



CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

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Message from President George H. W. Bush (41st President of the USA)

Although I cannot be with you personally, I am happy to have the opportunity to pay my respects to the members of the 455th Bomb Group Association, who will gather in San Antonio this fall.

As veterans of the United States Armed Forces, you are heroes in the truest sense of the word. Your courage and sacrifices reflect the great spirit of which General MacArthur spoke at West Point:

Duty, Honor, and Country

These are words dear and special to me. They have guided my life as they have guided yours.

I look back on my days in uniform as among the very greatest in my life, as I am sure you do. I was lucky to have served, and you must feel the same way.

As a former Navy man and former Commander-in-Chief, I salute each of you for taking up the torch of freedom and answering your country's call to duty. I also join you in remembering those members of the 455th Bomb Group who

made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom. All Americans owe them a lasting debt of gratitude.

Have a wonderful and memorable gathering.

Sincerely,
George H. W. Bush

AIR FORCE PRAYER

O, Lord, we thank you for the men who fly, For fighting soldiers aren't afraid to die,

For men whose heart is tough as steel, Whose courage makes the enemy reel.

For pilots, brave and true, For wills their task to do, For men who guide the planes, Through the fog, mist, and rains.

For men who work upon the ground, Their skill is good and sound. For Air Force men everywhere, For them, we ask this prayer.

And, last of all to thee we praise, For guiding hands along airwaves, For Presence with us every day, O, Lord, this prayer we ever pray.

The days are now numbered But still it is clear, It's only a short while That I can remain here.

But I shall ever love you Tho I'll be far away, I'll be fighting, ever fighting, For you, and the good ole U. S. A.

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ht Welcomes:

455th BOMB GROUP

REUNION



Message from the President

Lt. Col. Bill Gemmill (ret.)
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There were some who didn't think it a good idea to send my undated (sorry about that) letter to all members of the 455th Bomb Group Association that announced our plans for a reunion in San Antonio.

After all, the letters cost our treasury around \$700.00 ! Nevertheless, our Reunion Committee and almost all of the Board of Directors voted in favor of the expense.

You'll recall that we wanted to know if we could exceed the minimum of the 50 rooms that were originally required by our contract with the Omni Hotel and Armed Forces Reunions. The good news is that you have responded overwhelmingly. The result was 83 requests for rooms!

I can't tell you how much I enjoyed speaking with those of you who phoned - those of you whose e-mails brightened my days - and those of you who took the trouble to use Uncle Sam's snail mail.

I received responses far in excess of those who were reserving rooms. Some of you just wanted to wish us luck even though ill health put a damper on your travel. Sadly, others - mostly wives or children - informed me of the deaths of our fellow members of the 455th. Those names appear elsewhere in this issue of *The Cerignola Connection*.

The compilation of all these names became a labor of love for me, and I feel grateful, indeed, to be the President of such a wonderful Association.

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am looking to find any information on my father, T/Sgt. William E. Carter (deceased June, 1994). My father was a Flight Engineer with the 15th Air Force, 740th Bomb Squadron, 455 Bomb Group.

My father never talked about the war, but I do have some photos of his crew, and a write-up on his saving the tail gunner's life by fashioning a tourniquet out of arming wire.

I also have a write-up on him receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross in March of 1945. The DFC was also awarded posthumously to the copilot, 1st Lt. Charles Brazelton Jr. of Waco, Texas.

I remember asking my dad what scared him most about the war and he said, "flak" and also telling me that flak had killed their copilot.

I don't know the plane's number nor do any of the pictures have any art work on them. I know that the plane was called *The Uninvited* and I have the names of the crew members. I have researched as much as I can on the 740th, but his plane's name is not mentioned.

I don't know what kind of nose art was on his plane but in one of the pictures the number stenciled on the plane in 2 to 3 foot numbers is 438. I googled 438 but all I found was a 438 that belonged to another crew and, of course, the crew photo isn't of my father's crew.

My brothers and I are proud of our father's service both during and after WWII. He retired from the Air Force in October 1975. It is a proud legacy I would like to pass on to his grandchildren.

Any help will be gladly appreciated.

Best Regards,
James L Carter
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850-456-6788

Editor's Note: For anyone with internet access, please go to the following link:

www.awardphp.com/pdf/dragich%20uninvited.pdf

This story written by S/Sgt. Walter Dragich (740) details a harrowing mission on *The Uninvited*.

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Eleanor McGovern
Wife of
Sen. George McGovern (741)
1921 - 2007

Eleanor McGovern died of heart failure at her home in Mitchell, SD on January 25, 2007 at age 85.

She was born November 25, 1921, on a farm near Woonsocket, SD.

She attended school in Woonsocket, SD and graduated in 1940, as salutatorian. Following graduation she attended Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell, SD where she met her future husband, George McGovern.

On October 31, 1943 she married George McGovern at the Woonsocket Methodist Church where George's father, a minister, officiated. They raised five children. During their married life Eleanor and her husband lived in Mitchell, SD, Washington, DC, Stevensville, MT, Rome, Italy and traveled widely.

Eleanor campaigned for her husband in elections to the US House of Representatives, the US Senate and again when he won the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972.

Frequently, Eleanor discussed national and

international issues in the media. Following that time, she addressed civic, academic and women's groups as an advocate for children, family life and the roles of women. She wrote articles and gave interviews on many issues.

She wrote her memoir, *Uphill: A Personal Journey*, in 1974. She loved nature and was a voracious reader.

She is survived by her husband George, four children: Ann McGovern, Stevensville, MT; Susan McGovern and husband James Rowen, Milwaukee, WI; Steven McGovern, Madison, WI; Mary McGovern-McKinnon, London, England; ten grandchildren; six great grandchildren; sister Phyllis Riffe, Jamestown, ND; and many nieces and nephews; and her beloved pets, Ursa and Kitty-cat.

Dear Editor,

Ref: 743rd. dinner dance on Oct.3 1944.

I was there. We had a very good crowd and as I listened I was not understanding a word the girls were saying. I assumed they were Italian nurses.

One bumped into me and I discovered that I was wrong. They were from South Africa and spoke English. After she told me her name four times I finally got it. "Lil King". They had been trucked in from some where. We had a reputation for throwing good "whing dings" and usually had a General from Wing Headquarters attend.

Thanks!

Capt. Bill Loffer (743)

Final Flights

Editor's Note: Please read Bill Gemmill's President's Message on page 2.

In his message to the membership, Bill Gemmill mentioned receiving many notices of final flights from family members and friends that received the letter about the San Antonio reunion.

You'll see some of the final flights below were flown many years ago. We regret that it took so long for this information to appear in the newsletter.

Thank you to all the families and friends that informed us of their loved one's final flight.

Sgt. Royal L. Dixon (743) resident of Owasso, OK, passed away Friday, February 23, 2007, at the age of 82 years.

Frank DeMarco passed away Jan. 30, 2007

1st Lt. Herbert Weaver (740) passed away May, 2004.

1st Lt. Walter I. Summerfield (743) passed away June, 2006.

1st Lt. Karl D. Anderson (742) died June, 2005.

John Leftwitch died April 11, 1996.

S/Sgt. Donald A. Kaplanek (740) died June 29, 2006.

T/Sgt. Leon Seman (742) passed away in January, 2002.

Maj. Gerald F. Graham (743) passed away in Dec. 2001.

PFC Lloyd Texley (741)
No date given.

Cpl. Norbert F. Bailey (742)
No date given.

1st Lt. Jack Blum (741) took his final flight on December 17, 2006.

T/Sgt. Donald F. Bauer (741) died January, 2002.

T/Sgt. Vern Ussery (740) passed away March 27, 2006

Capt. William V. Richards (743) took his final flight June 23, 2003.

Capt. George J. Guido (742) passed away April, 2006.

S/Sgt. James A. Jackson (742) died September 2, 2006.

1st Lt. Martin Hoade (740) passed away September, 2006.

1st Lt. Leo Stopa (743) took his final flight August 3, 2003.

S/Sgt. Francis McPartlan (741) died September, 2005.

Maj. Harry J. Grosser (741) passed away January 2, 2005.

S/Sgt Dallas W. Cramer (742) former POW, shot down August 1944 over Ploesti. His final flight was in May, 2002.

John B. Coyle (741) passed away October 5, 2006.

Capt. William V. Richards (743) passed away June 23, 2003.

T/Sgt. Charles Oltarzewski (740) passed away October 31, 2006. "Murph" was the engineer on Bill Gemmill's crew (pilot Wesley Powell). Others on that crew were George Harvey (radio) and Curtis Kell (co-pilot).

Capt. Don McConnell (740) took his final flight on 11/05/06. Capt. McConnell volunteered to bomb Hitler's Chalet in the Alps during the winter of 1944, which entailed an extremely long round-trip flight. On the return leg, his cabin heater broke, resulting in his frostbite and hospitalization. He was buried last Veteran's Day (11/11/06) with full military honors.

M/Sgt. Cyril V. "Jim" Martin (742) died September 4, 2003.

Sgt. Ralph Johnson (GP) died in 2004.

1st Lt. Leonard Beckman (742) No date given.

Sgt. Charlie Hilland (742) died on January 7, 2007. He was a nose gunner in George Maitzen's crew.

Sgt. Charles A. Rein (742) passed away in 2005.

God Bless these brave
veterans and their families

Dear Editor,

You are not going to believe what my kids gave me for a Christmas present. They handed me a poem they had written and they asked me to read it out loud. I did. I am enclosing a copy so you can enjoy it (see right column this page). About the only things I expect you may not know is my special birthday is number 90 that comes up in May, 2007.

Already established is the departure date to New Orleans of April 8. We will visit the D-Day Museum on April 13 and April 14.

My kids remembered to work into the poem a much repeated story. We were supposed to wear our flak helmets on our heads, but I wore mine under my rear to protect my family jewels! My kids were the result of my great wisdom ... of my foresight!

Best Regards,

C.W. Cooper (741)

Navigator, George McGovern's crew

Dear Editor,

Please see the picture of the aircraft on fire ((below). My grandfather was 2nd Lt. Patrick W. Murphy (740). I believe that picture was taken on May 10, 1944. My grandfather's plane got badly shot up on their way back from a bomb run. They lost all hydraulics and Lt. Murphy controlled the plane using the engines.

He got it back to the airfield and circled while his crew all bailed out. Once everyone was out he belly landed on the runway and wound up nose down in a bomb-dump. He was knocked out and woke up covered in oil. I don't know how he got out or even how he survived. But he lived to fly more missions in a new plane (The Green Latrine II) until he lost almost his entire crew on July 22, 1944, over Ploesti in a mid-air collision.

Lt. Murphy didn't fly that day due to a bad sinus infection. His copilot, 2nd Lt. Edmund C. Russell, piloted the plane that day with a rookie copilot, 2nd Lt. Dolson Meeker. The only one to make it out of the plane was radio operator James Shumaker. The rest perished. I know right up until he passed away at the age of 72, he never got over losing his crew ... his brothers in arms.

My grandfather is the one on the top all the way to the right. My goal is not only to find some one who may have known him, but to put the names to the faces in that picture.

Sincerely yours,

Shaun Duncan

Port Washington, NY

Email: Old66impala@aol.com



*Christmas is the time of year
To find a special treasure
To give a gift just right for you
Would truly be our pleasure.*

*And knowing that a milestone day
Awaits you this coming year
We, your kids, will accompany you
So you'll have to pack your gear.*

*"Off we go" into the Crescent City
For a weekend in the spring
Visiting that famed museum
We'll treat you like a king.*

*Jazz will fill the N'Awlins air
Music you taught us to like,
As we stroll through the museum,
Bringing good memories of "Ike."*

*WWII and the 455th
Also brings a memory or two
Who the heck needs GPS
When all we need is you!*

*You'll navigate our way down south
Stephen Ambrose will be there
If only in spirit along with those
The heroes of the air.*

*We were going to invite McGovern
but that would be insane
He'd try to tell us what to do
and want to fly the plane.*

*It won't be a B-24 Liberator,
And we will not fly first class,
But we'll get there on a nice big jet,
With no helmet under our..... billfold.*

*This is our plan, we hope you like
So save a date for us
Standing by, Scott, Jeff and Sara
To help you off the bus!*

*And so we finish our little rhyme
About a special trip
Along with Colonel Cooper
Down the mighty Mississippi!*

*Merry Christmas and Happy Birthday
To a very special Dad.
With love from your kids*



Dear Editor,

Ref: your inquiry in the Fall, 2006 newsletter, page 16. I believe the lower picture (reproduced below) is in fact San Giovanni.

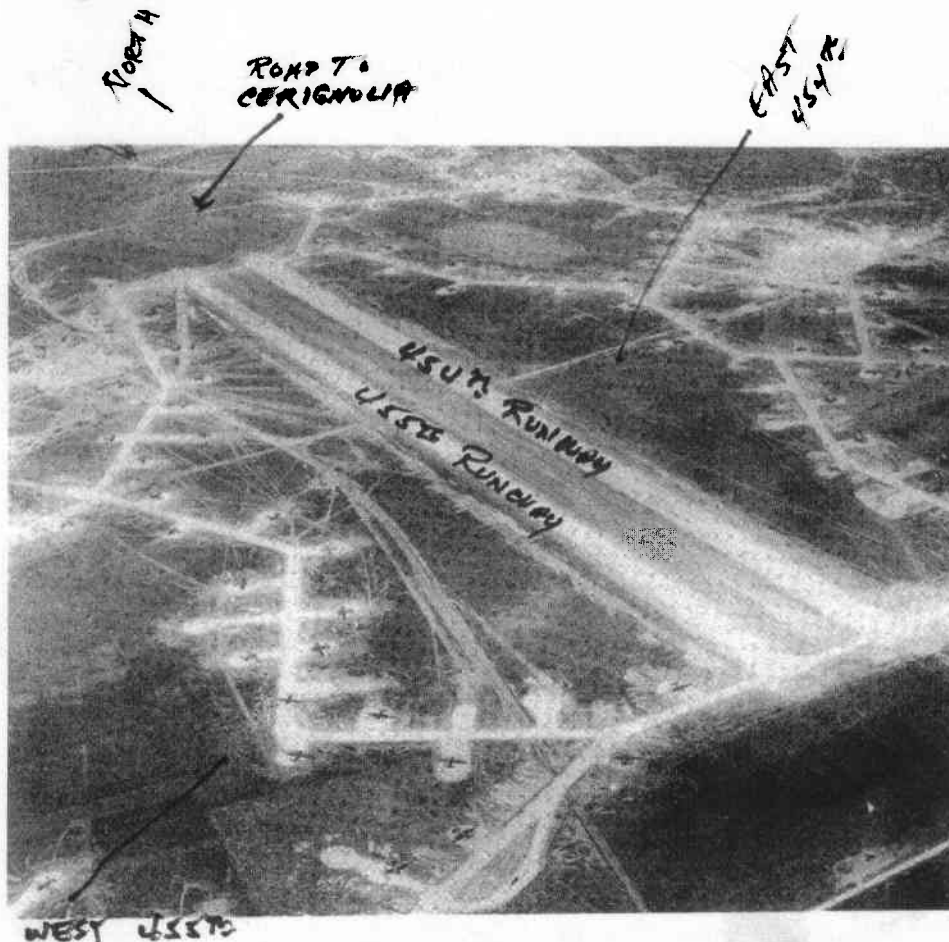
The oblique photo (not shown here) was taken with the camera facing southwest, so the 455th is to the right. Our olive grove tenting area is just beyond the top center of that photograph.

The annotations on the top picture (not shown here) were by Bob Armstrong, an early supporter of our organization. I miss him.

Best Regards,

Edward Hughes (740, Thorne's crew)

efhughes@charter.net



Notes on the photo above courtesy of Jack Phelps (740)

Charlie Brown's Story

Charlie Brown was a B-17 Flying Fortress pilot with the 379th BG at Kimbolton, England.

His B-17 was called 'Ye Old Pub' and was in a terrible state, having been hit by flak and fighters. The compass was damaged and they were flying deeper over enemy territory instead of heading home to Kimbolton.

After flying over an enemy airfield, a German pilot named Franz Steigler was ordered to take off and shoot down the B-17.

When he got near the B-17, he could not believe his eyes. In his words, he 'had never seen a plane in such a bad state'. The tail and rear section was severely damaged, and the tail gunner wounded. The top gunner was dead. The nose was smashed. Holes were everywhere.

Despite having ammunition, Franz flew to the side of the B-17 and looked at Charlie Brown, the pilot. Brown was scared and struggling to control his damaged plane.

Aware that they had no idea where they were going, Franz waved at Charlie to turn 180 degrees. Franz escorted and guided the stricken plane to and slightly over the North Sea towards England. He then saluted Charlie Brown and turned away.

When Franz landed, he told the C.O. that the plane had been shot down over the sea, and never told the truth to anybody. Charlie Brown and the remains of his crew told all at their briefing, but were told to keep it quiet.

More than 40 years later, Charlie Brown wanted to find the Luftwaffe pilot who saved the crew. After years of research, Franz was found. He had never talked about the incident, not even at post-war reunions.

They met in the USA at a 379th BG reunion, together with 25 people who are alive now - all because Franz never fired his guns that day. Research shows that Charlie Brown lived in Seattle, and Franz Steigler had moved to Vancouver, BC after the war.

When they finally met, they discovered they had lived less than 200 miles apart for the past 50 years!

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Dear Editor,

I have a letter (see letter at right) that my Grandfather received from his navigator's mother a few months after he died over Ploesti. I guess he might have been listed as an MIA at the time she wrote my grandfather just by the way she worded it.

How sad to think that at the time she wrote this letter in 1944 she still had hope that her son was alive and asking my grandfather to confirm her hopes. I don't know how he responded.

Here I am in 2007, reading the letter and knowing that the mother who wrote it passed long before I was ever born, about a son who was killed in combat all those years ago.

I can't imagine how my grandfather felt reading that letter in September, 1944. This paper letter will eventually fall apart, but due to computer technology maybe you could preserve it.

Thanks.

Shaun Duncan

Dear Editor,

Is the CC still online? How about the 455th BG History Book and veteran transcripts?

Thanks.

Capt. Charlie Stark (740)

Editor's Note: Yes, Charlie, all back issues of the CC, as well as the 455th BG History book, are available online at the following web address:

www.awardphp.com/veterans.php

Transcripts are at this address:

www.awardphp.com/transcripts.php

Sept. 25, 1944

Dear Lt. Murphy,

I am the mother of Bill Emer, navigator of your crew.

I understand that you may soon be back in the States and am wondering whether you will have a word of hope for us. I know that you may be limited as to what you are permitted to say, and of course we don't want to see anything that might endanger Bill or the rest of the crew, but am hoping and praying that you may have a bit of hope for us.

All we know is that two planes collided in mid air over Yugoslavia on July 22, after bombing Ploesti, and that only two chutes were seen. They said it didn't look very encouraging.

Bill has always had great faith in your ability as a pilot. I'm trying to ease my

fears he said they would never come to grief because of any fault of yours. I don't know who the pilot was that day, but am hoping he was good and was able to land the plane so the crew could get on even though they were not seen from the air. Miracles do happen and I am praying for one in this case.

I don't wish to seem selfish in my anxiety for news, and if you do get home likely you will have plenty of use for your time, but if you are anywhere near here, could you come to see us? You must have been through plenty and can't be feeling any too happy yourself. I feel guilty in troubling you but know that you will understand and forgive me.

Sincerely yours,

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My father, M/Sgt. Harold M. (Tex) Vestal (742), died in 1970. He was a POW at Luft Stalag 3 and was on the march to Mooseberg. He was shot down on a mission to Budapest on July 24, 1944 and I believe two of his crew were killed.

I am just finding out some things that I did not know through the kindness of others. Gus Seefleeth (sp?) has helped me as he was a member of my Fathers crew.

If any of your readership remember my Father, I would appreciate hearing from them.

Thanks for your help. I really appreciate reading the *Cerignola Connection*.

Best Regards,
Gene Vestal
640 Condor Trail,
Saginaw, Texas
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940-367-6317

Can You Help?

I just had a call from John V. Sampson from Thief River Fall, MN. His cousin, Willard Sampson, was with the 742nd and was apparently shot down and killed on or about April 20, 1944 (wasn't that Hitler's birthday?).

Anyhow, he would like to find out whether anyone might be able to add some details to that flimsy report. Apparently, the shoot-down occurred on a bombing mission at Malfacona, Italy, or over the Romanian oil fields.

John's address is:

P.O. Box 9, Thief River Falls, MN, 56701. Phone # 218-681-4297. FAX # 218-681-6274.

Can You Help?

In addition to the research I am doing on my Father-in-Law Earl Bodenhorn (743), I am also researching my Father's WWII experiences.

My Father was in the US Army, 426th Medical Battalion. I have very little information about his experiences and, unfortunately, he is no longer with us.

If you know of some resource for me to use in researching my Father's Army unit, I would really appreciate it.

Also, do you know where I can find a patch for the 743rd squadron, or some high-resolution art work on the Vulgar Vultures?

Thank you,
Meredith Hughes
248-373-8783

Tuskegee Airmen Honored

President Bush saluted the Tuskegee Airmen recently, six decades after they completed their World War II mission and returned home to a country that discriminated against them because they were black.

"Even the Nazis asked why African-American men would fight for a country that treated them so unfairly," President Bush told the group of legendary black aviators, who received a Congressional Gold Medal, the most prestigious Congress has to offer.

"These men in our presence felt a special sense of urgency. They were fighting two wars. One was in Europe and the other took place in the hearts and minds of our citizens."

Bush then saluted the airmen, saying he wanted to offer the gesture to "help atone for all the unreturned salutes and unforgivable indignities" they endured.

"We are so overjoyed," said Roscoe Brown Jr., after he and five other Tuskegee Airmen accepted the medal on behalf of the group. "We are so proud today, and I think America is proud today."

President Bush, members of Congress, and other dignitaries joined some 300 airmen, widows and other relatives for the ceremony in the Capitol Rotunda. Hours ahead of the event, Tuskegee Airmen -- some walking with the aid of canes, others pushed in wheelchairs -- flooded Capitol hallways on their way to being recognized for their long-ago heroism.

"It's never too late for your country to say that you've done a great job for us," retired Col. Elmer D. Jones, 89, of Arlington, Virginia, said in an interview this week. Jones was a maintenance officer during the war.

The Tuskegee Airmen were recruited into an Army Air Corps program that trained blacks to fly and maintain combat aircraft. President Roosevelt had overruled his top generals and ordered that such a program be created. Nearly 1,000 fighter pilots trained as a segregated unit at a Tuskegee, Alabama, air base.

Hundreds saw combat throughout Europe, the Mediterranean and North Africa, escorting bomber aircraft on missions and protecting them from the enemy. Dozens died in the fighting; others were held prisoners of war.

It long had been thought that the Tuskegee Airmen had amassed a perfect record of losing no bombers to the enemy during World War II. But new research has cast doubt on that theory. Two historians recently said Air Force records and other documents show that at least a few bombers escorted by the Tuskegee pilots were downed by enemy planes.

Editor's Note: These guys helped protect my dad and many other 455th BG flyers. Thank you, Tuskegee Airmen!

**455th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION REUNION
OCTOBER 17-21 2007
OMNI HOTEL – SAN ANTONIO, TX**

Wednesday, October 17

1:00pm - 6:00pm Reunion Registration open
5:00pm - 10:00pm Hospitality Room open

Thursday, October 18

8:00am Board of Director's Meeting
8:00am - 8:30am Reunion Registration open
9:00am - 3:00pm CITY TOUR (description follows)
3:30pm - 4:30pm Reunion Registration open. (Additional hours will be posted at the reunion, if needed)
5:00pm - 10:00pm Hospitality Room open

Friday, October 19

9:00am - 4:00pm FREDERICKSBURG (description follows)
5:00pm - 10:00pm Hospitality Room open
7:00pm - 9:00pm 741st Squadron Dinner

Saturday, October 20

8:30am - 10:00am Membership Business Meeting
10:00am - 11:00am Board of Director's Meeting (Incoming Board)
11:30pm - 4:00pm CASA RIO RESTAURANT (description follows)
6:00pm Cash Bar
7:00pm - 11:00pm Banquet begins

Sunday, October 21

Farewells and departures

CANCELLATION AND REFUND POLICY FOR ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC.

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less the non-refundable AFR registration fee (\$7 per person). Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less the non-refundable AFR registration fee. Cancellations will only be taken **Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 5:00pm Eastern Standard Time, excluding holidays**. Please call (757) 625-6401 or email cancel@afri.com to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation does not cancel your reunion activities.

**455th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION REUNION
TOUR DESCRIPTIONS**

CITY TOUR

Thursday, October 18

From the earliest Spanish Missionaries in 1691 to today's traveler, San Antonio's appeal continues to draw attention. Relax and enjoy a fully narrated tour of San Antonio's unique blend of rich heritage, traditions and natural beauty. Points of interest include stops at the San Jose Mission which is still an active church and is part of the National Park service, the largest of the missions; the Alamo, the city's first mission; San Fernando Cathedral, the original church of the Canary Island settlers. Drive by the Riverwalk, Hemisfair (the site of the 1968 World's Fair), and more. Enjoy lunch on your own and shopping at El Mercado, a unique Mexican Market featuring a combination of Tex-Mex cuisine, entertainment, and products ranging from pearls to piñatas. After lunch, enjoy some free time on the Riverwalk or return to the hotel.

9:00am board bus, 3:00pm back at hotel

\$31/Person includes bus and guide. Lunch on your own.

FREDERICKSBURG

Friday, October 19

Enjoy a scenic ride to Fredericksburg to tour the Admiral Nimitz Museum which is dedicated to everyone who served in the Pacific under Admiral Nimitz. Walk through the Garden of Peace, a gift from the people of Japan, and stroll down the History Walk of Tanks. The Museum has just completed a 3.5-acre expansion featuring a Pacific Combat Zone with a PT boat and more! Browse through the George Bush Gallery then enjoy lunch at one of several restaurants or delis located on Fredericksburg's downtown Main Street. There is shopping nearby on Main Street for those interested.

9:00am board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel

\$40/Person includes bus, guide, and admission. Lunch on your own.

CASA RIO RESTAURANT

Saturday, October 20

Casa Rio's beautiful location and colorful umbrellas have come to symbolize the serenity and romance of the San Antonio River Walk. Casa Rio Restaurant was the first Mexican Restaurant on the Riverwalk. Enjoy an authentic Mexican feast, including guacamole salad, chips and salsa, taco, tamale, enchilada, rice, beans, dessert, and a beverage. Alcoholic beverages can be purchased at the Restaurant Bar. After lunch, enjoy some free time on the Riverwalk or return to the hotel. Consider boarding a barge for a cruise down the river (fee to be paid by the individual). At least two shuttle times will be offered, based on your hotel location.

11:30am board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel

\$45/Person includes bus, escort, and lunch.

Driver and guide gratuities are not included in the tour prices.

Please plan to be at the bus boarding area at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time.

All trips require a minimum of thirty people, unless otherwise stated.

**THE OMNI SAN ANTONIO HOTEL AT THE COLONNADE – SAN ANTONIO, TX
(210) 691-8888 (800) 843-6664**

The Omni San Antonio Hotel at the Colonnade is located at 9821 Colonnade Boulevard, San Antonio, TX 78230. The hotel is in northwest San Antonio at Interstate 10 and Wurzbach Road. It is the polished centerpiece of The Colonnade – a 66-acre office, retail, and entertainment complex on the edge of the picturesque Texas Hill Country. The hotel is just ten minutes from downtown San Antonio. If you are driving, please call the hotel directly for directions. The Omni offers 326 guest rooms and suites. Guests will enjoy a fully equipped health club with sauna. In addition, a beautiful indoor/outdoor pool with two hydro-therapy pools allow guests every opportunity to relax. Each guest room features an iron/ironing board and complimentary coffee with coffee maker. A gift shop is located in the hotel. The hotel offers handicapped accessible and non-smoking rooms, which are based on availability. Please request these special accommodations when making your reservation. Parking is complimentary; valet parking is also available for \$10.00 for hotel guests. Check-in time is 3:00pm; check-out is at 12:00pm noon. *Bolo's Rotisserie Grille*, featuring Texas cuisine in a casual setting, serves breakfast, lunch, and dinner. *The Afterthought* features light dining and live, relaxing music. Room service is available.

The Omni San Antonio Hotel at the Colonnade offers complimentary airport transportation to and from the San Antonio International Airport, which is approximately fifteen minutes away. Call the hotel operator from the courtesy phone in the baggage claim area of the airport and they will give you an approximate time of pickup. The logo for the Omni Hotel is clearly marked at the phone. Upon departure, let the front desk know your flight departure time in order for the hotel to arrange shuttle service. As space is always limited on complimentary shuttles, you may want to consider other transportation services.

The hotel will allow RVs to park in the parking lot if guests are staying overnight in the hotel. For full hookup services please call Alamo Koa San Antonio at (210) 224-9296 or Fiesta Kampground at (210) 821-6494. Ask for information, directions, and reservations to determine which is best for you. The parks recommend reservations be made immediately due to limited space and availability.

Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, Alamo Mobility rents both manual and power wheel chairs by the day and week. Please call their toll free number at (210) 697-8884 for details.

Vendors, Schedules, and Prices are subject to change.

CUT HERE AND MAIL TO THE HOTEL

**455th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION REUNION – HOTEL RESERVATION FORM
REUNION DATES: OCTOBER 17-21, 2007**

NAME _____ SHARING ROOM W/ _____

ADDRESS _____ ZIP _____

TEL. NUMBER (_____) _____ ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEP. DATE _____

OF ROOMS _____ # OF PEOPLE IN RM. _____ HANDICAP ACCESS _____ SMOKING _____

NONSMOKING _____ KING BED _____ 2 BEDS _____

If room type requested is not available, nearest room type will be assigned.

RATE: \$105 + tax (currently 16.75%) for 1-2 people in room (max 4 in a double room). Rate will be honored three days before and three days after the reunion dates.

CUT-OFF DATE: 09/13/07. Reservations received after this date will be processed on space & rate availability.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Deposit is refundable if reservation is canceled by 12:00 pm local hotel time on your arrival day.

All reservations must be guaranteed by credit card.

___ AMEX ___ DINERS ___ VISA ___ MASTER CARD ___ DISCOVER

CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____ EXP. DATE _____

SIGNATURE _____

Mail to: Omni San Antonio Hotel at the Colonnade * 9821 Colonnade Boulevard * San Antonio, TX 78230

455th BOMB GROUP ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order (no credit cards or phone reservations accepted). Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before September 13, 2007. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. All new registrations accepted at the reunion will be charged a \$10 onsite processing fee. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
PO BOX 11327
Norfolk, VA 23517
ATTN: 455th BOMB GROUP

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Check # _____	Date Received _____
Inputted _____	Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 9/13/07

	Price Per	# of People	Total
<u>TOURS</u>			
THURSDAY: CITY TOUR	\$ 31		\$
FRIDAY: FREDERICKSBURG	\$ 40		\$
SATURDAY: CASA RIO RESTAURANT	\$ 45		\$
<u>MEALS</u>			
FRIDAY: 741 st SQUADRON DINNER (Please select your entrée)			
PAN SEARED CHICKEN BREAST	\$ 33		\$
SEARED SALMON FILET	\$ 33		\$
SATURDAY: BANQUET (Please select your entrée)			
CHICKEN WELLINGTON	\$ 35		\$
PACIFIC HALIBUT	\$ 35		\$
<u>MANDATORY PER PERSON REGISTRATION FEE</u>			
Includes Hospitality Room and administrative expenses.	\$ 10		\$
Total Amount Payable to <u>Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.</u>			\$

PLEASE PRINT NAME

FIRST _____ LAST _____ NICKNAME _____

SQUADRON _____

SPOUSE NAME (IF ATTENDING) _____

GUEST NAMES _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, ST, ZIP _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

(Sleeping room requirements must be conveyed by attendee directly with hotel)

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? YES NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

ARRIVAL DATE _____ DEPARTURE DATE _____

ARE YOU STAYING AT THE HOTEL? YES NO ARE YOU FLYING? DRIVING? RV?

For refunds and cancellations please refer to our policies outlined at the bottom of the reunion program. **CANCELLATIONS WILL ONLY BE TAKEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 9:00am-5:00pm EASTERN TIME (excluding holidays).** Call (757) 625-6401 or email cancel@afri.com to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion.

** The 741st Squadron Dinner is a private party for the members of the 741st Sqdn and their invited guests.

Dear Editor,

I have just started to research my grandfather's WWII tour. I have documents that states he was in the 740 B.S. from Jan. - June 1945. His name is Cecil S. Kessler from St. Joseph, Mo. I am hoping to find someone that may remember him. His memory and health has been failing in recent years.

I have limited information from what I remember as a child and some that I have gathered from other family members. Any information from you would be so helpful and appreciated.

Thank you,
Michelle Babcock
110 Dayspring Drive
Columbia, Missouri 65203

Can You Help?

My Father-in-Law, Earl Bodenhorn, was in the 743rd Squadron.

I have the 455th Bomb Group (H) history book, *Flight of the Vulgar Vultures*. He is pictured on page 247, upper left corner of the page. Earl is still with us today.

I am trying to find a better quality copy of the photograph. Do you have one that you can make a copy of for me, or direct me to where I might find it? I have already checked with the company that produced the book and they no longer have any records.

Can you help me, or can any of your readership help?

Thank you,
Meredith Hughes
248-373-8783

61 years after mission, medal accomplished

Dallas: Veteran honored for WWII heroism during bombing run

It wasn't as much a heroic act as it was answering the call of duty.

On Jan. 2, 1945, during a bombing run in Remagen, Germany, a live 2,000-pound bomb hung up on his B-24 Liberator and its 10-man crew. Capt. Ralph "Pete" Langenfeld, then a lieutenant bombardier navigator, sprang into action.

It was his duty.

"I didn't think that much of it either," said Mr. Langenfeld, a retired Dallas optometrist. "I still say that's what I'm trained to do, but that's not something you do every day on your missions."

It was 35 degrees below zero, and he had no parachute, but Mr. Langenfeld went into the back bay in an attempt to manually release the weapon. Mr. Langenfeld battled near-frostbite to release it over enemy territory. His fear was the bomb could release on the plane's descent onto Allied land.

"I struck a sharp blow and it released," Mr. Langenfeld said. "I was happy to see it go. At some point that bomb was going to drop."

After that mission, his pilot, Capt. Frank E. Wolf, completed his tour and retired. It was years later before Mr. Wolf and Mr. Langenfeld discussed the events of World War II and realized other servicemen were receiving decorations for similar feats.

"On that basis, we thought let's go ahead with it and see what happens," Mr. Langenfeld said. "We didn't really apply until quite late in the game."

Sixty years late to be exact.

The pilot initiated the paperwork, and it was sent to U.S. Rep. Jeb Hensarling's office. Six months later, on Aug. 24, a letter from Randolph Air Force Base in San Antonio arrived at Mr. Langenfeld's home congratulating him on receiving the award. But two weeks before, Mr. Wolf, his pilot, died.



Rep. Jeb Hensarling (right) delivered the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor to Ralph "Pete" Langenfeld.

"He wasn't even around to enjoy that," said Mr. Langenfeld. "It made me feel real sad. I couldn't believe it."

But 61 years after the mission, at age 84, Mr. Langenfeld has been recognized for what he calls a "so-called act of heroism." Last week, in front of Mr. Langenfeld's friends at the Sprague VFW Post, Mr. Hensarling, R-Dallas, recognized the WWII and Korean War veteran with the Distinguished Flying Cross with Valor.

"I felt it was important for Capt. Langenfeld to receive the honors that he so courageously earned," Mr. Hensarling said. "The outstanding bravery and selfless devotion to duty, honor and country displayed by Capt. Langenfeld is unquestioned."

Mr. Langenfeld accepted the pin on behalf of his crew and Mr. Wolf. And he thanked the congressman who presented him with the honor.

"I really did appreciate the fact that Jeb did this," he said. "I thought that was the finest thing that happened to me in a long time."

Dear Editor,

Ref: 743th Dinner Dance invitation that appears on page 15 of the Fall, 2006 newsletter. You should get several replies since anyone who was there is certain to remember it. (continued right column >>>)

The affair was dreamed up by our squadron C.O., Lt. Col. David Thayer and several other officers. They had heard of a hospital somewhere south of Cerignola which was staffed by a group of South African nurses. They talked the Major in charge of that group to permit a number of nurses to attend.

The affair was held in our Officers Club, a tuffa stone building, located about 25 yards from squadron HQ. The Squadron Surgeon had been saving up medicinal alcohol. The day of the dinner dance, a large amount of punch was made using the alcohol and several large cans of various fruit juices. You couldn't taste alcohol in the finished product, but it packed a pretty good wallop.

A 6X6 brought the nurses up and when everyone was seated, Col. Thayer welcomed us and made a point of explaining that the punch was very potent and to please exercise caution. Even though it was October, it was still warm, particularly inside the Club.

By 9:00 PM, everyone was pretty well looped. Some of the officers began to talk some of the nurses into going outside. When the nurses' Major found this out, she began to round everybody up. There were nurses behind the building, nurses in the 6X6, nurses in the bushes, each with an officer.

The Major was furious, but she soon got all of the nurses corralled with a promise to never return to Cerignola. It was quite an affair. I remember the invitation very well and I kept it for a long time.

Best Regards,
Crandall Jones (743)
Squadron Engineering Officer

Can You Help?

I am an Army Infantryman serving in Iraq. My uncle was S/Sgt John Kilian, an aerial gunner assigned to the 740th Bomb Squadron, 455th Bomb Group. He was killed in action on the 19th of March, 1944. I have done some research, even gotten the MACR, but there are still unanswered questions.

His plane was B-24 42-64497 and collided with B-24 41-29296. I can't remember the MACR exactly, but I know that the pilot of 64497 was a 1st LT. James Pidcock and also there was a Sgt. Buddy D. Brosz. Also a T/Sgt. Kellog. Both planes were in the same squadron and same group, returning from a mission to Austria.

I went to the link with 740th Unit history book and found a picture of the other crew, but no picture of my uncle's crew. It does, however, mention that day because they were the first known battle casualties of the squadron and that this accident was depressing because all 20 men were lost. It also says that both crews were members of the original contingent of the unit and says they were well liked by all.

I think that the plane's name was Minnie Ha-Cha, according to the B-24 nose art book, but that assumes it was in fact with the 740th BS, 455th BG, # 42-64497. The other plane's name was apparently Glammer Gal 740th BS, 455th BG, # 41-29296. Any and all information about that related event, pictures of the plane or crews would be well appreciated.

Please send any responses care of my wife at the address below. Thanks so much, guys!

Spc. Mike Kilian USARNG
1/34th Inf. Div.
Scania, Iraq

Home address:
53 Elmwood Ave., Apt 2
Buffalo NY 14201
716-316-1456
email: mjkw2@yahoo.com (he will get your emails in Iraq)

Editor's Note:

After I received Spc. Kilian's email above, I corresponded with him for several days. In addition to his heroic service fighting the terrorists in Iraq, he has quite a keen sense of humor.

I thanked him for his service to our country, on behalf of the 455th BG Association. Spc. Kilian is in awe of you gentlemen that flew and maintained the B24's in WWII. He asked that I pass on his best regards to the veterans of the 455th BG.

When Insults Had Class

"He has all the virtues I dislike, and none of the vices I admire."
-- Winston Churchill

"A modest little person, with much to be modest about."
-- Winston Churchill

"I am enclosing two tickets to the first night of my new play, bring a friend, if you have one."
-- George Bernard Shaw
to Winston Churchill

"Cannot possibly attend first night, will attend second... if there is one."
-- Winston Churchill, in response to Shaw quote above

"I've had a perfectly wonderful evening. But this wasn't it."
-- Groucho Marx

Can You Help? Response

This picture below was sent by Michael Dougherty (741) in response to the request for information about donut girls by Shawn Caldwell in the Fall 2006 edition of the CC.

The photo taken in April, 1945.

Her name is Maggie.



Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I'm the grandson of Rudolf C. Denke who was a radio operator stationed in Italy with the 455th BG (742 BS) in 1944.

I found your newsletter on the awardphp.com website and am very interested in finding out more about the 455th BG Assn. Perhaps you can help me in my search for information on the unit and, specifically, some of the aircraft my grandfather flew on. He was shot down on mission #100 to Bleckhammer, Germany on August 22, 1944 (MACR 11545). For the record, my grandfather is alive and well and living in Minnesota.

I'm also in the process of building a scale model of the "Reddy Teddy Too" (s/n 41-28989 from the 742nd BS), so any info about that plane would be appreciated, too.

Thanks.

Geoff Denke
3838 Viewcrest Dr., Apt. A
Medford, OR 97504
(541) 858-2049

A Report on The Members of the 455th Bombardment Group Who After WWII Remained Buried in Europe and North Africa

By Eugene L. Hudson
Major General USAF (Retired)
12610 Lonesome Oak
Valley Center, Ca 92082

Last year my wife and I made a trip to England and visited the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial for the U. S. Military personnel who were killed in World War II.

The 31 acre site was donated by the University of Cambridge. It lies on the North Slope with wide prospect. The west and south sides are framed by woodland.

The cemetery contains the remains of 3,812 of our military dead. On the *Tablets of the Missing* are recorded the names of 5,126 who gave their lives in the service of their country, but whose remains were never recovered or identified. Most died in the Battle of the Atlantic or in the strategic air bombardment of Northwest Europe.

The final disposition of WW II remains was carried out under the provisions of Public Law 389, 66 Congress and Public Law 368, 88 Congress, respectively. These laws entitled next of kin to select permanent interment of a loved one's remains in an American military cemetery on foreign soil designed, constructed and maintained specifically to honor in perpetuity of the dead of those wars.

Another option for families was repatriation of their loved one's remains to U. S. soil for interment in a national or private cemetery. The programs for final disposition of remains were carried out by the War Department's American Graves Registration service under the Quartermaster General.

From time to time, requests are received from relatives asking that the instructions of the next of kin at the time of interment be disregarded. Those making such a request are informed that the decision of the next of kin of record at the time of interment is final.

Often, on seeing the great beauty and immaculate care of the Commission's cemetery memorials, these same individuals say they are now pleased that the remains of their loved ones have been permanently interred in these shrines.

As a result of this Public Law, approximately 60% of all U. S military personnel killed in WW II have been returned to the U. S. for permanent interment.

There are 119 members of the 455th B. G. still buried in eight different cemeteries within Europe and North Africa. A listing of those personnel by name, squadron and cemetery location follows.

All cemeteries are open between the hours of 9 AM to 5 PM daily, (local time).

If you desire further information on any Cemetery you may contact:

American Battle
Monuments Commission
Court House Plaza II Suite 500,
2300 Clarendon Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22201
Telephone: 703-696-6897 or
703-696-3896
Fax: 703-696-6666
Web: www.abmc.gov

Plot/Row/Gr	Name	Ran	Unit	Cemeter	Date/Death	Ser. #	State	Decorations
E 19 32	MAXWELL BAILEY J	SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	27 JULY44	19117082	ID	AM PH
J 7 69	KENNEDY HERMAN L	CPL	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	06 APR 44	38371527	TX	
D 45 21	RUYTER EDWARD W	2 LT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	14 OCT 44	O-776804	DE	AM PH
G 9 26	KRIPPLEBAUER JOHN	CPL	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	06 APR 44	33489255	PA	
A 31 55	JAMES DANIEL P JR	S SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	27 JULY44	35580719	IN	AM/3 OLC/ PH
B 35 10	MELLO ARTHUR R	SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	27 JULY44	31310961	M	AM PH
K 48 22	LOERCHER CHARLES	1 LT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	16 JUNE44	O-747597	PA	AM/2 OLC ✓
E 35 22	GROSS HUGO R	T SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	16 JUNE44	32669776	NY	DFC AM/2 OLC
A 19 5	MORRIS RUSSELL S	S SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	26 JUN44	32555279	NJ	AM/4 OLC/ PH
J 40 17	BAIN JAMES K	S SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	30 MAY 44	34700527	AL	AM/3 OLC/ PH
D 13 25	ASHLEY FRANK A	S SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	16 JUNE44	35369411	IN	AM/4 OLC/ PH
A 16 23	SHROPSHIRE CHARLES	CPL	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	14 OCT 44	20234097	NY	AM PH
G 10 26	RICKEY JOHN W	T SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	06 APR 44	16016969	IL	AM/OLC/
D 11 25	KAMPA BERNARD W	S SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	16 JUNE44	37461572	SD	AM/4 OLC
E 16 36	WURTZ NELSON A	1 LT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	16 JUNE44	O-682937	M	AM/4 OLC/ PH
E 16 36	FRASE HARRISON C	SGT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	FLORENCE	17 NOV 44	36243165	WI	AM PH
J 4 60	ACKERMAN ERNEST R	2 LT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	03 APR 44	O-735152	NJ	AM PH
C 7 42	FRANKE WARREN L	2 LT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	FLORENCE	27 AUG 44	O-717023	M	PH
E 3 21	LAWS KEELS	2 LT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	FLORENCE	28 APR 44	O1703136	TN	AM/2 OLC/ PH
D 11 40	ADAMS CHARLES S	1 LT	741 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	FLORENCE	12 MAR 45	O2062621	WI	AM/OLC/ PH

Plot/Row/Gr	Name	Ran	Unit	Cemeter	Date/Death	Ser. #	State	Decorations
D 2 40	NEIL WARREN	2 LT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	FLORENCE	20 APR 44	O-690665	CA	AM/OLC/ PH
C 8 40	ARMSTRONG HOMER	S SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	20 DEC 44	13120830	VA	AM/OLC/ PH
F 1 5	WEBB CHARLES R JR	S SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	FLORENCE	20 APR 44	17076406	M	AM/2 OLC
B 34 17	MICHAEL DONALD R	SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	26 JUNE44	37676000	LA	AM PH
C 25 16	COLLINS STEPHEN F	SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	27 JULY44	35729473	KY	AM PH/OLC/
B 41 11	JACKSON ROGER W	T SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	21 APR 44	39195519	W	DFC AM/2 OLC
D 11 45	JONES MERIWETHER	1 LT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	21 APR 44	O-449999	VA	SS AM/2
A 37 57	STENGL LOUIS	2 LT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	17 AUG 44	O-815583	WI	DFC AM/OLC/
C 24 13	MASON JAMES B	T SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	26 JUNE44	11084773	M	AM/5 OLC/ PH
B 36 29	SCHROYER RALPH W	T SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	17 AUG 44	33574231	PA	AM/OLC/ PH
H 12 10	CANTER MOFFETT W J	S SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	17 JUNE44	13121522	VA	AM PH
A 34 54	OWENS RALPH C	2 LT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	27 JULY44	O-820044	NY	AM PH
K 26 15	BALKOVEC JAMES R	S SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	27 JULY44	33427326	PA	AM PH
A 26 6	FRITCHARD EDWARD J	T SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	26 JUNE44	33298006	PA	AM/5 OLC
D 11 47	ZOBEL ROBERT E	2 LT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	ARDENNES	17 AUG 44	O-704236	M	AM PH
E 8 55	GREGENSEN NORMAN	T SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	20 DEC 44	17114481	WI	AM/OLC/
D 46 26	HAINISH CHARLES K	SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	27 JULY44	13068792	PA	AM PH
D 46 26	DUNCAN KENNETH JR	CPL	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	FLORENCE	29 DEC 44	15303783	IN	AM PH
D 46 26	CHARLES WILLIAM S	S SGT	742 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	FLORENCE	20 APR 44	15339377	W	AM PH

Plot/Row/Gr	Name	Ran	Unit	Cemeter	Date/Death	Ser. #	State	Decorations
I 4 68	TALKINGTON KENNETH	1 LT	743 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	20 DEC 44	O-725004	AR	AM PH
F 6 5	TIER CHARLES A	SGT	743 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	10 DEC 44	32314849	NY	
F 12 8	BEARD THOMAS W	SGT	743 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	SICILY+ROME	20 DEC 44	38479805	TX	AM PH
B 24 23	PETERSON ALFRED R	S SGT	743 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	02 APR 44	17175599	KS	AM PH
K 15 25	POTUCEK EUGENE D	1 LT	743 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	27 JULY44	O-696653	M	AM/OLC/ PH
A 30 6	BARNETT PAUL E	SGT	743 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	27 JULY44	15084466	IN	AM PH
B 23 17	FEIDORA JOHN	SGT	743 BOMB SQ 455 BOMB GP/	LORRAINE	22 NOV 44	33055567	PA	AM PH

Some people spend an entire lifetime wondering if they made a difference in the world. But our veterans don't have that problem.

-- President Ronald Reagan

Dear Editor,

I was the radio operator on Lou Dolan's crew in the 740th Squadron from September, 1944 until we finished our missions on April 2, 1945. We all came home without a scratch, but there are now only three of us left out of the original ten (co-pilot Steve Truhan, tail-gunner Sam Wyrosdic, and myself).

My daughter, Cynthia Harriman, was at a business meeting in Lecce, Italy, recently and happened to meet a woman who wanted to visit Cerignola because her late father was a co-pilot in the 459th. I emailed her what information I had about San Giovanni and Mario Capocefalo, whom I didn't know personally but had heard of.

They succeeded in finding both group locations, but did not catch up with Mario due to lack of time. They were able to get some information through their interpreter from a farm woman they met at the 455th headquarters (455th BG HQ building below).



There is no reason to fly through a thunderstorm in peacetime.

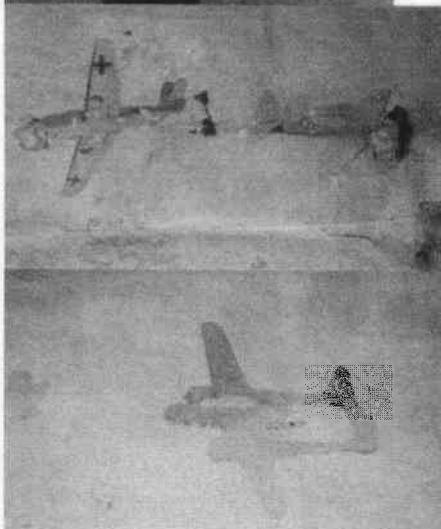
from Torre Giulia, where the 459th was. The Albanian farm worker there said he knew nothing of the history of the place, but finally offered to let us explore the main building.

The officers of the 459th lived in a winery. Mission briefings were held in the same building. You can imagine their excitement when Cynthia discovered a fading frieze of military planes painted around one room.

They thought it might have been the briefing room. This room was behind the arched doorway visible in the middle of the building photo below.

Cindy also said Cerignola didn't look as if it had changed much in the last sixty years.

Best Regards,
T/Sgt. Charles B. Wills (740)



Dear Editor,

You inserted my request for information on Lt. Edward Ruyter's tragic last mission (Oct. 14, 1944) in the Fall 2006 edition of the CC (page 17).

In this column, and on the next page, please find more information about this mission.

Sincerely
Svatopluk Vaculík
Czech Republic
svatavel@netscape.net

Crew of B-24J
S/N 42-51912 on Oct. 14, 1944:

Pilot - Lt. John NOSKE - executed by SS

Co-pilot - Lt. Walter SHOSTACK - POW

Navigator - Lt. Elijah OSTRANDER - POW

Bombardier - Lt. Edward W. RUYTER - KIA

Radio operator/gunner - Cpl. Alexander DUBETZ - POW

Engineer/gunner - Cpl. Jack R. KOEPPLE - POW

Engineer/gunner - Cpl. Robert E. SPICER - executed by SS

Gunner - Cpl. Charles SHROPSHIRE - executed by SS

Gunner - Cpl. Robert E. BREWER - executed by SS

Gunner - Cpl. John J. STELLA - KIA

Dear Editor,

After 62 years, we finally know what happened to our bombardier.

Lt. Col. Walt Shostack (741)

See article, next page

CLARIFICATION OF A SIXTY-TWO-YEAR-OLD CASE

On October 14, 1944, large formations of American aircraft flew over our city of Kojetin, in eastern Moravia. On their return flight, the body of an airman who had been killed in an aerial combat was dropped from an aircraft behind the city of Kojetin (in the direction of the village of Kojetice)

The identification card found with the body belonged to the American Air Force Lieutenant Edward Ruyter. He was buried on October 18 in the local cemetery. The burial ceremony was performed by the local parson with several German soldiers participating. The cemetery was closed during the ceremony and nobody else was permitted to participate.

Thanks to efforts of amateur researchers into the history of aerial war over Central Europe in the years 1944 and 1945, many details into this case can be presented now. The researchers have succeeded in finding information in archived documents and in personal correspondence with veterans and other witnesses.

On the day mentioned above, the 15th U.S. Air Force performed an air raid onto the complex of German petrochemical works in Upper Silesia (now Poland). Of particular interest to the US bombers was the destruction of the synthetic gasoline manufacturing factories situated in the cities of Blechhammer and Odertal.

Of the several hundred four-engined bombers sent on this mission was a B-24J Liberator (Serial Number 42-51912) of the 455th Bomb Group ("The Vulgar Vultures"), 741st Squadron.

Above Odertal, at an altitude of 20,000 feet, this B-24 took a direct hit by an antiaircraft shell in the aircraft nose. The explosion instantly killed two members of the crew ... Bombardier Lt. Edward W. Ruyter and gunner Cpl. John J. Stella. The crew dropped their bombs, and in spite of heavy damage, the aircraft was able to leave the target area in a southerly direction with the intention to fly as far as possible.

The return flight was described by the Co-pilot, Lt. Walter Shostack: "Our plane was split in the front like a banana, our windshield was gone, and so were our rudder and throttle controls. We still had elevator and aileron control, so we could stay aloft, but only at full throttle, which used up most of our fuel.

We flew south under fire but were not hit again. My engineer checked on Ed Ruyter and John Stella. He said they were both dead but did not say they were gone. I don't know when they fell out or when they were blown out of the plane - it was a very bumpy ride. We flew until we came to the mountains. We could not climb over them, so we bailed out, I was far away from Bleiburg when I jumped and there were no soldiers around when I landed.

I walked in the hills until I stumbled over a hidden house that was a hiding place for some of Tito's partisans. They sheltered me and gave me a guide to take me back to a place where my squadron would pick me up. Unfortunately, the Germans found us before we made it back."

It so happened that during the return flight, the bodies of both airmen fell out from the aircraft. Ed Ruyter's body fell onto the field near the city of Kojetin in Moravia. The place of John Stella's last rest is not known. Their bomber reached the region of southern Austria. It was not able to fly over the Alps, and the remaining members of the crew bailed out on parachutes. Four airmen landed in the vicinity of the city of Bleiburg in Carinthia, Austria. The other four landed in other places far away.

Whereas the latter were able to escape captivity for a relatively long time period (Walter Shostack was not taken prisoner until October 27 near Ljubljana), four airmen of the former group were captured near Bleiburg and were shot dead as terrorists in a school yard by members of the German SS. They were buried in the local cemetery. The others spent the last seven months of the war in German POW camps.

Edward William Ruyter was born on April 11, 1922 in the city of Dover, Delaware. He came to Italy in September 1944. In his letter addressed home, dated October 13, he advised that the next day he would fly his third bombing mission. He did not anticipate that it would be his last one.

His body was exhumed from the grave in the Kojetin cemetery on September 10, 1946 and transferred to a military cemetery in St. Avoird in France.

Editor's Note:

I recently received a copy of a personal journal from Henry Groen (741) of Murray, Utah. I enjoyed reading his recollections of his youth, military training, experiences in Cerignola, and post-war life.

Mr. Groen is an accomplished artist. He used his talents to create nose-art on some of the Liberators in the 741st squadron. His art includes the picture to the right.

My father, Lt. J. T. Ward (740), once told me the only thing as beautiful as his wife (my mother) was a P-51 escort during a mission. Dad's comment gives this picture a special significance to me.

While I cannot reproduce the journal in these pages, I wanted to thank Mr. Groen for allowing me to read this fascinating story of one veteran's life.



Dear Editor,

Could you please include a request in the next newsletter for anyone who may remember my grandfather, Cecil S. Kessler (740), flight engineer, in Italy from January, 1945 - June, 1945, to contact me. I have attached two photos.

The Barrumska crew is as follows:

Standing (L-R)

2nd Lt. Robert D. Guyton - Pilot

Fallert - Co-Pilot

King - Navigator

Kneeling (L-R)

SSgt Cecil S. Kessler - Engineer (photo top right)

Cpl William J. Roche - Radio Operator

Cpl Stanley J. Smorschok - Armorer/Gunner

Lawrence J. Wilson - Armorer/Gunner

Richard N. McAllen - Armorer/Gunner



Thank You.

Michelle Babcock

110 Dayspring Drive

Columbia, Mo. 65203

michellebabcock1020@yahoo.com

573-445-1495

Dear Editor,

I was the flight engineer on Dan Neuman's crew "*Leakin' Deacon*". We were one of the original crews that trained at Langley, VA. We were in combat from February, 1944 through late June, 1944. We were one of the few crews in the 743rd to complete 50 missions.

We were on the Steyr and Moosbierbaum missions, and were awarded the DUC for these missions. Wylie Smith, Reid B. Peck, and myself are the surviving members of the crew.

Tom Ramey was a good friend, and great editor of the *Cerignola Connection*. We miss him.

Best Regards,

Emmett Ledbetter, Jr. (743)



Leakin' Deacon at Langley
1943



Neuman's crew tents
Spring 1944



Menacing Messlina
Spring 1944

Attention: All 455th Bomb Group Association Members

Remember that your membership dues pay for the costs of this newsletter, along with many misc. expenses related to the Association's activities. If you haven't paid your 2007 dues yet, please mail your check for \$15 to the 455th BG Assoc., Attention: Gregory Riggs, PO Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.

Note your mailing label on this newsletter. If there is a number 02 or lower on the top line, you're going to be dropped from the newsletter mailing list. This number indicated the last time you paid your annual dues, and we haven't heard from you since then. Thus, we are deleting those names from our newsletter mailing list. To re-establish having your name on the mailing list, please send \$15 for 2007 dues to P.O. Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.

**455th Bomb Group Assoc., Inc.
P.O. Box 93095
Austin, TX 78709-3095**

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