dropped their bombs by pathfinder method. Results were unobserved because of clouds. The two B-24's returned undamaged and there were no casualties.

Mission 142, November 4 Forty-one B-24's took off to bomb the Linz, Austria main marshalling yards. Each airplane was loaded with 500# RDX bombs. Thirty-seven of these aircraft dropped their bombs on the target. Two of the aircraft did not bomb because of malfunction of the pathfinder equipment and two aircraft returned early because of crew sickness. Since bombing was done by pathfinder method, no results were observed. All planes returned to base without casualties.

Mission 143, November 5

Twenty-eight B-24's took off to

bomb the Florisdorf Oil Refinery at Vienna, Austria. Half of the B-24's carried 500# RDX bombs while the other half carried 500# incendiary bomb clusters. Bombing was done by pathfinder method so no results were observed. Flak at the target was intense, inaccurate and heavy. Flak en route was moderate and fairly accurate at Bratislava. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Mission 144, November 5 Shortly after the 28 B-24's took off to bomb the oil refinery at Vienna, eight B-24's were sent to bomb the Mitro Vica, Italy troop concentrations. These aircraft were forced back by bad weather and did not drop their bombs. All aircraft returned safely.

Mission 145, November 6 Forty B-24's took off to bomb the South Ordinance Depot at Vienna, Austria. They were escorted by P-51's. One B-24 returned early because of a gas leak, so 39 aircraft dropped 93.5 tons of a mixture of RDX bombs and incendiaries on the target. Flak at the target was intense but inaccurate. Eight enemy aircraft were seen in the Lake Balaton area but did not attack. All aircraft returned to base safely.

Mission 146, November 7 Twenty-eight B-24's attacked troop concentrations at Sjenica, Yugoslavia. They dropped 66.5 tons of RDX bombs on the target. Flak at the target was non-existent. Bombing was done visually with fair to poor results. All aircraft returned to base.

Mission 147, November 11 The Group was scheduled to bomb the marshalling yards at Linz, Austria. All 28 B-24's returned to base without dropping their bombs due to bad weather.

Mission 148, November 15 Five B-24's took off to bomb the Linz Benzol Refinery. All five aircraft bombed the target by pathfinder method and returned safely

despite the intense flak at the target. None of the aircraft received any damage.

Mission 149, November 16 Two missions were scheduled against two different targets. On the first target, 28 B-24's took off to bomb the Munich West marshalling yards. Flak in the target area was intense and accurate. Bombs were dropped by pathfinder method so the results were unobserved. All planes returned to base with no casualties.

Mission 150, November 16 The second mission was an eight aircraft raid on troop concentrations at Visgrad, Yugoslavia. Seven B-24's dropped 13.5 tons of bombs in the target area where slight and inaccurate flak was experienced. All aircraft returned to base.

Mission 151, November 17 Eighteen B-24's took off to bomb the marshalling yards at Mirabor, Hungary. Flak at the target was very intense and accurate, and one aircraft was shot down by flak. One crew member was killed by flak and three others received serious injuries. Bombing results were good with over 40% of the bombs falling within 1,000 feet of the aiming point. Twelve men were missing in action.

Mission 152, November 17 Twenty-eight B-24's took off to bomb the Gyor, Hungary marshalling yards. These aircraft were loaded with 500# RDX bombs. Flak at the target was heavy and accurate. One aircraft was seen with one engine feathered and did not return. Ten men were reported missing in action. Bombing was done by pathfinder method so no observation of results could be made. The rest of the aircraft all returned to base.

Mission 153, November 18 Forty B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs were briefed to bomb the Airdrome at Vicenza, Italy. The mission was flown without escort

and bombing was done visually with excellent results. Over 50% of the bombs fell in the target area causing extensive damage to the installation. Flak at the target was light and generally inaccurate. All planes returned to base without casualties.

Mission 154, November 19 The Group was again scheduled for two targets. The first was the Locomotive Repair Depot at Verona, Italy. The target was completely covered by clouds and the weather was very bad so the mission was aborted. All planes returned to base.

Mission 155, November 19 The second target for that day was the Lobau Oil Blending Plant at Vienna, Austria. Twenty-seven B-24's carrying 100# GP bombs bombed the target by pathfinder method. Intense but inaccurate flak was experienced at the target area and no planes received damage; all returned to base safely.

Mission 156, November 20 Twenty-eight B-24's loaded with 500# RDX bombs took off to bomb targets in Czechoslovakia, but due to weather obscuring the primary target, the group bombed the factories at Zlin, Czechoslovakia. Sixty-three and a half tons of bombs fell on this target with good results. No flak was experienced in the target area and all planes returned to base safely.

Mission 157, November 22 Thirty-six B-24's took off to bomb the marshalling yards at Villach, Austria. No flak was observed in the target area and no bombs were dropped because of bad weather but we still lost one aircraft, with 11 men missing in action. The B-24 was last seen losing altitude and appeared to be on fire. No chutes were observed. The rest of the planes returned safely.

Mission 158, November 25 This was the Group's last mission in November. This was also our first

mission flying three pathfinder aircraft at night. The target was the marshalling yards at Munich West. The three B-24's took off at 0045 hours and were over the target at 0409. One B-24 dropped its bombs on the primary. The other two dropped their bombs on the Innsbruck main marshalling yard because the primary target had weather clearing and the planes would not have the protection of the bad weather from fighter attacks. No flak or enemy aircraft were seen on the mission. All three planes returned to base safely at 0630 hours.

November bombing was over. Although our efforts were heroic, the results left a lot to be desired. We managed to get a total of 429 aircraft over the targets and dropped a total of 707.1 tons of bombs. The Group flew 19 missions while losing three aircraft. We reported 41 crewmen missing in action; we had one man killed in action; we also had three severely wounded. The 19 missions were flown in only 15 days. The doubling up helped our totals for the month and showed how efficient our ground support had become. Tougher flying weather was coming, so we were getting prepared.

DECEMBER

As we anticipated, December brought bad weather, but it also brought a new concept in strategic bombing. Bombers would make single and three ship formation attacks on targets in bad weather. These attacks would be accomplished by pathfinder method and it showed how much the 15th Air Force had progressed in the art of bombing through an overcast. Twelve of the 15 missions would be done by radar and only four by visual methods, with one mission aborted. This gives one some idea of the bad weather conditions in which the Group had to fly.

Mission 159, December 3 Three B-24's took off to bomb a primary target but were unable to bomb

due to clearing weather at the target. One aircraft bombed the alternate target, the marshalling yards at Villach, Austria by pathfinder method. Two aircraft jettisoned their bombs in the Adriatic and all planes returned to base safely.



**Want to give up?
Think you're too old to try something new?**

Consider these examples

Age isn't always a factor in your success or failure. Consider these famous examples:

- Actor George Burns won his first Oscar at 80.
- Golda Meir was 71 when she became prime minister of Israel.
- At age 96, playwright George Bernard Shaw broke his leg when he fell out of a tree he was trimming in his backyard.
- Painter Grandma Moses didn't start painting until she was 80 years old. She completed over 1,500 paintings after that; 25 percent of those were produced when she was past 100.
- Michelangelo was 71 when he painted the Sistine Chapel.
- Physician and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer was still performing operations in his African hospital at 89.
- Doc Councilman, at 58, became the oldest person ever to swim the English Channel.
- S.I. Hayakawa retired as president of San Francisco State University at 70, then was elected to the U.S. Senate.
- Casey Stengel didn't retire from managing the New York Mets until he was 75.

OUR CREWS

This new Cerignola Connection on-going series includes crew photos not presently in the group history "Flight of the Vulgar Vultures." Also included are corrected photos and legend of those previously printed in error. If corrections are still necessary, please let your editor know. Also, if your crew photo has not appeared in print please send a copy complete with crew names and assignment.



Front row, l to r: John Kilbane, nose turret gunner; Duane Kiesecker, tail turret gunner; Charles Fisher, ball turret gunner; Harland Gilman, top turret gunner; Robert Demaline, engineer; Thurston Dawson, radio operator. Back row, l to r: Johnston Hart, pilot; Donald Fotheringham, co-pilot; Chadbourne Smith, bombardier; Horace Haley, navigator. 742 SQUADRON



Front row, l to r: Herbert Morris, co-pilot; John Wichser, bombardier; Richard Brimage, pilot; Joseph Spier, navigator. Back row, l to r: W. Eginton, ball turret gunner; Adolph Blanco, waist gunner; Bobby Stinson, radio operator; Lacy Cowan, engineer; Harry Green, nose turret gunner. Harry Leverson, waist gunner, not pictured. 742 SQUADRON



Front row, l to r: Ross Smith, bombardier; Leighton Hope, pilot; John Kennedy, co-pilot; John Kearns, navigator. Back row, l to r: Felix Vasquez, engineer; Robert Frank, tail turret gunner; Charles Tate, waist gunner; Richard James, nose turret gunner; Erling Kindem radio operator; George Friedman, ball turret gunner. 742 SQUADRON



Wrightson Crew – Unidentified – 742 SQUADRON



Helbig Crew – Unidentified – 743 SQUADRON



Hoorer Crew – Unidentified – 742 SQUADRON



Front row, l to r: James Anderson, Robert Lee, Stanley Schwartz, Birney Bracken, Joseph Craney, Walter Trzasko. Back row, l to r: Ralph Rovie, navigator; John Jureka, co-pilot; Frank Nichols, pilot; Melvern Corbett, bombardier. 743 SQUADRON



Front row, l to r: Maurice Fuller, tail gunner; Jacob Sadler, ball turret gunner. Middle row, l to r: Albert Klinek, top turret gunner; John Markell, waist gunner; Vernon Floyd, nose turret gunner; Warren Levasseur, waist gunner. Back row, l to r: Roy Schott, pilot; Roy Cheesman, co-pilot; Phillip Buck, bombardier; Donald Geraty, navigator, 743 SQUADRON



Front row, l to r: Ted Duderik, bombardier; Lloyd Beachman, pilot; Carl Hart, navigator; Walter Carlton, co-pilot. Back row, l to r: Richard Ogg, nose turret gunner; Charles Conrad, radio operator; Ted Hays, waist gunner; Joel Place, tail turret gunner; Robert Simeroth, ball turret gunner; Harold Patterick, engineer.



Blankenship crew – Front row, l to r: Raymond Horal, tail turret gunner; Maynard Metz, nose turret gunner; Robert Wahl, waist gunner; P. A. Frontera, ball turret gunner; Lawrence Van Amberg, radio operator; Charles Robinson, engineer. Balance unidentified. 743 SQUADRON



l to r: Patrick Schlavo, Donald Russell, Daniel Kaminsky, Edwin Kiesel Bach; Edward Ambrosini, Joseph Spier, Bruce Tuthill, Richard McCauley, William Hill. 742 SQUADRON



Front row, l to r: Gabriel Lahiere, Gordon Webber, Herman Simon. Middle row, l to r: Dale Shores, John Sims, Virgil Froussard. Top row, l to r: William Hulen, navigator; Everett Gustafson, bombardier; Harold Syverson, co-pilot; Donald Anderton, pilot. 743 SQUADRON



Front Row, l to r: Jim Comuniello, ball turret gunner; Ray Ciccone, gunner; Sam Wyrosoic, tail turret gunner; Charles "Chuck" Wills, radio operator; Ardon "Junior" Fichtner, gunner; Herb Hert, engineer. Back row, l to r: Sam Jemazian, bombardier; Steve Truhan, co-pilot; Lou Dolan, pilot; Bob DeArment, navigator. SQD Unknown



Thank you for returning my crew picture of the Bensinger Peterson Crew. This picture was in one of the last Cerignola Connections and I do appreciate it being in there. Since I haven't been able to contact any other members of my crew I thought by publishing the photo someone might see it and give us a call.

I am enclosing a picture of myself and Fred R. Hamilton of Gardena, CA, who was my radio man gunner on over 20 missions together. I have to give Lou Hansen credit for getting us together. Fred and his wife Carolyn and my wife Virginia, all of us had a super time at this years reunion in Dayton. It was a great event. I have enclosed a picture of Fred and I and if you can put it in the Cerignola Connection at some future issue.

You are doing a swell job as Editor and we all enjoy the paper very much. Keep up the good work.

Bert Peterson

PS Fred and I had not seen each other for over 52 years – what a wonderful reunion this one was for us.

B-24 Crew Reported Lost, Returns

Reported blown up over the target during a raid on Blachamer, Germany. T/Sgt. Alexander C. Bathie, an engineer gunner on a B-24 recently had the pleasure of returning to his bomber base three days later with his entire crew – all unhurt.

Bathie, who completed 35 missions from an Italian base, explained that on this particular trip they had had two engines knocked out over the target and that as the formation circled to return to the base and other B-24s spotted them losing altitude, with smoke pouring from their plane.

"When he reported us down," the sergeant said, "He came to a very natural conclusion. But, meanwhile, we had begun throwing everything we could overboard to lighten the load."

As they cleared the Eastern Alps into Yugoslavia with not too many feet to spare, a third engine started acting up and the pilot decided to set her down on the Isle of Vis in the Adriatic Sea.

From there they caught a boat and returned to the base where the pilot was awarded the DFC for bringing them back safely. "No one in our crew ever got hurt on 35 missions," Bathie asserted.

When Bathie returned home on leave he completed his marital plans, which were interrupted by the war, by marrying the former Cora Perket of Oyster Bay Rd., Locust Valley, in New York City's Little Church Around the Corner.

The young engineer-gunner has been awarded the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters for his seven-month stint overseas. He later received the Distinguished Flying Cross.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



In Maine they tell of an old man walking along the beach with his grandson, who picked up each starfish they passed and threw it back into the sea. "If I left them up here," the boy said, "they would dry up and die. I'm saving their lives."

"But," protested the old man, "the beach goes on for miles, and there are millions of starfish. What you are doing won't make any difference."

The boy looked at the starfish in his hand, gently threw it into the ocean, and answered: "It makes a difference to this one."

— President George Bush



From Charles Rosenberg –

Since I wrote you on May 7, 1997, and attending the Reunion at Dayton, I have found out about two more members of my original crew. I met Charles Miller at the reunion. He was the original bombardier for "The Secret Weapon." His crew was shot down on his 29th mission and he was a prisoner of war in Poland until he was freed by the 3rd Army under Gen. George Patton. Charlie has some great stories to tell if you can get him to write them. I learned that our original navigator, Nicholas Winkelhorst, finished his tour with 47 missions. He flew with the Bob Baker crew. "Wink" died during the past year, leaving his wife, Gloria, of Atesia, CA.

I am enclosing the original photo of our crew in hopes that it will be published in the Cerignola Connection. The names are; top

row, l to r; Sgt. Fred Huggins, Lt. Charles Miller, Lt. Nicholas Winkelhorst, Lt. Walt Harrington, Lt. Charles Rosenberg. Bottom row, l to r: Sgt. Raymond Tarpy, Sgt. Thomas Elder, Sgt. Myrel Schenk, Sgt. Raymond Beauvais and Sgt. Robert Fowlkes. Huggins was engineer and top turret gunner, Miller was bombardier, Winkelhorst was navigator, Harrington was copilot.

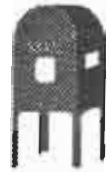
Thanks for returning the photo. It has a space reserved in a frame in our den.

Chaplain's Corner



"Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?" The King will reply, "I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me." Matthew 25:37-40

New Address Labels



You'll notice that new address labels are used to mail you the Cerignola Connection. Gus Wendt, the new Executive Director/Treasurer, had to make a new data base of the 455th members. His computer was not compatible with Lou Hansen's computer. Thus a direct exchange of data was not possible. Gus points out that he is not a typist, but, has made considerable effort to make the new data base as accurate as possible. He would like to hear from you if you note an error on your label.

One new feature has been added to the label. There is a number in the upper right hand corner of the label. This number indicates the last year that our records show that you paid your dues and is a "reminder." If your records differ, please advise Gus, and indicate the date and the check number that you paid your dues. (It should be noted that our Assn. considers you a member even if you're not current on your dues. All you have to do to re-establish your currency is to pay \$15.00 for the current year (1998). If there is asterisk (*) in the upper right hand corner, you are on our books as a Life Member. If there is a number sign (#) in the upper right hand corner, you are carried on our books as an Associate Life Member. Life Members do not pay annual dues.



455th Bomb Group Association, Inc.
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