



# CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

**Fall, 2004** Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039  
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## 2004

2004 marks a 60th Anniversary for many members of the 455th Bomb Group. Most of you were either transiting TO Italy in 1944, or returning FROM Italy 60 years ago.

Either way, the task that you were traveling to, or from, six decades ago was the most important and consequential job of the last century.

Many events that occurred during the first 40 years of the twentieth century led the world into global conflict.

Many events that have happened SINCE the end of that terrible struggle are a CONSEQUENCE of the war.

Your contribution to making the world "safe for democracy" can never be repaid, nor can you ever be thanked enough. The newly opened World War II Veterans' Memorial in Washington, D.C., although 60 years too late, is hopefully a small start.

This newsletter has several items related to the opening of the memorial.



## President's Message

William Gemmill, Lt. Col (ret.)



Time flies when you're having fun. It's hard to believe that it has been almost a year since our Orlando reunion. I sincerely hope that all of you have enjoyed life and good health in the intervening months. Carole and I have made several trips during that time, the most recent of which was to Maryland and Washington, DC, with a three-day stop at Myrtle Beach on the way home.

I thought you might appreciate my thoughts regarding my visit to the World War II Memorial in Washington.

*(continued next page, left column)*

## Editor's Note:

*The subjects of this NYT article about the WWII Memorial, Edward Foley (741) & Howard Cooper (740), served in the 455th Bomb Group.*

## Seeking a Familiar Face, Veterans Settle for an Ear

WASHINGTON, May 27 - As Howard Cooper of Staten Island was telling his war stories on Thursday, Edward Foley of Berwick, Pa. was just a few feet away telling his. The men were not immediately aware of each other and certainly had no idea that their paths had crossed nearly 60 years ago in a small Italian town.

But someone listening to Mr. Cooper happened to notice that Mr. Foley's cap bore the insignia of the same bombing group, the 455th, that Mr. Cooper served in. As soon as Mr. Cooper saw it, he walked over and said his unit had been stationed in the small town of San Giovanni.

"Is that where you were?" he asked Mr. Foley.

"Yeah, San Giovanni," Mr. Foley said, his eyes widening. "That's where I was."

*(continued next page, right column)*

## President's Message (cont.)

We were there exactly one week after the official opening on that gorgeous, sunny day that was so beautifully covered on television. The difference, one week later, was the weather: cold, windy and wet!

The area covered was far smaller than I had expected it to be. That fact, however, did not detract from the grandeur and beauty of the memorial. On the contrary, it is "awe-inspiring"!

I thought of each and every member of the 455th, those still with us, and those no longer here.

I felt obligated to wear my VFW cap complete with B-24 and 15th Air Force pins. That, coupled with my cane, apparently made me stand out, because I received so many requests for photographs that I should have charged a fee! The cane, by the way, was not because of any new infirmity, but just because of the long walk from parking (if you could find a space). It's well worth having a cane with you if you plan to visit.

The closest reference to members of the 455th was the words "AIR WAR IN EUROPE" chiseled into the granite base of a fountain in front of the European section of the memorial. Surprisingly, at least to me, was the absence of any specific geographic areas for which we, as well as all other veterans of the war in Europe, received battle stars. I suppose they were too numerous, and there's just so much granite available.

The monument is ringed on the north and south sides by columns representing our 48 states and possessions during the war. On most of the columns or at their base, there were many old photographs, flowers and memorabilia in honor of veterans who had entered the service from those states or possessions. All such items are collected daily and are stored in an adjoining building.

As the cold, wet day came to a close, Carole and I were sitting on a chilly granite wall when another veteran wearing a CBI cap (C h i n a - Burma-India) sat down with us. We started chatting and I learned that he too flew in B-24s in that theater of operations. He was visiting from Colorado. and he made me think of our dear friend and great 455th Executive Officer Gus Wendt because he complained bitterly about the lack of a B-24 at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum.

I'll close with warm regards, and the hope of seeing all of you in October of 2005.

Bill Gemmill  
President, 455th BG Assoc.



## Foley & Cooper (cont.)

The first day of a four-day tribute to World War II veterans in Washington worked out exactly as planned. The huge white tent, designated as Reunion Hall, connected a pair of veterans for a moment.

While they did not know each other back in the day -- Mr. Cooper, 79, was a tailgunner in the 740 Squadron; Mr. Foley, 87, was a cryptographic officer in the 741 Squadron -- they chatted long enough to determine that for a few months through early 1945 they had been stationed less than a quarter of a mile apart.

"That was really great, to run into him," Mr. Foley said. "To meet someone who experienced the same thing -- well, I just didn't expect it."

Memories are playing a big part of the tribute as tens of thousands of World War II veterans arrive in Washington for a swirl of activities that includes the official dedication of a new memorial on Saturday as well as discussion groups, swing bands, military displays and the chance for old war buddies to bump into one another.

Organizers of the tribute have gone to great lengths to help veterans connect. A Web site invites them to sign in and provide contact information -- more than 2,500 are listed so far -- and the Reunion Hall was designed to allow veterans to fill out information forms and post them on message boards under the name of their unit.

(continued next page, left column)

## Foley & Cooper (cont.)

Shortly after the tent opened on Thursday morning, the boards were filling up, and veterans crowded around, looking for familiar names.

Most of the notes were written by veterans, urging other members of their unit to contact them by telephone or e-mail. Others came from family members of veterans who are ill or have died, seeking information from people who served with them.

It quickly became apparent that instant connections, like Mr. Cooper's meeting Mr. Foley, were the exception.

"I'd be stunned if I found anybody here I served with," said Arthur Piatt, 77, of Bethlehem, Pa., who served in the 81st Infantry in the Pacific. "I looked at the names up there, but I didn't recognize anyone."

Neither did Vernon Crow of Shawnee, Kan., a Navy veteran who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam. "Serving in World War II made an impression on you you'll never forget," Mr. Crow said, as tears filled his eyes.

Many veterans who failed to recognize a name or face were happy enough to tell their stories to anyone who would listen. Bill Clark of Pagosa Springs, Colo., who served on the U.S.S. Vigilance in the Pacific, wore his old Navy uniform and talked about how proud he was that America was finally thanking World War II veterans with a memorial on the

Mall.

Mr. Clark helped raise more than \$7,000 to build it, he said, and interviewed veterans to record their stories for posterity. But he expressed disappointment that the memorial was so long in the making. It has been 17 years since the concept was first contemplated, and the memorial is opening at a time when the youngest World War II veterans are in their mid 70's.

Robert Anderson, 81, of Cookeville, Tenn., who served as a navigator on a plane shot down over the Netherlands in 1944, was scanning the message board for a familiar name from the 8th Air Force 381 Bomb Group. Mr. Anderson survived 15 months as a prisoner of war before Patton's forces came through southern Germany to rescue him.

He marveled at how united the country was over the war effort in those days and, like other veterans, said it bothered him that more Americans were not showing the same kind of support for the war in Iraq.

"In our school system, we were taught patriotism," Mr. Anderson said. "As the brunt of my education, I learned respect for the government. It wasn't until later that divisiveness set in, pulling people apart. That's what we've got now."

Mr. Piatt agreed, pointing to a fracture that he said began during the Vietnam War.

"It's appalling to me the way people are acting today, as opposed to how they did during World War II," he said. "If the

country was like that then, I don't know if we would have won. We'd probably be speaking Japanese or German now, if we were here at all."

*Courtesy New York Times*

## More Information about the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier

*This must take a special kind of person:*

How many steps does the guard take during his walk across the Tomb of the Unknowns and why?

*21 steps. It alludes to the twenty-one gun salute, which is the highest honor given any military or foreign dignitary.*

How long does he hesitate after his about-face to begin his return walk and why?

*21 seconds for the same reason as answer above.*

Why are his gloves wet?

*His gloves are moistened to prevent his losing his grip on the rifle.*

Does he carry his rifle on the same shoulder all the time, and if not, why not?

*He carries the rifle on the shoulder away from the tomb. After his march across the path, he executes an about-face, and moves the rifle to the outside shoulder.*

How often are the guards changed?

*Guards are changed every thirty minutes, twenty-four hours a day, 365 days a year.*

*(continued next page, left column)*

What are the physical traits of the guard limited to?

*For a person to apply for guard duty at the tomb, he must be between 5' 10" and 6' 2" tall and his waist size cannot exceed thirty inches.*

Other requirements for guards of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier:

- \* They must commit 2 years of life to guard the tomb, live in a barracks under the tomb, and cannot drink any alcohol on or off duty for the rest of their lives.
- \* They cannot swear in public for the rest of their lives and cannot disgrace the uniform or the tomb in any way.
- \* After two years, the guard is given a wreath pin that is worn on their lapel signifying they served as guard of the tomb. There are only 400 presently worn.
- \* The guard must obey these rules for the rest of their lives or give up the wreath pin.
- \* The shoes are specially made with very thick soles to keep the heat and cold from their feet. There are metal heel plates that extend to the top of the shoe in order to make the loud click as they come to a halt.
- \* There are no wrinkles, folds or lint on the uniform.
- \* Guards dress for duty in front of a full-length mirror.
- \* The first six months of duty a guard cannot watch TV.
- \* Every guard spends five hours a day getting his uniforms ready for guard duty.

**Editor's Note:**

*The following story was submitted by Herbert R. Efflandt (742). It is another example of the "small world syndrome". Herbert can be reached at 6012 Ainsdale Ct., Dallas, TX. 75252, (972) 713-0064.*

My sister and brother-in-law, Anita and George DeShazo, own a home in a subdivision near Houston, Texas. One day George was talking with a neighbor about World War II.

The neighbor, John Magee, told George he was a Waist Gunner in the 15th Air Force in Italy at San Giovanni Air Field. George told him that his brother-in-law was also stationed there.

*Note: Anita, George, my wife Virginia, and I visited Italy in 1980. We went to Cerignola and San Giovanni. So George was familiar with the Air Base. My wife and I were with Lou Hansen when the Italian adventurers (thirteen couples) made the trip to Italy.*

George found out Magee was in the 743rd, and Tom Ramey was his pilot. (For those of you with the official history book of the 455th B.G., see page 247 for a picture of Ramey's crew). John Magee joined Ramey's crew in the states and flew to Italy with him.

Virginia and I visited Anita and George in Houston, and got to meet John Magee and his wife, Claribel.

I left my album of pictures, the 455th history book, and all my old copies of the *Cerignola Connection* with John.

John was the oldest of the crew at 29. Ramey was 21. John had his 90th birthday November, 2003.

John was sick the day Ramey was shot down and didn't make that flight. He finished his missions with other crews and returned to the states.

John flew a total of 42 missions with Ramey. He also spent R & R time with Ramey on Capri. He said they had a great time.

After returning home, John wanted to forget about the war and has little contact with former squadron members.

He sold optical equipment until his retirement. He is an avid golfer.

The photo of John below was taken at his home in Houston in July, 2004.



Do the coupons below look familiar? If you tried to buy gasoline during World War II, and you didn't have these coupons, you were out of luck!



## Air Force Prayer

O, Lord, we thank you for the men who fly,  
For fighting soldiers who 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,  
Though I'll be far away

I'll be fighting, ever fighting  
For you,  
and the good ole U.S.A.

"The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis.' One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger ... but recognize the opportunity."

Richard M. Nixon (1913 - 1994)

## Available for purchase ...

### **459th BG BOMB DAMAGE CD**

We have received a letter from Ried M. Waltman, the Vice President of the 459th Bomb Group Association, advising us he has a CD containing 470 photos covering targets they hit from their first mission on March 1, 1944 through their mission #242 on April 18, 1945.

The 459th Bomb Group was located in Italy, and was a member of the 304 Bomb Wing, as was the 455th Bomb Group. Thus, this CD should be of interest to many of our members.

This CD will play on all computers, except Apple. The price is \$15 for a mailed CD. If you desire more than one CD the cost would be \$15 for the first CD, and \$10 for each additional CD mailed to the same address.

If you desire a copy (or copies) of this CD, please mail your order, with your check to:

Ried M. Waltman  
100 CR SE 4297  
Scroggins, TX 75480-3036  
(903) 860-2352

If any of our members have photos or other material that would complement this CD, Mr. Reid would like you to send it to him. He wants to construct a sequel to the original CD.

### CD Table of Contents

- \* 15th AF History
- \* 459th BG History
- \* Bomb Damage Photos
- \* Combat Mission List

- \* Aerial Photo Mission List
- \* Giulia Field
- \* Mission Briefings 1944
- \* Mission Aerial Photos
- \* Flak Maps
- \* Fighter Escorts
- \* Isle of Capri Rest Area
- \* WWII Songs & Cartoons
- \* Dedication

### 455th BG Assoc.

#### Reunion, 2005

The 455th BG Association reunion is planned for Kansas City, Missouri in October, 2005. The gathering will be held in a downtown hotel, but the exact venue and dates are pending.

No other information is available at this time, but be assured the Spring, 2005 issue of the *Cerignola Connection* will have all of the details and reservation documents.

We hope to see you all in Kansas City next year.

### FINAL FLIGHTS

Sgt. Arthur Henry Eads, Sr.

*Armorer/Gunner (742)*

Sgt. Eads passed away July 27, 2004 at age 84. His aircraft was the "Miss I Hope", and his pilot was Lt. William Solley. He was stationed at San Giovanni Airfield from November, 1944 to September, 1945. He flew a total of 23 missions over Europe prior to the end of the war.

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Editor, *Cerignola Connection*

## FINAL FLIGHTS

### Lt. Col. John Van Lent

*One of the founders of the  
455th BG Association*

Lt Col. John J. Van Lent, 93, died November 18, 2003, at his home in Muscatine, Iowa. Col. Van Lent was born on May 21, 1910, in Muscatine, the son of John C. and Martha Mozer Van Lent. He married Marian V. Roth on October 10, 1946, at the St. Mathias Church in Muscatine.

John was a graduate of the University of Iowa and was a Finkbine Scholar. He had been employed for 28 years by HON Industries. At his retirement in 1975, he served as Advertising Manager and Special Products Sales Manager of the HON Company. He was active in office furniture trade circles, and served as a director of National Education Industries Assoc.

John was a World War II veteran and one of the original members of the 455th Bomb Group from mid-1943, until the groups' deactivation in September, 1945, at San Giovanni, Italy. He flew in a B-24 from Langley AFB in December, 1943, to North Africa and then on to Italy.

He had many personal friends within the squadron. After the war, he returned to civilian life, and was one of the four founding members of the 455th Bomb Group Association in 1986. He participated in the writing of the original Group Charter and By-Laws.

John will be deeply missed because of his knowledge, humor, and integrity. His contributions to the Bomb Group and 741st Bomb Squadron were monumental and will never be forgotten. His service made a substantial contribution to the cause of freedom during World War II.

He is survived by his wife, Marian Van Lent of Muscatine; two daughters, Anne M. Van Lent of Princeton, New Jersey, and Jeanne Curcio and her husband, Peter, of Cape Coral, Florida; and two grandchildren, Katherine M. Curcio and Peter John Curcio.

### Lt. James E. Councilman

Dr. Councilman passed away January 4, 2004. He served with the 455th BG and received the Distinguished Flying Cross for the role he played as pilot of a plane that was badly shot up over Linz after a bomb run.

He had a very interesting career as a swimming coach at Indiana University, winning a total of 23 Big Ten Team Championships, six team NCAA Championships, and, as twice head Olympic Coach had the two most successful U.S. Teams in our country's history. He was recently awarded a special USOC award, which will be named for him and given each Olympic year to the person judged to have contributed most greatly to any sport. He was also named the oldest to have swam the English Channel (in 1979), when he was 58 years

old. His book "The Science of Swimming" is considered the bible of the sport; it went to twenty two printings.

He is survived by his wife, Marge Councilman, and leaves many other loving family members and friends.

Andy Graham

*742nd squadron pilot*

From Goshen Washington, Mr. Graham took his final flight April 24, 2004.

Samuel Speakman

*Tech Sgt. (741) in charge of the photographic section.*

Sgt. Speakman, age 85, passed away on March 2, 2004. He was born June 22, 1918, and was a graduate of the University of Delaware.

He served in the U.S., France, Normandy, Rome and Rhineland. He was awarded the Bronze Star medal. He had resided in Bonita Springs, Fl.

Herbert Weaver

*Radar Bombardier (Mickey)*

1st Lt Herbert Weaver (740) passed away in Ocala, FL. on May 17, 2004.



George S. Patton

*Son of the famous Army General*

George S. Patton, who became an Army major general and was the son of the famous World War II general, died Sunday, June 27, 2004, at his home in Hamilton, Mass. He was 80.

He was a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy during World War II when his father, Gen. George S. Patton Jr., rose to prominence as one of the most beloved and feared Allied military leaders.

The younger Patton graduated from West Point in 1946 and spent 34 years in the Army. After his father's death in an automobile accident in 1945, he legally changed his name from George Patton IV to George Smith Patton. (There was no George Patton III.)

He was a company commander in the Korean war and was a colonel during three tours of duty in Vietnam, where he commanded the 11th Armored Cavalry Regiment, called the "Blackhorse" regiment. Much like his father, the younger Patton received plaudits and criticism for the zeal his forces demonstrated in battle.

"Find the bastards and pile on" was his unit's motto in Vietnam. "I do like to see the arms and legs fly," he once told his soldiers.

Over the years, Gen. Patton was often asked about his father. "He didn't dwell on it," said his wife, Joanne Holbrook

Patton. "It was a fact of life." He usually said, "Yes, of course there is a responsibility, but it's also a privilege."

Besides his wife, survivors include five children, six grandchildren, and one great-grandson.

Col. Robert Morgan

*Swaggering WWII Colonel Who Flew the Memphis Belle*

Retired Col. Robert Morgan, the pilot and commander of one of the most famous airplanes of World War II, the Memphis Belle, died earlier this year in Asheville, N.C. He was 85.

He was hospitalized last month, after falling after an air show, and also had pneumonia.

As portrayed in interviews, Col. Morgan appeared to blend swagger and humility in a manner that won him many admirers, and he became a popular figure at air shows.

The Memphis Belle, named in honor of Col. Morgan's girlfriend, was described as the first of the heavy B-17 bombers to complete 25 European missions and return with its crew to the United States.

The daylight missions were carried out at a time of great hazard and severe losses to planes and crews, who contended with intense anti-aircraft fire and the machine guns and aerial cannons of swarms of enemy fighters.

Years later, Col. Morgan told a reporter of briefing his men

*(continued next page)*

before a mission. "Look, guys," he told them, "if only one airplane comes back today, it's going to be us."

The airplane and its crew were the subject of a wartime documentary and later the inspiration for a Hollywood movie.

After completing the 25 missions, Col. Morgan and his crew toured the United States in 1943 to boost morale and help sell war bonds.

Col. Morgan then returned to combat, flying 25 missions over Japan in the new B-29 bomber. His first mission in the Pacific was the first B-29 raid on Tokyo.

An article that appeared in the News & Record in Greensboro, N.C., offers an account of the relationship between Col. Morgan and Margaret Polk, the young woman for whom his B-17 was named.

The account, apparently based on a book that Col. Morgan co-wrote, reported that on his return to this country in 1943, he and Ms. Polk wished to wed but that the Army Air Forces, recognizing the appeal of the couple's romance, urged delay.

In time, the marriage plans were shelved, but the couple were said to have remained friends until she died in 1990.

According to the newspaper account, Col. Morgan visited the set of the 1990 film inspired by the

Memphis Belle. He was asked how he could be more effectively portrayed.

"Be more egotistical," he said. He also recognized his debt to the airplane in which he flew, recounting one incident in which a German fighter nearly shot off his bomber's entire tail.

"It was on fire, and chunks of it were falling off," he said. He added that he dived 5,000 feet to extinguish the flames and the plane flew home with half a tail.

Col. Morgan, according to an Air Force biography, was born in Asheville. He attended the Wharton School of Finance at the University of Pennsylvania and entered the Army Air Corps in 1940. He was commissioned a second lieutenant five days after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Col. Morgan retired from the Air Force in 1965, and subsequently spent much of his time in the real estate business in North Carolina.

Survivors include his wife, Linda Dickerson Morgan. They married in August, 1992, in a ceremony held under the wing of the Memphis Belle.

#### Can you help?

If anyone has an extra copy of the Spring and / or Fall 2002 editions of the *Cerignola Connection*, please mail them to the Editor at the address on the front page. Or, if you have any editions from 1996 or earlier, I need them as well. Thanks in advance for your help!

#### Can you help?

Thanks to all of you who responded to Mark Bowles' question about the book "Angel on our Wing".

The author of the book, Robert H. Armstrong (741), passed away prior to the book being completed. His copilot was Ed Soderstrom. Their story is in the Ambrose book "The Wild Blue". Mr. Armstrong was in Italy from Oct., 1944 thru April, 1945. Their aircraft was the Yo-Yo.

Robert Armstrong, John J. Van Lent, John Davis, & James Bates founded the 455th BG Association.

Editor

#### Can You Help ? (re-run)

Dear Editor,

Is Anyone Familiar With a Crew Ditching Offshore Grado, Italy?

I am Firmino Granziera and I live in Grado, a little area of Northern Italy (40 NM east Venice; 20 NM south Udine) on the coast of Adriatic Sea. I am an aviation enthusiast.

I write to you in the hope of reconstructing a history of a B-24 and it's crew ditching in the Easter period 1944 or 1945, about 4 NM offshore of Grado. The only sure date in my possession is a dog-tag with the name Harris Huey, number US 53324868, that we found in a wreck. The number 33 on the dog-tag could be another number as it is difficult to read



clearly. It would be wonderful for me to know the names of the crew and their histories. Thank you very much for any help that you can give me. I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Firmino Granziera  
Via e. Dandolo 5  
34073 Grado (Gorizia), Italy

Can You Help ? (re-run)

Dear Editor,

I just learned of your newsletter, the *Cerignola Connection*. My brother, Lt. Arnold D. Luxenberg, flew out of Cerignola in 1944. In fact, he was on Mission 83, July 22, 1944, and was one of the crew members who perished as a result of the mid-air collision on the flight home.

I'm in the process of building a history of my family, and I'm trying to learn more about my brother. We were fairly close, despite the fact that he was four years older than me, and had his own circle of friends. Also, because of the depression, he left home early to take a government job out of town to help support the family. As a result, we had too little face-to-face contact from the time he was 18, and I only 14. Add to that the fact that once he went into service, he never came home on a furlough. He went from one school to another without having a break.

I'm hoping to find some of his colleagues who knew him

and could give me some details of his life--especially the crash that took his life. He graduated in the Class of 44-4 on March 18, 1944, from Selman Field in Monroe, La. After graduation he was shipped out west to a base at Pueblo, Colorado, and from there to Topeka, Kansas for final training before going overseas. While in Colorado, he married his childhood sweetheart, Ruth. He went overseas in June, 1944.

I would be deeply grateful if you could ask your readership if anyone knew my brother, and if they have any stories to tell about him. I realize I should have started this search years and years ago, but now I'm trying to make up for lost time. Any information I can get at this late date will be much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Leon Luxenberg  
11117 NW 65th Court  
Parkland, FL 33076  
(954) 575-3210  
LeeLux@att.net

Can You Help ? (re-run)

Dear Editor,

My brother, Michael Mason, has been in touch with you previously. We are still looking for information on my father's bomber crewmates. My father, Staff Sergeant Bob Mason of Toledo, was assigned as the tailgunner on a B-24 Liberator. He was assigned to the 455th Bomb Group, 742nd Squadron,

stationed in San Giovanni, Italy. His unit arrived in Italy in January or February, 1944.

We are also looking for a picture of his plane. I believe it was an -H or -J model. The plane was named "Seldom Miss", and the nose art consisted of a female archer holding a bow at full draw. We saw photos of the plane when we were children, but my dad apparently destroyed them before he died in 1997. I believe this was the plane they were in when shot down after bombing a target in Poland, on December 26, 1944. I think that the aircraft loss report for this is MACR #10748.

Would you be able to post this information in your organization's newsletter? I have posted it over the Internet on the Army Air Forces website. We would very much like to contact anyone who knew our father, especially surviving members of his crew. They also may be able to provide us with a picture of the plane.

Please advise as to any other steps we might take in this regard. Feel free to call me collect at home, telephone: (419) 472-9080. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Mark L. Mason  
5514 Ginger Tree Lane  
Toledo, Ohio 43623-1066

Great Truths

Growing old is mandatory;  
growing up is optional.

## 455th BG E-Mail Roster

Below is a list of e-mail addresses of 455th members. If you want your e-mail address included in this roster, please send it to Craig Ward at 813 Peterstow Dr., Euless, TX. 76039, (817) 540-1068 or email [aphp@comcast.net](mailto:aphp@comcast.net).

Harry W. Anderson (740) San Antonio, TX.  
[pomganny@aol.com](mailto:pomganny@aol.com)

Gene V. Benson (740) Livingston, MT.  
[dayflyguy@mcn.net](mailto:dayflyguy@mcn.net)

Jack Blum (741) New Port Richey, FL.  
[jblum15677@aol.com](mailto:jblum15677@aol.com)

Winfield S. Bowers (741) Mount Dora, FL.  
[winbow20@aol.com](mailto:winbow20@aol.com)

Marlin L. (Bud) Brown (742) Lake Placid, FL.  
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Great Lies in Aviation

I've got the field in sight.

I've got the traffic in sight.

Of course I know where we are.

If we get a little lower, I think  
we'll see the lights.

So Much...Too Late!

Mrs. Theresa Wittman McLaughlin of Hollywood, Florida, is proud to announce that her late husband, Major William Wittman, Jr. has been awarded the "Distinguished Flying Cross" for "extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight" in a B-24 Liberator Bomber over enemy territory in Europe during the Second World War.

He served first in Australia and then New Guinea.

It was while he was serving in New Guinea he was transferred back to the U.S. to begin training for Flight School. He graduated in a year or so and "I pinned the silver wings on his chest." "Oh, Happy Day!" as he would say.

After flight training, he was shipped overseas again, without leave. He was now part of the 455th Bomb Group (H) and stationed in Italy, flying fifty missions over enemy territory in Europe.

The Citation reads:

***This is to certify that the President of the United States of America, Authorized by Act of Congress, July 2, 1926, presents The Distinguished Flying Cross to First Lieutenant William Wittman, Jr. for extraordinary achievement in aerial flight.***



CAF WEAVES ITS MAGIC  
OVER McGOVERN,  
AMBROSE

What began as an opportunity to honor renowned World War II historian Stephen Ambrose turned into two excited and exciting new members of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF). As a result of their great experiences during the Fina-CAF AIRSHO 2003, former senator George McGovern and Andy Ambrose, son of World War II historian Stephen Ambrose, both joined the CAF.

On Sept. 26, 2003, a large crowd gathered in the Jimmy Doolittle Memorial Garden at Headquarters in Midland, Texas, to dedicate a bronze statue of a B-24 in honor of Stephen Ambrose. Guests of honor were McGovern, featured in Ambrose's book, "The Wild Blue," and Andy Ambrose.

During the tribute in the garden, McGovern told the assembled crowd that Ambrose was highly regarded as a tough-minded historian who wrote "The Wild Blue" because he felt B-24s didn't get fair play during the war. He said that many American reporters freely covered the flights of B-17s, since they flew from England, but the B-24s flew mostly from North Africa or Italy where the English language was scarce so less was written about them. "Ambrose wanted to correct that imbalance," said McGovern.

Andy Ambrose told the crowd that his father was a great writer because he asked people about themselves---where they

grew up; what the Depression was like and who their parents were-not just about the first time they picked up a weapon.

Ambrose was an honored guest throughout the AIRSHO weekend. McGovern's schedule required that he depart Midland early Saturday morning, but he managed to squeeze a lot of activity into a few short hours. After the ceremony in the garden, McGovern and Ambrose both participated in a press conference for members of the Midland-Odessa media, and then they were whisked off to the lobby of the American Airpower Heritage Museum to autograph copies of "The Wild Blue." At 3 p.m., it was off to the general membership meeting, where McGovern and Ambrose were introduced to CAF members.

After the membership meeting, McGovern and Ambrose took advantage of a few spare minutes for rides in CAF aircraft. McGovern opted for a ride in the CAF's P-51 Red Nose with Col. Stan Musick at

the controls while Ambrose flashed a jaunty "thumbs up" as he and his pilot taxied out in the bright yellow Stearman PT-17 assigned to the Utah Wing.

That evening both attended the American Combat Airman Hall of Fame in downtown Midland, Texas, where they joined hundreds of others paying tribute to those being inducted that evening. It was McGovern's final event before leaving early the following morning.

Ambrose, however, attended AIRSHO both Saturday and Sunday with a high-energy enthusiasm that was fun to watch. In addition to watching the show, he rode in the B-24/LB-30 "Diamond Lil" and toured the CAF airshow grounds for a close look at the planes on display. Ambrose's escort was challenged to keep up with him as he made the most of his weekend.

The CAF was pleased to welcome both of these honored guests & is doubly pleased to welcome them as new members.

Andy Ambrose proudly looks at a bronze sculpture of a B-24 dedicated to his father, Stephen Ambrose, at the Commemorative Air Force Headquarters in Midland. Stephen Ambrose published more than 20 books, including *Band of Brothers*.



A Letter from  
Robert Fortson, Waist Gunner  
& Armor Gunner

After reading my Spring 2004 Cerignola Connection, I want to report that I had the same experience happen to me that happened to T/Sgt Ledbetter and S/Sgt Peck.

I don't remember what mission it was, but we were carrying fragmentation bombs that day. When we dropped our bombs, I heard something bump against the side in the bomb bay. I checked to see what was wrong and found the bomb shackle had malfunctioned and released one end of the shackle but not the other end. The bomb hung with the arming wire pulled out of one of the bombs and the little propeller was fluttering in the wind. Pilot William A. Crawford decided the bomb should be released before landing. So, when we got down to 15,000 ft., Robert Furtson, Armor Gunner, and I got out on the catwalk and released the cluster, shackle and all. While doing this, I skinned my forehead, but didn't notice it.

When we taxied in to the hardstand, Colonel Kool was waiting to welcome us back from a hard mission and saw blood on my forehead and had his aide take me to the medic's tent. They were going to write me up for a purple heart, but I told them I didn't want it because they would notify my parents that I was wounded in action, and it would worry them too much.

I was later called to the operations office and

reprimanded for not saving the bomb shackle!

Major William A Crawford was my pilot and Lt. Roy Johnson was the Co-Pilot. I was awarded a certificate of Valor a few year's ago for flying 51 missions. I am 72 years old and going strong.

Best Regards,  
Ralph L. DeSelms  
404 S. Maxwell St.  
Ulysses, KS 67880

Pictures and description below  
courtesy of Gen. Gene Hudson  
(741).

The large picture was taken in March or April, 1944. The tent was set up to serve hot coffee and donuts to the aircrews after a mission and, as you well know, the open doors of the building behind the tent is the 455th B.G. briefing room and crew debriefing room. These crew members, in line, are waiting for coffee, donuts and debriefing. The second and smaller picture is of my crew enjoying the coffee and donuts and waiting to be debriefed.

**Editor's Note:**

*My father, Lt. J. T. Ward (740), said many times when I was growing up that he "hates waiting in line!"*

*In his words, "I waited in so many lines in the Army, I never want to be in a line again!"*

*After seeing the photos to the right, I'm starting to understand what he meant!*

