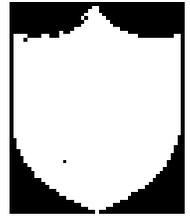


The 461st



Liberaider



Vol. 15, No. 1

June 1998

SOMEWHERE IN THE U.S.A.

REUNION 1998



SHERATON TARA HOTEL
Braintree, Massachusetts
20—23 August

The 461st Liberaider
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"Liberaider"

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Permission is granted to use articles provided source is given.

FROM YOUR EDITOR

A few issues ago I stated that the December 1997 issue would be my last.. I lie a lot and things change so I am going to hang around a little longer. I have become a "Caregiver" and it seems that I may end up with a few extra hours on my hands. In addition, I have been providing a summary of monthly activities that took place in our Group in Italy during 1944 and 1945. The June 1998 issue of the "Liberaider" will include the summary for January 1945. Since "Our War" ended in May of 1945, there are only four more months left in the 461st History Book. I feel that it would be a mistake to stop publishing the "Liberaider" so close to the final chapter of our history. Since nobody stepped forward to take over the job of Editor, I guess I'm stuck with it. Therefore, I will do my best to complete the story, However, it is not the highest priority job on my agenda. If "Push comes to Shove", my family comes first. Also, as I have said many times, it is your newsletter, I don't write the material I present. It is your stories and those I steal from. other newsletters that fill the pages. If I don't get the material there is nothing to publish. So keep the stories coming along.

THE 1998 REUNION

Last November I sent out a letter to all "Dues Paying" members telling them when and where the Reunion would be held. I also asked them to give me an idea of what type of activities/tours they would like to participate in. The response was great and enough people indicated that they would attend that we were able to meet our commitment to the hotel. On the basis of the responses, I have scheduled events consistent with the majority of those responding. I have sent out another letter with all the details to those who said they would come. This information is duplicated on the Centerfold pages of this issue of the "Liberaider" for those other members who might have changed their minds about attending. Space may be limited so if you want to attend get your hotel reservation and Registration Form in early.

The Liberaider

In general, there are two reasons that you do not receive your copy of our newsletter:

1. You didn't pay your dues.
2. You don't keep us informed of address changes.

DUES: You are supposed to keep track of your payments which are due on a calendar basis. We are trying to save money by not sending dues notices. If I can remember, I will put a notice in the December issues of the "Liberaider". Whatever you do, DO NOT SEND THE DUES TO ME, YOUR EDITOR. Send them to our Treasurer at the address below:

Pete Peterson
P.O. Box 461
Spencer, IA 51301-0461

ADDRESSES: We send out the newsletter at Bulkmail rates. THEY DO NOT FORWARD THESE TO YOU if your address has changed. We are now faced with a new Classification, "Temporarily Away". If you go away for a month or so during the year they will not hold it. Check with your Post Office for details.

It costs us 19 cents to mail it Bulk rate. It will cost y(80 cents or more to have us send you another copy.



MAIL CALL

Editor's Note: The following two articles were submitted by a pair of "Martins". The first, Martin Rush of our 767th Squadron and the second, Martin Garren, a life long friend (even if he did fly B-17s in the 8th Air Force) who lives in Friday Harbor, WA. The poem is from an unidentified 8th Air Force Newsletter.

The articles do not present a lot of technical data to establish "The Best" but they do provide different "slants" on the subject that add to the "Mystique" surrounding the two aircraft. My thanks to the Martins.

Dear George,

21 February 1998

In the December 1997 issue of the "Liberaider", I read with interest the article by Robert S. DeGroat comparing the B-17 with the B-24. My interest was sharpened by the fact that, like quite a few others, I had the opportunity of training in both of them.

Allow me to hasten to say that although I was a pilot, it was not because of any lifelong burning desire to be a pilot. It was another of those lottery results that give to all of us certain experiences which afterward, we cherish, but marvel that we should be so fortunate to have landed in that situation.

When the war broke out, I was very happily engaged in being a civilian, but soon realized that part of my lottery fate was to be a part of the massive war effort as a soldier. It was something that could not be avoided, in any honorable fashion, and rather than wait until the inevitable draft plucked me out of my unregimented lifestyle and assigned me to the slogging foot soldier role, at the last possible moment I went up to the Air Force Recruiting station at Wright-Patterson Field in Dayton and applied for the Cadet Training program. I had always had pretty good luck in passing tests, and the prize to me was the possibility of becoming, not necessarily a pilot, but - can you guess it? - and officer. In retrospect, it embarrasses me to admit this, but if passing tests can give you a seat in the first class section, it seemed like a good idea. Sort of like getting a upgrade in frequent flyer miles.

The tests were given, and taken, and I was on my way. As all of you will remember, it was a hectic

treadmill that left little time for reflection, and every ounce of energy was involved in surviving that day's

chores and preparing for the next one. Somewhere along the way, we were probably given a form to fill out asking which we wanted to be: Pilot, Navigator, or Bombardier. If they did, I marked Navigator as my first choice. It always seemed like such a treat to be allowed to sit and look out the window and regard the passing scenery below, and check it against a map on your knees. In none of my thirty-five missions do I ever remember having the opportunity of gazing down at the terrain below, and I certainly never saw any of our targets. When I was not holding our place in the formation, I was listening to the engines to see if they were running smoothly in synchrony, or running my eyes over the gauges to see if the temperatures, pressures, rpm's, needle and ball, etc. were where they were supposed to be.

More probably, nobody asked us. All I know is, the conveyer belt carried me into the section marked Pilot. It was an exhilarating challenge, and in spite of myself, I found myself enjoying the swoops, the dives, the banking turns, and the occasional snap rolls and spins.

Although the wings I so proudly pinned to my tunic looked just like everybody else's, my self-esteem suffered a slight wound when I was notified that I was to go to Co-Pilot school. The plain fact was I was not such a hot pilot that I was assigned to fighter school or bomber school. I remember ruefully that I had almost flunked out of Link Trainer. I couldn't get into my head how to listen to those dit-dahs and dah-dits and make turns that got me smoothly onto the beam. I think they gave up and waved me through - and sent me to co-pilot training, in B-17's as it happened.

It was a lovely airplane. It took off and landed with the same smooth movements as the original Piper Cub that started my air training. It responded to the controls in the same way all the previous aircraft had done, except in a larger and slower fashion, and I fully expected to be sent overseas in a B-17, probably to England, where most of the B-17's seemed to be. Honestly, I don't think I thought much about where I would go or do, for in the Army, you seemed to develop a fatalistic acceptance of whatever assignment the order-cutters gave you. I was a cog, and I turned and functioned as well as I could wherever I found myself to be. I learned to fly formations from the right seat, read and follow checklists, and maybe I was given a couple of token



MAIL CALL

opportunities to take off, and more importantly, learn how to land it. It floated in nicely, and was a dream to handle.

One day, without warning, I received notice that I was to be sent to be a co-pilot trainee at a B-24 training center at Mitchell Field, New York. This seemed to be more like the real McCoy, for I was also assigned to a crew, with an experienced pilot, who had been a pilot instructor, and told of how he had, as a civilian pilot, buzzed a small field in a pontoon plane, and after they came out and watered the long grass with hoses, landed the pontoons on the wet grass. I was pretty impressed, and glad to have the guidance of such a dedicated pilot. I think I was relieved not to have the responsibility of being the left seat pilot, also.

The B-24 was something of a shock when I was handed the controls and asked to fly it in formation. Whereas with the B-17, you could feel a connection with your airplane through the seat of your pants, it was not so with the B-24. You could feed in rudder, aileron, and elevator to make the usual tum, but your needle and ball were not in synchrony. You often found that although you had done everything exactly the way you should to make a tum, you were skidding, diving, or climbing, according to your instruments. No longer could you simply feel your way into a manoeuvre. You had to keep your eyes on the gauges every minute. It was not a musical instrument, like the B-17, it was a soulless machine, like the Link Trainer, my old nemesis. Gradually, I became accustomed to its vagaries, and managed not to disgrace myself, but I never felt that it and I were one, as I had with all previous aircraft. Cautiously, I checked with my fellow transferees from the B-17, and was relieved to hear their chorus agreement that it was different, and not an easy switchover. "Like a boxcar with wings," they said.

When I timidly voiced my misgivings to my pilot, Bob Hess, he was quick to defend the plane, which he seemed to believe was the most significant aeronautical advance since the Wright Brothers' original. He extolled the merits of the high speed Davis wing, with its reduced air surface and more efficient lifting surface. A sturdy champion of his assigned vehicle, he said it always felt just right for him, and he began to notice and criticize

my turns and their effect on the needle and ball.

I swallowed my misgivings, and tried to be more appreciative of the plane's merits. One adjusts to what one has, and tries to convince oneself that it is not so bad, after all.

Overseas, after my pilot was promoted to Operations Officer, I became the pilot of the crew, and tried to fulfill my duties, which were primarily to get the plane and the crew to the targets, and back onto the tarmac in reasonably functioning condition. I chafed under the burden of responsibility of knowing the plane was signed out to me before each mission, and if I didn't get it back in one piece, somebody was going to ask me to pay for it, or so it was implied, in my head.

Later, when I talked with some B-17 pilots in Naples, where we were waiting for transportation home after completing our missions, some of them told me they were always pleased with the rare occasions when they flew on the same missions with the B-24's. (I never had that experience). Although the Liberators had to slow down a bit, they flew below the Fortresses, and caught all the flak from the ground batteries, thus acting as a flak screen for the Forts. I grunted silently inside like, "Thanks a lot. I needed that."

I wonder if any other ex-pilots have this feeling: Nowadays, when I look at pictures of those old warbirds I get a funny feeling in my body, and I'm not sure other ex-pilots get the same feeling I do. When I look at pictures of those two big old birds, for the moment, I am flying them, I become a part of them. If you ski, which I like to do in my geriatric fashion, you look at the pictures of skiers coming down the mountain, and you can feel the snow under your skis whistling by as you glide over it. You can feel your feet pressing into your boots, and your knees bent a little, and your ankles twisting to put the pressure on the outside ski to turn, and feel yourself lighten up the angle to the snow so you can turn slowly, or quickly. You become the man on the skis. You are all one piece with the skis and the skier.

It's the same with looking at a picture of the bomber and feeling that you are a part of the moving airplane. You feel as though it is a part of you, as though it is suddenly a sixty-seven by one hundred and ten foot extension of you. Your arms are the wings, with your hands away out there being the ailerons, and your feet stretched out



MAIL CALL

Dear George,

behind you, stretched out flat, so you control your up and down movements with the angle of your feet being the elevators.

And here is the interesting difference in feelings I get between the two airplanes, and it has nothing to do with which is the better plane, or the easier to fly. When I look at the B- 17, which is a low-wing monoplane, I find myself feeling as though my elbows are stuck to my waist, and my arms from the elbow down extended out sideways, like wings, with my center of gravity riding high above the wing, resting on it, which is how it was with the Fortress, and probably only the pilot can know that feeling.

When I look at pictures of the flying Liberator, I am suddenly in it, a part of it, and since it is a high wing monoplane, I can feel myself soaring along, my arms straight out from the shoulders a little bit upward, and my body hanging down from it, like a man who is hang gliding. although that is another experience I have never had. It is the difference between having your center of gravity riding above the wing as though you were sitting on the center of the wing, or hanging down below it. I experience the rapid shift whenever I look at pictures of the two planes flying along separately, and shift my eyes from one picture to the other.

Probably I have not so much conveyed a comparison feeling or impression, even to old pilots, as much as I have convinced you that I must be some strange kind of old bird myself Well, so be it, but this is a feeling I have wanted to share with someone for a long time, and if no one can identify with it, I'm sorry, but it seemed like something I wanted to compare notes about with someone who might have had a similar feeling.

Sorry not to have added any meaningful data about which is the better airplane. The good old B-24 got me and my guys to the target and back thirty-five times, and for that I feel a loyalty to it. But I have to say, that in my opinion, it was harder to fly than the other -which shall not again be mentioned - airplane.

Martin Rush
767th Squadron

Dear George:

I clipped this from the 8th AF Newsletter. I know you'll like it, but you have to read it to the end to get the full impact.

All the best,
Martin Garren
Friday Harbor, WA

Lib or Fort, Which Was Best

The debate is as strong,
now just as before,
as to which bomber was best,
the - 17 or -24.

Some guys said the - 17,
was certainly a queen,
and she was the best bomber,
that they had ever seen.

But other crews stood their ground,
and some actually swore,
that their bomber was better,
the immortal -24.

The - 17 was a good plane,
it's easy to say.
She was the first into battle,
and fought on day after day.

But the -24 fought,
in every theater of war,
and could fly higher and faster,
so that evened the score.

"So which one is better?"
the question seems to arise
from all the "old timers",
who flew those unfriendly skies.

Well, there's a story that's survived,
above all the rest,
of how a -24 crew,
proved their bomber was best.

It seems one day,
as the war raged on,
that some -I 7's were flying,
across the big pond



Mail Call (Continued)

Unknown to them,
above and behind,
flew a lone -24,
of the 'Tr' model kind.
When the -24 pilot,
saw the - 17 below,
a thought came to mind,
that just made his face glow.

"Hold on boys" he said,
as he pushed on the yoke.
"Those -17's don't see us
so were playin' a joke."

He pushed the nose over,
into a shallow dive,
'til the airspeed read,
three hundred twenty five.

She shuddered and shook,
and the clouds flew by,
and the crew wondered
"Are we all going to die?"

Soon they saw what was happening,
and figured it out,
and got on the intercom,
and started to shout.

"Give her all she's got",
and everyone did say.
"Let's show those Forts
who's best this day!"

The airspeed built up,
the altimeter wound down.
And the engines were screaming.
Man what a sound.

As the pilot drew closer,
to the Forts just below,
he had an idea,
that his crew didn't know.
Ever so carefully,
he pulled on the wheel,
to maintain the airspeed,
he did it by feel.

Then his hand moved to the throttles,

as a hundred times before,
and he pulled back on engines,
number one and number four.

He turned to his copilot,
to yell over the din,
"Feather the props,"
he said with a grin.

The Lib slid past,
all those Forts with great ease,
on just two engines and airspeed,
as slick as you please.

For weeks and months,
in England it was said,
a squadron of - 17 crews,
walked around with bowed heads.
So the story was told,
and the legend grew,
about the B-24,
and its fearless crew.

It's never been seen,
or heard since that day,
when it blew by those Forts,
but some people still say,

That the pilot who flew it,
was our own Creator.
He liked it so much,
He flew His own Liberator.



Editor's Note: The following was stolen from the
B-17 Combat Crewmen & Wingmen, Sept./Oct.
1997

A Raving

A
by B-24 friend's Lt.'s Robinson, Jobe and Behr
with apologies to Edgar Allen Poe

Once upon a mission dreary,
When of combat I'd grown weary
I had flown a thousand hours
And was sure to fly some more



Mail Call (Continued)

When suddenly there came a knocking
Sounded like some AckAck popping
Popping like the very devil
Just beneath my bomb bay doors.

Tis some Jerry thought I
Wishing to improve his score
I will use evasive tactics
Even if he does get sore
Turning then I saw before me
Blacker now than 'ere before
AckAck bursting close and heavy
Guess I'd better turn some more.

Opening wide I swung the bomb doors
And to my surprise and horror
Flashing fast and bright below me
Were some ninety guns or more
And above the shrapnel's screeching
I remembered then the briefing
When they told us with much speaking
That there were only three or four.

Leveling then I made a bomb run
Which was not a very long one
For the varsity was on duty
And I'd seen their work before
Then an engine coughed and clattered
And the glass around me spattered
And I knew they had my number
Just my number, nothing more.

Then at last the bombs were toggled
And alone, away, I hobbled
With some fifty seven inches
And a feathered number four.
While outside like ducks migrating
Was a drove of M.E.'s waiting
Waiting all with itching fingers
Just to finish up the score.

I had lost my upper turret
And alone, defenseless, worried
I was the saddest creature
Mortal woman ever bore
And each bright and beaming track
Coming nearer, ever nearer

Just my spirit, nothing more.

Then at last to my last elation
I caught up with my formation
And the M.E.'s turned and left me
By the tens and by the score
But my wings were torn and tattered
And my nerves completely hattered
And as far as I'm concerned
The war is o'er.

Now I've found the joy of living
And my secret I am giving
To the rest of those among you
Who might dare to live some more
For my sinus starts to seeping
Every time they mention briefing
No more flying, no more missions
No more combat, Nevermore!



Editor's Note: The following is the wood that keeps my fire burning. However, see page 2 for what I propose to be my last issue of the "Liberaider".
Thanks for your kind words Bruce.

15 February 1998

Dear George,

The December 1997 issue of the "Liberaider" was the best one ever, and I've been reading them for years.

The narrative history and missions by number, date and target is the top feature - concise but enough detail to bring memories rushing back. Balancing with humor and DeGroat's contribution on the controversy of B17's vs. B-24's made it an issue to read slowly, and then re-read, and then show to your kids and grandkids.

Keep up the good work.
Bruce Thompson
767th Squadron
Tail Gunner



Made my spirit sink within me

Mail Call (Continued)

Dear George,

1 January 1998

I'm sending a couple of pictures taken at the old base. I'm sure lots of gunners will remember going to the gunnery school. This is me outside of ball turret and in doorway. Lots of water under the bridge since then.



The gunnery school was more or less a refresher course for flight crew gunners on 50 cal. machine guns, turret operation and gun sights. They kept crews going through every so often. I think there were six of us at the school - can't even remember the names of the fellows in the picture.

I only flew 5 missions - filled in when a crew member was needed - I can't even remember the missions except - invasion of Southern France which turned out to be a "milk run".

I've enjoyed "The 461st Liberaider" very much - am real glad you found me - I'm sure I missed out on a lot before,

Thank you,
Jim Glandon
764th Squadron



Dear George,

March 1998

Our crew flew our own plane from Hammer Field to the 46 1 st Bomb Group, 767th Bomb Squadron in Cerignola in 1944. The crew, #68, consisted of the following members. Their current status is indicated if known.

Francis J. Riley, Pilot - Deceased 1991
Byron D. Cocking, Co-Pilot - Deceased 1960
Art L. Hewitt, Bombardier - Living
John R. Hancock, Navigator - Living
Jean P. Lemieux, Crew Chief, Gunner - Living
Richard C. Brady, Waist Gunner - Deceased 1989
Thomas J. Sullivan, Radio Op., Deceased 1987
Hyman Silverstein, Waist Gunner
Frank G. Rogan, Nose Turret, Deceased 1978
Unknown, Ball Turret

Three of us got together last month in Mesa, Arizona. John Hancock spends the winter there. Jean Lemi comes from Oklahoma City, OK and I live in Leagu City, TX (near Houston). Had a very nice time enjoy the "Liberaider".

Thank you,
Art Hewitt



Art Hewitt, Jean Lemieux and John Hancock.

L
to
R



Mail Call (Continued)

Dear George,

March 22, 1998

In 1943 at Hammer Field, Fresno, California a young 1st Lt. Pilot named Joseph W. Donovan asked me to paint some nose art on the aircraft he was assigned to, a B-24 AC #45. At his request I painted a mule, clutching a fan in his tail, with a fire built under his rear. The mule was also wearing a helmet and goggles. The caption written under the painting was THE HOTTEST ASS IN TOWN. However, the Base Commander at the time prohibited the use of the word ASS, so I had to substitute three question marks in its place. Nowadays it seems like everything goes.

Joe Donovan was assigned to the 766th Squadron. The plane was so badly shot up after one of the missions that Joe miraculously brought the plane home to Torretta Field at Cerignola, Italy, had the crew bail out and jumped himself. The last I heard he was a Lt. Col. in Hdq Sqdn. when I was sent home for redeployment to the South Pacific.

I would like to locate Joe and send him a few pictures. If he or anyone who knows his whereabouts, address, phone number or how I can get in touch with him would contact me I sure would appreciate it.

Ted Wise, 15 Deerfield Path, East Quogue, NY, 119424628, Tel. (516) 728-0450, E mail address, wiseted@aot.com. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Ted Wise
SMS,Retired, USAF

Editor's Note: There is a Joseph W. Donovan listed



in the Operations Office of the 461st Bomb Group Headquarters Staff. The following address is given but to my knowledge we have never made contact with him.

1200 NE 143rd St., 202F, Seattle, WA (No ZIP)



Dear George,

The following is some material from my years in the service.

I started in Keams, Utah with Captain Drobeck & Lt. Preciado and a bunch of other guys. At that time I was a 766 ground radio operator & mechanic. After Salt Lake, Wendover, Hammer field and a long train and boat ride we landed in Naples, Italy. we stayed in the marble college on a cold February night. I bunked with two buddies, Bob Andrews and Glenn Hamilton. (both deceased) Glen left us in the evening and returned about midnight and said, "How about a steak sandwich and a piece of angel food cake?". I almost threw him out the window until he showed me the bag. It was a true story. His sister was a nurse at the Naples Hospital. It was the best surprise the three of us had in quite a while.

Now on to the train and box car heaven. The fastest milk train to Cerignola. I don't remember how long we were on the train but I do remember we all had diarrhea from the C rations in Naples or something else. It was sure fun with 2 guys holding your arms with your butt out the door. The citizens along the way sure got a good laugh at the sight.

Being in the 766 we wound up on a farm outside Cerignola. This farm had a large horseshoe shaped barn where we bedded down temporarily until the tents and stoves arrived. Mess Sgt. George Panagopoulos, who was the best in the group, traded C rations, K rations and anything else he could get for fresh vegetables. Most of us developed some kind of bladder or kidney infections and couldn't hold our water. We heard lots of men get up in the middle of the night running outside, swearing all the way. Wet again. This kept Capt. Sproul very busy the first few days.

For some unknown reason I was split up from Hamilton, Andrews and Davidson. I wound up with six

Mail Call (Continued)

other guys in a tent near the barber shop. E. Carpenter, L. Gerbicke, C. Percival and J. Breuil, all living. E. Fraser and J. McQuire, both deceased.

We built the ground radio station at Group Hdqs. and settled down to routine operation. We all worked eight hour shifts, split up with the four squadron's radio operators. After the air crews arrived, we were on the air 24 hours a day. Jim Gillespie was our fourth operator (deceased). Does anyone remember the code names for each squadron and group? They all began with the letter "N". I remember these names, Newsboy, Nevermore and Nonesuch.

In the spring of '44, we decided to build a house next to our tent. We fell heir to enough "Tufa Blocle" to construct a building 20 x 30 feet (approx) using fertilizer for mortar. Worked O.K. Picked up enough spare wood for a roof and covered it with frag metal box tops. Our good friend, Joe Quattrochi, was the engineer on the project and all went well. We needed one or two good pieces of I x4 lumber for our ridge and scrap this large was unavailable but in the supply building was a stack of good lumber that would suit our needs. Four of us went into the building. One of us started talking to Supply Sgt. Lucas while the other three made off with our ridge boards. If Sgt. Lucas saw us, he never let on. We acquired four sacks of cement and hired some locals to pour our floor, by hand. With only four sacks of cement in our 20 x 30' floor made it very thin but it was better than dirt.



By this time we took in another poor soul, Gordon Springfield, propeller specialist. Now we had four men in armament. They were under Lt. Halpern who had a dog named "Frag". McQuire was an instrument man, Fraser, air mechanic and I was a radio operator under Lt. C. Walker. Mechanics were under Line Chief Ted Hawkinson. Quite a mix but we all got along very well.

About November 1944, the squadron had lost 3 or 4 radio operators, so I thought I could get home earlier if I flew. I talked to Capt. Preciado and was on flight status. About the same time they came out with an aircraft radar jammer called "Panther". I took 4 hours study and became a "Panther" operator. This allowed me to fly almost every day. I did fly 5 missions in 5 days. Always flew in the 7th spot in the squadron which always put me with a new crew. Also as an odd man I did fly in lead and deputy lead ships. One mission was with Lt. Faulkner. When we landed on the Isle of Vis, one B-24 hit the mountain before we landed. Then a P38 did the same thing after we landed. This was one landing and take off I would rather have missed. I will say, in my 27 missions, we had very little fighter opposition, just flak.

About Jan-Feb, Capt. Hal Ehrlich (had been ill) was transferred to the 766th. I was assigned to his crew with two other men, Cpl. Al Crisp (gunner) (the pride of Texas) and Sam Bryan (engineer) deceased. Capt. H. Ehrlich was a squadron leader so we usually flew lead or deputy group lead which required a radio operator. After that I flew with anyone who needed me.

The Panther outfit consisted of 3 or 4 transmitters and one receiver. You would listen for enemy radar then jam with a transmitter. On one mission we had quite a bit of flak and I asked the tail gunner what he thought about the Panther operation. He was very upset and stuttered that it attracted more flak. That was the only observation I heard about how effective it was.

After the final mission, we flew a couple of supply missions to P.O.W. camps. It was over. Flying at low altitudes we did observe some of our handy work. It was an experience I could have missed but will never forget.

When Sam Byran & I were notified we were going to fly back with Maj. Phillips and Capt. Jack Yetter on #49 ship, we had a large wheel painted on the nose plus "The Wheels".

Flying did get me out earlier on points so it paid off.

In 1986, when I discovered we had an organization, I decided to try and locate members of the "House".



Mail Call (Continued)

Found out Earl Fraser and Jim McQuire were deceased but the other five were still with us. Since then, my wife and I have visited all of these good people after we had our first and only reunion in Memphis, TN.

My wife and I are old car nuts and in 1996 we drove our Model "A" to Rochester, NY and contacted the Capt. himself, Hal Ehrlich. He invited us to a cook-out where we had a delicious steak dinner with all the trimmings. Met his wife Grace, his son and daughter-in-law (names I have lost) and his young grandson. I took them for a ride in the Model "X". All went well on the first trip but when Hal and Grace went with me the Ford quit right in the middle of the street. Hal had flown on many missions and we always got home safely. This was embarrassing. After stumbling around for a few n~nutes, I remembered the fuse I had installed, that was the answer. At least I got them home and it was an enjoyable trip. My wife Lucille and I, married 51 years, have travelled all over in our trusty old Ford for 25 years.

Last summer we drove our Model "N" to Dayton for a National Meet. While there we visited the Museum. Had dinner in the hanger (same place the reunion was). We also located the 461 st Bomb Group plaque and tree which has grown quite tall.

When I located Glenn Hamilton in Ohio, I learned he was killed in an auto accident in 1952. I talked to his sister. She was the nurse who sent us the sandwiches and cake, I got to thank her personally for her good deed.

LeRoy B. Duke
766th Squadron
Radio Operator



Editor's Note: The following letter was forwarded to me. It was written by Herb Bennett and sent to Gail Peterson, I think. I can not find a Herb Bennett in the 461st Directory. It is hand written and quite hard to decipher. However, the content is very interesting and I have done my best to "translate" it.

Dear Gail,

As a matter of interest.

In Roman times 2,000 years ago the Carthaginians came from Africa with 40,000 men, and elephants to boot They beat the Roman army twice and moved over to the Cerignola area to take in the harvest.

The Romans met them there with an army of 80,000 men and cavalry. They fought a terrible battle in the river bed that ran south of our runway, over toward Bacletta(?).

Hannibal, the Carthaginian General, sucked the Roman army in and completely destroyed them. They lost about 70,000 men of the original 80,000. It was Romes worst defeat.

So you see we were in a very historic area. It was called the Battle of Cannae. I saw the Battle Plans in the library. They were laid out on computer projections of the elevations of the actual area where the battle was fought.

We were sent down to South Italy one day for gunnery practice. I've been told that area is where the Carthaginians had their base, right near the sea.

Editor's Note:  The following is a geographically related article.

The Foggia Plain

The Foggia plain was chosen for the location of a number of bomb groups: Its level terrain facilitated communication by road and by wire and also offered advantages of an engineering nature for the construction of new fields; its weather was reported to be the best in Italy for flying: its main airfield had an all-weather surface and had been the center of operations for a number of satellite fields, some of which had been used by the enemy and could be prepared for heavy bomb groups and fighter groups fairly rapidly. (From Fifteenth Air Force I-lstory, Air Materiel Command, 1946. Copied from the "Black Panther" newsletter of the 460th Bomb Group Association.



Mail Call (Continued)

Dear George,

April 8, 1998

Thought you might be interested in the article and photo attached. The 454th and 455th BG's were based between our field at Toretta and Cerignola - I think it may have been called San Giorgio.

I was in the 767th Squadron, and we had the tuff-block structure with the tent top on what we called "Chapel Hill". One morning after breakfast, I was outside brushing my teeth with canteen cup in hand, and the 454th/455th were taking off to the south on a mission, east from Toretta. Suddenly the engines quit on a fully loaded plane, and seconds later, there was a loud, lowpitched boom and a gray cloud of smoke rose above the trees.

I thought to myself, it's one thing to go down in combat, but to go down like that would leave an empty feeling your stomach. What a waste!

The story went around that there was a spy on the base, who sabotaged more than one plane. and was subsequently caught and went before a firing squad. Scary! I wondered more than once if the fatal takeoff in the attached picture was part of the same espionage. Stars and Stripes mentioned "accidental application of brakes" - I found that totally unbelievable.

The old Lib was a workhorse of WWII - more 24's were built than any other plane - but it rarely gets the recognition. A friend of mine, who was on the 8/1/43 Ploesti raid, went by the Air Force Academy. While other planes were recognized on plaques or bronze sculptures, the Lib was forgotten - that is, until he and others brought pressure on some people, and the omission was corrected. (Editor: see article on page 25)

Thanks for keeping the "Liberaider" going.

Regards,
Guyon Phillips
4406 Graham Road
Greensboro, NC 27410

Editor's Note: The following is a photo and an excerpt

from a letter Guyon Phillips sent to the "Briefing", the journal of the International B-24 Club. The photograph shown on the top of the next page was sent along with the letter. It is sad these brave airmen were killed doing their duty with their Liberator but lost their chance to participate in the final victory.

Here is a picture of a Liberator in a one-in-a-million accident. It occurred at the 454th/455th Bomb Group base near Cerignola, Italy in April 1945.

I was a pilot with the 461st BG, which was close by. Early one morning my co-pilot, navigator and I were in a jeep on our way to Cerignola, and as I looked up the road ahead, I couldn't believe my eyes. There was the unmistakable oval fin and rudder of a B-24 high above the dirt road, which made no sense at all. Doing a double take, I realized it was a Liberator standing on what was left of its nose.

At first, we were afraid to approach the plane in case it might explode from leaking gas (of course, the bombs weren't armed, but we didn't want to assume they stiff weren't dangerous). An Italian fanner had been going along the road in a small horse-drawn cart, and the fanner was over in a ditch with the over-turned cart, tending to the horse. The horse didn't seem to be injured. Apparently the farmer had to take to the ditch as the plane came roaring toward him, and ground to a halt just short of the ditch.

You could tell immediately that all the crew on the flight deck had been killed instantly. The plane was one of many taking off on a mission, and although the "Stars and Stripes" account mentioned "an accidental application of the brakes", none of us believed that. From every indication, the plane had an emergency of some sort just before lift-off, and the pilot showered down the brakes - a B-24 with a full load of gas and bombs just won't get in the air without full power.

Unfortunately, he was past the point of no return. After running off the steel mats at the end of the runway, the nose gear sheared off and the nose of the plane ground into the soft earth beyond with such force that it literally chewed off the front of the plane, right up to the engines. How the plane kept from toppling over on its back was a miracle - that may have saved the remainder of the crew.

 Mail Call (Continued)



SIX MEN were killed instantly when this 15th AAF B-24 crashed squarely on its nose during a takeoff. An accidental application of brakes is believed to have caused the accident. (MAAF Photo)

Dear Gail,

April 6, 1998

Dear George,

January 13, 1998

I hope all is well with you. Jim has been in the Care Center here at the Army Residence Community for a year. He had some extensive surgery on his back for a staph infection, followed by plastic surgery to fill in the wounds. Five days later he went into congestive heart failure. He suffers some partial memory loss on top of a weakened heart but he is certainly a fighter.

Having to take over all his desk work eats into the spare time I have after being with him several hours a day.

Best regards and Blessed Easter,
Mary Emma Knapp

Editor's Note: For those that would like to write, here is Jim's address:

Major Gen. James B. Knapp
7400 Crestway #512
San Antonio, TX 78230

Let me start by thanking you for your editing work on The "Liberaider". I look forward to receiving it with keen anticipation and enjoy reading most of the articles. Your work and devotion is appreciated! THANK YOU.

My wife and I plan to attend the Boston reunion and we would appreciate receiving the Questionnaire and other pertinent data. Our dues are currently paid.

I was a nose gunner and was shot down on Mission # 15 1, Odertal Refinery. I was saddened to hear that Ed Chan had died. Ed located me in 1991 and helped me contact some of my old crew members. Coincidentally, Ed Chan was also shot down on the Odertal raid and later we graduated from engineering college in the same class in 1948. I knew Ed at college but never suspected that we were both members of the 461st Bomb Group.

I wanted to send you some of my stories for publication but was just too lazy or too busy. Enclosed is an article



Mail Call (Continued)

which was published in our local newspaper, The Independent News (Montville, NJ) on January 12, 1995.

My efforts to locate my old crew members could also be of interest to you. I travelled to East Rochester to find our flight engineer and to Biloxi, Mississippi for the pilot and finally, in the nick of time, the tailgunner in Connecticut.

My work assignments for Engineering Contractors required me to travel extensively and I had a chance to visit Germany on numerous occasions where I was wined and dined by Germans who wanted me to buy their equipment. I was also instrumental in selling new oil refineries to German clients but did not elaborate on the Odertal refinery episode.

I recently visited Germany and was able to locate the site of my POW camp near Berlin. I also wanted to find Odertal, Blechhammer, Zuckmantel, Muglitz and other related places but after the war all the names have been changed. I sure would appreciate it if you could locate an old map or at least get the coordinates for these places which now must be part of Poland.

Finally, I have befriended a former Luftwaffe ME-109 pilot who is a US citizen and lives in New Jersey. It is always interesting swapping "war stories" with a guy who was on the other side of our machine guns.

Thanks again for your work. See you at the next reunion.

Hjalmar Johansson
767th Squadron

ditor's Note: If any of you have maps of the target areas mentioned, contact Hjalmar Johansson, 38 Rockledge Rd., Montville, NJ 07045-9710.

Montville Vets... Their Story

Hjalmar Johansson was one of these kids who made model airplanes. One of these was the German ME-109 (the Messerschmidt) which he "admired as a beautiful sleek fighter plane." Little did he know at the time that as a 19 year old nose gunner in a B-24 Liberator, he would face these aircraft in

battle. Johansson could have walked straight out of

the movie *Stalag 17*.

In November 1944, Johansson flew his first and last mission over southern Austria. They encountered ME 189s. "the wings lit up and suddenly (it looked like) an ugly, hairy spider which I had to destroy."

Their plane was hit and they flew on eastward toward Russia with one engine out and the plane partially on fire.

When it became apparent that the plane was going down, the crew parachuted, Johansson landing in a back yard in farm country, scaring an old woman who lived on the property. The local police were notified and Johansson was arrested, kept in solitary confinement for three days and "interrogated rigorously". He said he was scared but answered with "name, rank and serial number, that's all you'll get." It was mental abuse rather than physical. Johansson said but followed this by saying they were kept in total darkness. "No food, no heat, no blankets, no water."

After interrogation, Johansson was shipped "with a lot of others" to Wetzlar Prison Camp where word reached them that the allied troops were closing in on the Rhine. Food was meager, their warm flying clothes were taken away and they were issued "remnants of clothing. I had a Canadian jacket." The food was a subsistence diet which they ate with a spoon out of a cup, two implements they kept with them at all times.

Johansson weighed 150 pounds when he entered captivity, I 10 when he emerged. They did receive Red Cross packages, but their own prisoner governing body "skimmed off the best." Johansson did not smoke, so he traded cigarettes for food. He learned to relish German black bread which he said never got stale no matter how long you kept it, and it was substantial. "It got to a point where black bread tasted like chocolate cake."

In February 1945, Johansson had "one of the worst experiences." He and 44 other prisoners, "some of them badly wounded," were transported by boxcar. The trip took 7 days. Half the car held the prisoners, the other their 7 German guards.

The American prisoners were jammed in "literally like sardines," Johansson said. They took turns standing and sitting. They had no water, no toilet



Mail Call (Continued)

facilities: "We had a couple of cardboard boxes".

When they reached Berlin they were left locked in the cars and told that the English were going to bomb the city. They did and the car rocked with the explosions. "No one was hurt but it was a frightening experience."

Their destination was 25 miles south of Berlin: Stalag III A - an "all purpose concentration camp built in the 30'e' Johansson said. "It was ugly and primitive" and held between 4000 and 10,000 prisoners. Russians, Americans were kept in different compounds.

Their camp had a marvelous underground. "We would get news bulletins from the British compounds." The British had built a "clandestine radio." Even the Americans did not know where it was.

The Russian troops came through and liberated the camp in March 1945 only to put up the barbed wire again. Their plan was to trade Russian prisoners of war, located in another area for the American prisoners.

The Russian prisoners in Stalag III A were liberated by their own armies, given "a chunk of bread, a rifle and a half of sausage" and "off they went to kill Germans in Berlin. They had the motivation," Johansson said.

The liberators came in calling the prisoners Amerikanski and "giving us bottles of vodka. My stomach was not up to that," Johansson said. When the second line Russian troops came in they took over the camp and put the barbed wire back up. "We were now literally prisoners again. I knew the cold war had started before anyone else did," Johansson said.

Johansson still has his thumb print, prison record data and dog tags. He kept a diary while he was held prisoner written on the back of cigarette packet papers with a pencil he had sewn into the lapel of the coat he was wearing. They took all writing tools away from them. He still has the diary.

"We literally cut down the barbed wire and marched out in formation." The Russians fired over their heads but did them no real harm. They made it to the American zone where they finally got rid of "fleas

and lice which was another form of torture" for the prisoners.

Johansson said he was proud to fight in the war and "would have been disappointed if I didn't go" but he has kept "no real animosity for the Germans." Years later he made business trips to Germany and they would ask him if he had visited there before. He would reply, wryly, yes. They were momentarily ill at ease when they found out he had been a POW.



Hi, George,

March 22, 1998

Enclosed is a copy of a letter I got from Norma Ford Beard, daughter of Gene Ford, who died in that ditching near Vis after the Ordertal mission of Dec. 17, 1944. In response to her letter in the "Liberaider" of December, 1997 (pages 7 and 8) I had written her what I knew of the mission and her father's fate. I wasn't on that mission, and was a new pilot in the 765th, so what I could tell her was not first-hand stuff. (I'd arrived around Nov. 1st, and had flown only 3 credited missionsbut half-a-dozen 6-7 hour aborted missions, along with lots of stand-downs, in that miserable winter weather.)

Norma's letter is very touching, and it provided me more information than I'd given to her. You may have gotten the same, or better, information from other people, but you, or whoever is going to continue the "Liberaider", may be able to use some of it.

The "Liberaider" has gotten better and better under your editorship. Compliments on your good work, and thanks a lot for all you have done.

Best regards,
Bob Kelliher
765th Squadron

Dear Mr. Kelliher,

March 13, 1998

Thank you so much for your letter.

The note you saw was first published in December of 1996, after I put a message on the B-24 Veterans' Internet bulletin board. Early last summer I received a letter from Val Miller. I since have met him and



Mail Call (Continued)

John Toney, the last two survivors of my father's last crew.

My father was part of the original cadre, as you guessed. He was sent home on leave after his 40th mission, in early July of '44. Right after he left, the AAF changed its policy on sending people home before they had completed a tour, and it looked like the fellows sent home would be allowed to stay there (I don't understand that, but then, I've never served in the military). My father was one of 18 or so officers the 461st were able to recall because they were "actual or potential staff personnel or flight leaders," and he rejoined the 765th in early November of '44 as a flight leader pilot. I'm quoting from the narrative history of the 461st, which I have on microfilm and have been laboring through. My mother thinks he was a flight leader pilot before he was sent home on leave.

My father's two best friends, Richard Fawcett and Paul Dietrich, both were killed before he was. You may remember Paul "Dutch" Dietrich. He was made Squadron Navigator in early November 1944. He had been navigator on my father's original crew. So far as I know, all MY father's original crew members are dead, except perhaps the co-pilot, Raymond Kahn. I'm waiting now for Frank O'Bannon to get his data base converted to his new computer system, so he can check on that. Thomas Lightbody, my father's third good friend, did survive the war but died several years ago, as did Captain Mixson. In short, there doesn't seem to be anybody left except my mother who knew him well.

My mother used to talk about my father very reluctantly. In fact, all I knew about him until I was 13 was that he had been a pilot and was killed in the war. I'd never even seen a picture of him until I visited his mother and stepfather in 1957 (complicated family history, with which I won't bore you). After I married in 1991, to my mother's amazement and vast relief, my husband was able to persuade Mother to talk, little by little. Then we bought a computer, and were able to put her information to work. Back in the '80's my brother and I tried to get my father's service records, but apparently they were destroyed in a fire.

I am grateful to all of you who have taken time to answer my questions. Mother seems to be free at

last of a terrible burden. In fact, the other day she

was grouching because she thought my father should have been promoted faster than he was. Apparently he was promised a captaincy that didn't materialize. For her, that's real progress, and her health has improved considerably in the last year. My brother and I thank you.

I have mixed feelings about my father being sent back. There are so many imponderables. It could be that he would have been killed if he had continued to fly through the summer. If he hadn't been sent home, I wouldn't have my brother, Richard, named for Richard Fawcett, and conceived at the AAF resort hotel in Atlantic City in September '44, during a hurricane.

My father wanted to make a career of the Air Force. Although he didn't like combat and didn't want to go back to it, I'm guessing he would have gone back voluntarily if that's what it took to assure his career. From the time he was a small boy he desperately wanted to fly, but if there hadn't been a war, he almost certainly would have been condemned to spend his life milking Holsteins twice a day, with nothing to look forward to but upgrading to registered Jerseys. he died doing what he loved to do and did very well. That's something.

I was particularly touched by some things the crew chief, Mr. Fitzgerald, had to say. He respected my father, because, he said, my father took good care of his - Mr. F.'s - plane. I gather Mr. Fitzgerald would not say that of some pilots. Of course, my father had been trained as a B-24 mechanic before the AAF relaxed its requirements and began to accept high school graduates for pilot training. Mr. Fitzgerald told us a story about a crew that bailed out of "his~' damaged plane, which then, oddly enough, managed to land itself He added, "Your father would have landed that plane."

A few additions to the December 17th story, courtes~ of Val Miller (bombardier) and John Toney (nos gunner). They were, indeed, flying the Tulsamerican Like my father, Val Miller had never flown with tha crew before.

The Tulsamerican was leading a box of six planes that found itself some distance from the rest of the formation as it emerged from a cloud bank. I suspect the crews my father was leading were relatively inexperienced in formation flying under those conditions, so he spread them out more than



Mail Call (Continued)

he might have earlier in the war. As they were turning to rejoin the formation, they were jumped by German fighters. Four of the planes were shot down almost immediately, and the fifth was last seen with a large hole in its fuselage, but may have made it back.

The Tulsamerican dumped its bombs for maneuverability and fought off the fighters, but had lost an engine and its hydraulic system, the bomb bay doors were stuck in the open position and it was leaking fuel. It limped back to the field at Vis, but the engineer couldn't get the landing gear to lock, so my father decided to go around again while the engineer worked on it. Before they could get that straightened out, two of the remaining three engines cut out, the plane went over on one wing and into the water from about 100 feet. Mr. Fitzgerald thinks they ran out of fuel, because the Tulsamerican was an older, heavier version of the B-24 with less range than the version my father was used to flying.

What continually amazes me as I read about the 15th AAF flight crews is how young you all were! My father flew his 29th mission on his 21st birthday and I've seen references to a 20-year old captain in one 15th AAF squadron, although the pilot and squadron weren't identified. I doubt you could find many 20-year-olds these days capable of that kind of responsibility. But maybe that's just as well. Too many of those talented young men never came home.

At one point I wanted to write a book about my father and his experiences, but I have given it up. I don't have enough information about him, for one thing, and for another, a history professor named Thomas Childers already has written the sort of book I wanted to do. It's called The Wings of Morning, and is about his uncle, a crewmember on the last B-24 shot down over Germany in WWII. I think Professor Childers would be an ideal person to write a book about the Odertal mission, and I'm trying to figure out the best way to approach him about it. He teaches at the University of Pennsylvania, where I worked for many years, but I never met him. I think we may have some professorial friends in common, though. His book was put out by one of the big, commercial publishers and has had respectable sales and good reviews.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,
Norma Ford Beard

Dear Mr. Dickie: 29

April 1998

In the course of researching the death of Vermont, IL native, 2nd Lt. Wallace R. Hopkins in a P-39Q-15-BE on Sun, 5 Dec.43 at Daly City, CA, I came across data on a significant storm (perhaps the El Nino of 43) which during the period 22 Nov-7 Dec43 contributed to the deaths of fighter pilots Wallace R. Hopkins, 2nd Lt. Edward L. Wanzung, and the crashes of four 461st B24's during the same period.

I am looking for photos and data for a possible article for AIR CLASSICS or FLIGHT JOURNAL on the following 461st crews:

2nd Lt. Reginald V. Tribe, 765th Sq. - B-24E #41-28465, on Mon 22 Nov 43 made three-engine out crash landing near Goldfield Highway, eleven miles SW of Tonopah, NV. (C/P Edwin J. Drucker killed in crash landing.

1st Lt. William Zumsteg, 767th Sq. B-24 #41-29169. Sat 4 Dec 43, hammered all night by a storm, emergency landing at Manzanar, CA about 0445 hrs. This crew was later KIA 2 Apr 44 over Bihac, Yugoslavia.

2nd Lt. Charles W. Turvey, 765th B-24E #41-28463, Sun 5 Dec 43 during storm hit mountain in Sierras.

Capt. William H. Darden, 765th Sq. B-24H #42-7674? while searching for Turvey, made crash landing at Huntington Lake, CA.

Mr. Dickie, perhaps you might have space in the "Liberaider" to put in my blurb for photos/info on these 461st crews.

John D. Bybee
2690 E. 2350th Street
Vermont, IL 61484-9506

Editor's Note: John is an old friend of the 461st. He researched the trials and tribulations of Ken Smith's crew, 99R, following the fateful mission to Odertal, Germany on 17 Dec 44 (Mission # 15 1). His write-up of this mission and Ken's problems was printed in the Dec 93/Jan 94 issues of the "Liberaider". If any of you can help John with his current research project, please do.

461ST BOMB GROUP (H) 1943-1945 REUNION
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
20-23 AUGUST 1998
HEADQUARTERS: SHERATON TARA HOTEL, BRAINTREE, MA

This letter is only being sent to those members that responded to the questionnaire that was sent out last November. The same information will be printed in the June 1998 issues of the "Liberaider".

REGISTRATION FORM

Your completed REUNION REGISTRATION FORM (enclosed) will be recorded and numbered upon receipt. As in the past, the form must be accompanied by a check covering the costs of the various events you wish to attend. The CUT-OFF DATE for the return of your form and check is 1 July 1998. Cancellations will be fully refundable except for the Registration Fee provided the Committee has not been obligated to pay funds prior to receiving the cancellation notice.

HOTEL RESERVATION

HOTEL RESERVATIONS ARE TO BE MADE BY YOU DIRECTLY WITH THE SHERATON TARA HOTEL! Each reservation must be accompanied with a NON-REFUNDABLE deposit equivalent to one nights stay (\$99 including taxes). They may be made in two ways:

1. Fill in the enclosed hotel card with your credit card number and signature. Fold, seal and mail to the hotel.
If you choose not to provide your credit card number in this manner, mail the completed card in a separate envelope along with your check or your credit card number shown.
2. You may call the hotel directly, (781) 848-0600, and give them your credit card number. In order to get the reduced room rate YOU MUST IDENTIFY YOUR AFFILIATION WITH THE 461ST BOMB GROUP.

THE CUT-OFF DATE FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS WILL BE 20 JULY 1998. Late reservations may not be able to be accommodated by the Sheraton and the reduced room rate may not be honored.

Your Reunion Committee requests that you make your reservations NO LATER THAN 1 JULY so that we have a little more time to check the number of attendees to make sure we are going to meet our room commitment to the hotel.

The hotel will honor the reduced room rate for two nights prior to and two nights following the scheduled reunion.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Those arriving by air will probably land at Logan Airport in Boston. It is about 14 miles to the hotel. The LOGAN EXPRESS bus leaves the terminal for Braintree every half hour and passes right by the hotel to its terminal about a quarter of a mile away. It does not stop at the hotel but if you tell the driver where you are going, he will radio the hotel to send their van to the terminal to pick you up. The Round Trip fare from the airport to the bus terminal is about \$14.00.

The hotel has ample parking space for those that drive. (over)

GENERAL

INFORMATION (cont.)

If you are coming in an RV you probably have the latest information on available camp sites. If not, the Committee will try to obtain the the location and names of nearby camps.

The prices for the Squadron Dinner, the Banquet and the Memorial Breakfast include tax and gratuities totaling 23 percent.

PLEASE fill out the REUNION RESERVATION FORM and send it along with your check to the address shown AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. There is a lot of accounting and planning work that has to be done and we need your input as early as we can get it. The CUT-OFF date is 1 July but please send it sooner if you can. PLEASE NOTE: There will be a \$10.00 late fee charged for any tours or meals that are booked after arrival in Boston, so make your reservations by 1 July 1998.

REGISTRATION DESK HOURS

The Registration Desk will be manned during the hours shown below. In case of emergency, contact the front desk of the hotel and/or page George Dickie or Janet Kirsch.

Friday,	21 Aug.	12:00 - 5:00 PM
		7:00 - 9:00 PM
Saturday,	22 Aug.	7:00 - 8:15 AM
		4:30 - 6:00 PM
Thursday,	20 Aug.	7:00 - 8:15 AM
		5:30 - 6:30 PM
Sunday,	23 Aug.	7:00 - 8:00 AM
		10:00AM - 12:00PM

We will have a Seating Chart for the tables at the Annual Banquet at the Registration Desk. You may sign up for a specific table provided you have the names of the people in your party and a paidup ticket for each person at the time you sign up. We will put the table number on each ticket. You do not have to sign up for a complete table. First come, first served. Remember we are all friends and members of the same association.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<u>THURS.</u>	<u>20 Aug.</u>	Registration desk and Hospitality room open at
Noon	5:00 PM	12:00 noon. Complimentary non-alcoholic beverages available in the Hospitality room.

5:30 PM	Dinner on your own. See Optional Tour #1
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<u>FRI.</u>	<u>21 Aug.</u>	Plymouth Tour
8:30AM - 3:30PM		8:30 Busses leave hotel.
		9:00-12:00 Visit <u>Plymouth Plantation</u> (see enclosed brochure)
		12:00-1:00 All American Barbecue

(next page)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

(cont.)

FRI. 21 Aug. Plymouth Tour
1:00-3:00 Visit Plymouth Rock and board
 Mayflower II
3:00 Busses leave for hotel.

4:30 - 5:30 Board of Directors Meeting. Others rest.
6:30 Cash bar available before dinner.
7:00 Squadron Dinners.

SAT. 22 Aug.
8:30AM - 3:30PM Historic Tour.
8:30 Busses leave for Lexington
9:00 - 12:00 Visit Historic Lexington and Concord
12:00-12:30 Box lunches on the way to Duck Boats.

Duck Boat Tour (see enclosed brochure)
12:30 Half of the members will board
 the Duck Boats for the Boston Tour.
 The other half sightsee the area
 and shop until 1:30.
1: 30 The second half of the members board
 the boats for the Boston Tour.
About 2:20 The first tour returns.They can
 sightsee and shop until 3:30.
About 3:20 The second tour returns.
3:30 The busses leave for the hotel.

4:30 - 5:30 Annual Meeting
6:30 Cash bar available before dinner
7:30 Annual Dinner and Dance

SUN. 23 Aug. Memorial Service and Breakfast
 8:00 Memorial Service
 8:30 Memorial Breakfast

NOTE: The dates for the above events are firm but the times are subject to change. The tour times for both Friday and Saturday are very "tight" and depend very heavily of local traffic. Please do not "linger" too long at any one place and miss a bus. We have to maintain the schedule in order to see and do all we have planned. Keep your eyes and ears open for announced changes.

OPTIONAL TOURS

Optional Tour #1
THU. 20 Aug.
5:30 - 9:30 PM As indicated, the only charge for this tour is the bus fare. Dinner and shopping are on you. There are plenty of places to eat at Quincy Market. Anything from sandwiches to full course meals. Durgin Park Restaurant is suggested because it is nationally known.

Optional Tour #2
Sun. 23 Aug.
11:00AM-5:00PM This tour is being offered for those that will not be leaving for home on Sunday, 23 Aug. It is a single tour with the bus(s) stopping first at the U.S.S. Constitution and then at three other destinations.

OPTIONAL TOURS (cont.)

Many of you indicated you would like to visit the Museum of Science, the New England Aquarium, and the Kennedy Library. We do not have time for you to visit each of them but after about an hour stop at the Constitution the bus(s) will stop at these locations in the order shown on the REGISTRATION FORM. You will get off at the attraction of your choice. About three hours later (time will be announced) the bus will return to take you back to the hotel. The prices for the various attractions vary due to the entry fee.

We need forty five (45) people per bus to get the price per person down to where it is cost effective. We need your Registration Forms as soon as possible in order to determine how much interest there is in scheduling these tours. Please indicate on the Form which activity you are interested in so that we can plan this tour.

For your information, we have included a small amount in the tour fees for each day to cover a gratuity for each bus driver. You should not feel obligated to contribute any more for the bus service. In addition, the elevated costs of the meals at the hotel include a 23 percent fee covering service gratuities and taxes. The Cost of Living keeps going UP!

BREAKFAST

We are a little concerned about the timing for breakfast. We have to be ready to board the buses by 8:15 in order to maintain our schedule. The hotel restaurant opens at 6:30AM. The least expensive way to get your breakfast is to order from the menu but that takes longer for a group our size. They do offer a Continental Breakfast and a Breakfast Buffet starting at about \$9.50 per person. BV



REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

PLEASE FILL IN THIS REGISTRATION FORM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND SEND IT ALONG WITH YOUR CHECK TO THE ADDRESS BELOW.

461st Bomb Group Reunion
 c/o George D. Dickie
 P.O.Box 615
 East Sandwich, MA 02537-0615

NAME

(Names as you want them on your name tags)

SPOUSE CHILDREN/GUESTS

INSERT ONE OF YOUR
 ADDRESS LABELS HERE

DATE OF ARRIVAL

PHONE: (

DATE OF DEPARTURE

HAVE YOU MADE YOUR HOTEL RESERVATION?

HOW MANY ROOMS?

LIST OF EVENTS

SQUADRON				
REGISTRATION FEE	_____ @	\$ 10.00	\$ _____	
Thu. 20 Aug	# of Persons		Total Amount	
PLYMOUTH TOUR	_____ @	\$ 33.50	\$ _____	
Fri. 21 Aug.	# of Persons		Total Amount	
SQUADRON DINNER	_____ @	\$ 28.50	\$ _____	
Fri. 21 Aug.	# of Persons		Total Amount	
HISTORIC TOUR	_____ @	\$ 13.00	\$ _____	
Sat. 22 Aug.	# of Persons		Total Amount	
DUCK BOAT TOUR	_____ @	\$ 19.00	\$ _____	
Sat. 22 Aug.	# of Persons		Total Amount	
DINNER/DANCE	_____ @	\$ 36.50	\$ _____	
Sat. 22 Aug.	# of Persons		Total Amount	
MEMORIAL BREAKFAST	_____ @	\$ 19.70	\$ _____	
Sun. 23 Aug.	# of Persons		Total Amount	
Optional Tour #1	_____ @	\$ 7.75	\$ _____	
Quincy Market	# of Persons	Bus fare only	Total Amount	
Optional Tour #2	_____ @	\$ 21.00	\$ _____	
Museum of Science	# of Persons		Total Amount	
Optional Tour #2	_____ @	\$ 18.50	\$ _____	
N.E. Aquarium	# of Persons		Total Amount	
Optional Tour #2	_____ @	\$ 16.00	\$ _____	
JFK Library	# of Persons		Total Amount	
	Total amount submitted by check		\$ _____	

NOTE: Unless enough people sign up for the Optional Tours to Pay for the buses (and the activity entry fees) we will not be able to offer the tours. See previous page.



**MEET
DAN H. FENN
TOUR GUIDE FOR OUR BOSTON REUNION**

Editor's Note: Dan called me a few months ago and offered to help plan an historic tour of the LexingtonConcord area as part of our Boston Reunion. To my surprise, Dan turned out to have been a member of the administrative section of the 767th Squadron of the 461 st Bomb Group. Here's what he has to say about his life since Italy. I felt he was qualified to act as our Tour Guide in the Boston Area.

"I finished up at Harvard after I left Italy in the Fall of 1945. I went on to be an Assistant Dean there, Director of a non-profit educational institution in international relations. I was also an editor and teacher at the Harvard Business School.

I was active in state and local politics and spent two and one-half years in the Kennedy White House when the President's staff was 25 people, not the 650 or so they have today. After a stint as a Commissioner and Vice Chairman of the United States Tariff Commission, and a couple of way stations, I became the Founding Director of the Kennedy Library and Museum, which is part of the National Archives of the U.S.

I am an elected officeholder in Lexington, a member of the Lexington Minute Man Company and on the Board of the Old South Meeting House in Boston, the "Tea Party" church."

OLD IRONSIDES CRUISE OF 1812

This story is said to come from one of the log books in the archives of the US S Constitution. The story involves the Constitution's famous cruise during the war of 1812. In August the Constitution set sail from Boston with 474 officers and men and the following supplies -48,000 gallons of fresh water, 7,400 cannon shots, 11,000 pounds of black powder, and 79,400 gallons of rum. Upon arrival in Jamaica on October 6th she took on 826 pounds of flour and 69,300 gallons of rum. She then headed for the Azores, where she took on 500 tons of beef, and 64,000 gallons of Portuguese wine. On November 13th she set sail for England. In the ensuing days she defeated five British men-of-war and sank 12 British merchant ships, salvaging only their rum. By January 27th her powder and shot were exhausted. Nonetheless, she made a raid on the Firth of Clyde. Her landing party captured a whiskey distillery and transferred 40,000 gallons of scotch aboard. She then headed home and made Boston harbor on the 23rd of February with no cannon shot, no powder, no food, no rum, no scotch, no wine, but with 48,000 gallons of stagnate water!!!

WH P.O.W. COMPENSATION

This interesting article relates to the possible belated compensation from the German government to United States Prisoners of War. A man from New Hampshire filed a claim with the United States Foreign Claims Settlement Commission, which is a quasi-judicial agency of the Justice Department and had his claim approved. The Commission decided that this man's poor health is a result of the abuse he suffered as a prisoner of war for two months in 1945. He filed his claim under a holocaust survivors program by United States Prisoners of War who were subjected to inhumane, conditions. The money comes from a trust fund set up by the German Government as part of the 1995 agreement.

(Armed Forces News, 10/97)

Cover Picture

A 3.5 inch diameter lead crystal Cup Plate produced by the Pairpoint Glass Co., Sagamore, Massachusetts to commemorate our 1998 reunion in Boston.

TAPS
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE FOREVER

November 1997 - June 1998

SQ	Name	Hometown	MOS	Date of Death	
764	Bro, Alan M.	Burbank, CA	750	4 Mar	1998
	D'Amante, Armante R.	Concord, NH	1035	4 Nov	1997
	Hawthorne, Jack C.	Pittsburgh, PA	612	28 Oct	1997
	Hill, Fred F.	Tuxedo, NY	9301	1 Mar	1998
	Holleran, Joseph D.	Homer City, PA	612	8 Feb	1998
	Keller, Albert L., Jr.	Kankakee, IL	612	12 Nov	1997
	Lane, David F.	Rossville, GA	612	18 Oct	1997
	Lloyd, Elmer J.	Wheeling, WV	612	13 Mar	1996
	Robbins, Burney C.	Pleasanton, TX	754		1997
	Webber, Raymond J.	Bridgeton, MO	748	23 Oct	1996
765	McDonald, John R.	Hyannis, MA	1092	8 Dec	1997
	Romeo, William A.	Columbus, GA	747	30 Apr	1998
	Toney, John F.	Muskogee, OK	612	12 Apr	1998
766	Gear, Murray C.	Perris, CA	911	19 Mar	1998
	Kehs, Walter L.	Perkasie, PA	1092	23 Oct	1997
	Kissell, William G.	Spartanberg, SC	1034	11 Feb	1998
	Maloney, Aelred	Aconto Falls, WI	612		1997
	Quattrochi, Joseph	Jarrettsville, MD	901	23 Feb	1998
	Reckley, Francis R.	Indianapolis, IN	853	25 Oct	1997
	Snell, James A.	Columbia, MO	612	11 Feb	1998
	Warren, Horace A.	Dunnellon, FL	612	12 Feb	1998
767	Dace, George W., Jr.	Drexel Hill, PA	1034	Feb	1998
	Dial, Walter G.	Kansas City, MO	748	18 Mar	1996
	Heald, Robert L.	Westfield, NJ	1092	29 Nov	1995
	Mohlman, Arthur W.	Cincinnati, OH	1034	15 Apr	1998
	Sossoman, Howard R.	Owasso, OK	1034	Dec	1995

The Story Behind Taps

It's a bugle call that easily evokes tears on Memorial Day and at other times when Americans formerly honor their war dead - Taps - Few of us know the origin of how it came to be one of America's most inspiring pieces of military music. The composer, strangely enough, was not a musician nor did he have any formal knowledge of music and notes. His name was David Butterfield and he was a union general in the Civil War. Butterfield's unit had taken part in a fierce battle at Gaines' Mill near Richmond, VA, on June 26, 1862, and he was seriously wounded. If his unit would have broken, the Army of the Potomac could not have withdrawn safely and the North would have suffered yet another defeat.

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

The effect was magical and soon taps was being played throughout the Army of the Potomac. Taps was officially adopted by the Army in 1874. General Butterfield was a Medal of Honor recipient during the Civil War and died in

190 1. He was buried in the U.S. Military Academy Cemetery at West Point with full military honors and to the saddest song of all, his beloved Taps.

TAPS

Day is done, gone the sun,
From the lakes, from the hills,
From the skies.
All is well, safely rest,
God is nigh.

BRONZE SCULPTURE OF A B-24 TO BE PLACED IN THE HONOR COURT OF THE AIR FORCE ACADEMY

The Liberator will take its place of Honor at the Air Force Academy amid previously made sculptures of the B- 17, P-3 8, P-40, P-47 and the P-5 1.

A Corporation was formed by some veterans to raise funds for sculpting the model to take its rightful place in the Honor Court. It will be a 1/6th scale model of a B24J having a wingspan of 18.33 ft. and a fuselage length of 11.27 ft. It will weigh approximately 1 ton and will rest on a blue colored granite base weighing about 3 tons.

The Corporation is named "B-24 Groups Memorial of the Army Air Forces". The wooden model is almost completed and the bronze casting is expected to be completed by September 1998. Dedication is tentatively scheduled for 25 September.

The Corporation is soliciting funds for the construction and installation at the academy. You can make individual donations to the project but you Editor would like to see a sizeable contribution made by the 461st Bomb Group so that we will be recognized on the large bronze plaque on the base of the model. Contributions are tax deductible. If you want to participate send your checks, payable to the B-24 Groups Memorial to:

B-24 Groups Memorial of the Army Air
Forces Neal Sorenson, Treasurer
133 Peninsula Rd.
Minneapolis, MN 55441-4112

Contributors of \$100 or more will have their name placed in the Book of Remembrance. Those contributing more than \$450 will have their name placed on the large bronze plaque at the base.

Replacing Military Records and Decorations

In case you have not heard, the Veterans Administration discovered some 10 million duplicates of military records thought to have been destroyed in their 1973 fire. If you have been unsuccessful in receiving lost documents or unawarded/lost decorations, try again.

For Military Records write to:
National Personnel Records Center
(Military Personnel Records)
9700 Page Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

Put "Restoration Unit" on the lower left side of the envelope and on the upper right side of you letter.

For Military Decorations:

According to the May 1997 issue of the *Afterburner* (USAF news for retired personnel), former Army Air Corps or Air Force service members, looking to replace lost decorations, are entitled to a one-time free replacement. Request should be made to: Air Force Reference Branch, National Personnel Records Center, 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. (Be sure to include full name, current address, Social Security number, Army Serial Number(s), and copy of separation document.) After review, NPRC notifies the Air Force Personnel Center specialist, Randolph AFB, TX, who forwards the replacement medals to the member. Since the 1973 fire, reconstructed records do not always reveal the decorations/awards the individual is entitled to receive. If NPRC cannot determine eligibility, the entire record is forwarded to AFPC for verification. If AFPC cannot verify, they may request supporting documents from the member.

HISTORY OF THE 461ST BOMB GROUP

CHAPTER XVH THE RULE OF WEATHER: UNCERTAIN - - JANUARY 1945

(A) Narrative History

The narrative story of the 461st Bombardment Group (H) for the month of January 1945 can be quickly told. It was another month of many combat crews and too few combat airplanes. It was a long month of rain, snow, driving winds, and seas of mud. It was a month of stand-downs, of bigger and better bond raffles, of growing importance of the Group Band, and of various types of staff meetings. Members of both the air and the ground echelons tried to keep their impatience, caused by the bad weather, partially under control by closely following the reduction of the German bulge on the Western Front in the Ardennes by the United Nations Armies, and the rapid advance of the Russian Armies across Poland and Hungary. The Russian drive was of especial interest because the Russians either captured or eliminated five of the hottest targets left to the Fifteenth Air Force and the Group: The synthetic oil refineries at Blechammer North, Blechhammer South, and Odertal in Germany; Oswiecim, Poland; and at Moravska Ostrava, Czechoslovakia.

(B) Operations

The bad weather of January was the worst in which this Group has operated since its arrival in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. As compared to fifteen missions in October, nineteen in November, and seventeen in December, the Group flew but eight missions during the month of January. A total of fifteen non-effective missions were planned during the month. Almost all of these were briefed and "scrubbed". The missions were curtailed in number due both to the location and the kind of weather which prevailed in January.

During the Spring and Summer months of 1944 the 461 st Group had bombed targets in the following countries: France, Italy, Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Roumania, Yugoslavia, and Greece. In 1944 when the weather was bad over the Alps, the Apennines, or the Dinaric Alps, the Group could operate nearly every day by hitting targets either east or west of bad weather over these mountains. By January of 1945, however, Northern Italy, Austria, and Germany, together with very limited areas in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, constituted the only area left for strategic bombing within range of the Fifteenth Air Force. Thus it happened that when the weather was bad during the month at the Base, over the mountains, or at the target, the Group was compelled to stand down.

At his press conference in Rome of 2 February 1945, the Commanding General of the Mediterranean Army Air Forces, Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, said, "If there is any one rule about weather, it is its uncertainty". Under date of 18 January 1945 the Fifteenth Air Force issued a monograph entitled "Operational Employment of Lone Wolf Tactice". In this monograph can be found an illustrated non-technical discussion of the weather conditions which influence the operations of the groups in the Air Force. The narrative part of this article is reproduced below:

Weather Considerations

Base, route and target weather prevailing in Fifteenth Air Force operating areas during the late fall, winter and early spring have definite local characteristics. Southeastern Italian bases have operational weather about seventy-five percent of the time but, unfortunately, some of the most unfavorable base weather occurs frequently at a time when target weather is good. When a frontal system passes over South German target areas from the northwest, the locality becomes operational, but the routes and bases become poor. Often, by the time the bases improve, a second storm on the same frontal system is approaching the target area making it non-operational. Although frontal weather is at its peak during these months, the cloudiness associated with it is of short duration. Bases experience lowest ceilings and greatest rainfall when a low pressure area is centered over the Southern Balkans or Adriatic, and a high pressure area is situated north of the Alps. This condition brings very strong northerly winds to Southeastern Italy, producing very poor flying weather at bases and on lower routes while flying conditions are good north of the Alps. This situation usually persists for a period of two to four days. Persistent low pressure areas over other parts of the

Central Mediterranean also bring higher ceilings and smaller amounts of rain.

prolonged poor weather to bases, but with

The most important factor contributing to unfavorable operating weather in winter as well as during summer is the influence on meteorological conditions introduced by the Apennines, Alps, and Dinaric Alps. But for them, route conditions would usually be good when target conditions are good. These mountains greatly affect the height and extent of the cloud systems. Air currents, more or less horizontal over level land and oceans, acquire a marked vertical component in passing over mountains. This is the origin of the vertical type cloud system so prevalent in this section of Europe. Vertical wind velocity components over the mountains increase the extent of cloud decks and make them continuous to high levels, with turbulence extending even above cloud tops. The height to which mountains disturb the airflow varies with the speed of the wind, but extends normally two to three times as high as the mountains. When encountering stratiform or horizontal type cloud systems, it is possible to fly between layers of cloud toward good weather without much danger of the cloud layers merging. Vertical type cloud systems, continuous and turbulent to high levels, cannot be penetrated by formations of heavily loaded aircraft. Normal operations over South European mountains can succeed only when winds over them are light or air masses are stable and dry.

Mountains surrounding or lying adjacent to target areas also have considerable influence on target weather. Over some Fifteenth Air Force targets, when certain wind directions prevail, the weather resulting from these conditions is similar to that experienced over continental plain areas devoid of bold topographic features. However, in most instances, the greater portion of our target weather is affected strongly by mountains. Favorable weather conditions occasionally prevail over targets north of the Alps when a down-slope wind caused by a northerly flow from the Mediterranean sweeps over the mountain crests causing cloud breaks in the lee. This condition is, however, always associated with degenerating route conditions which are concomitant with cloud build-ups on the South Alpine slopes.

During the Winter months, most favorable operational conditions are associated with two types of meteorological phenomena; one, the encroachment of a frontal condition into Western Europe, and the other, the presence of a continental high pressure area over Western Czechoslovakia. Because of the situation of the South-central European mountain systems, frontal condition which produce southerly or southwesterly winds in Germany, Austria and Hungary produce ahead of them ideal operational conditions. It is extremely difficult, however, for this Air Force to take advantage of these conditions because of the fact that frontal disturbances move rapidly across the continent, affording only a fleeting opportunity to put them to advantageous use. A more static situation, making possible normal conditions for more than one or two successive days, exists in the instance of the continental high pressure area. Only stratiform low cloud and fog in the target areas are associated with this condition.

The frequent passage of frontal systems and their strong reaction to South European topographic features causes the chief restriction to normal heavy bomber operations of the Fifteenth Air Force during the winter months. Storms moving in from the Atlantic from north-west to south-east proceed rapidly across the British Isles, France, the Low Countries, and Western Germany but, when they come into contact with the mountain chains in South Europe, their speed decreases and they almost come to a standstill, causing unfavorable flying weather for extended periods. It is often the case that portions of storms, centered north of the Alps, spill over into the Mediterranean where they lie off the west coast of Italy, penned in by the Apennines, or in the Adriatic, held static by the Apennines and Dinarics. Unfavorable route and base conditions always accompany this situation.

Of those three weather areas - base, route and target - which must be considered when executing normal heavy bomber operations, this Air Force is most troubled most frequently by route weather over mountain areas. Target weather is the second most frequent deterrent to our operations and base weather causes relatively few stand-downs.

Weather conditions which favor Lone Wolf operations usually occur when a frontal system lies along the Alps and extends past the Carpathians, up through Poland. Analysis of weather conditions shows that weather which is too bad

for normal operations may be, on the other hand, too good for Lone Wolf operations. Weather conditions at base and enroute may be so unfavorable as to prevent normal operations; yet the target may be clear, thus prohibiting Lone Wolf operations. For penetration by single aircraft into fighter-defended areas, the sky coverage in these areas should be 10/10 at bombing altitude. These conditions are as unique as is totally clear weather. Single sortie aircraft can be dispatched only when weather conditions are such as to give protection to bombers, yet which are not so severe as to cause losses due to icing and turbulence.

NEW CREWS

A total of twenty-four new crews were received during the month of January. They were led by:

764th Squadron	765th Squadro	766th Squadron
<u>767th Squadron</u>		
Ist Lt. Guy W. Lively	2nd Lt. Cornelius H. Brady	2nd Lt. Raymond L. Coleman 2nd
Lt. Robert P. Bogner		
2nd Lt. Marvin W. Rathfelder	2nd Lt. Johnson S. Miller	2nd Lt. Claude D. Fernstein
2nd Lt. Warren E. Petty		2nd Lt. Charles D. McGinnis
Lt. Donald L. Ryan		2nd Lt. Ernest L. Skinner
2nd Lt. Roger S. Ross		2nd Lt. Charles T. Courtney
2nd Lt. Harlow R. Huchzermeier		2nd Lt. Leonard S. Wojtkowiak
		2nd Lt. Conrad E. Mahlurn
	2nd Lt. Donald W. Michaelis	2nd Lt. John C. Bontempo
	2nd Lt. LeRoy M. Naves	2nd Lt. William P. Hettinger

Mission No. 159 4 January 1945

Target: Trento North Marshalling Yard, Italy

The first mission of the month of January was a four flight formation which was led by Captain Veiluva on 4 January. The target was the North Marshalling Yard at Trento, Italy, which is located on the railroad connecting Verona and the Brenner Pass. The target was bombed visually for a score of 25 percent. There were no enemy fighters and for some unexplainable reason not as much flak as had been anticipated. The main pattern of the bombs fell on the East side of the marshalling yard with some hits in the partially filled yard and some on the South choke point.

Mission No. 160 5 January 1945

Target: Zagreb East Sidings, Yugoslavia

On 5 January the Group Air Inspector, Captain Trommershausser, got his first assignment as a Group formation leader. The target was the East Sidings of the marshalling yard at Zagreb, Yugoslavia. On takeoff the planes in the four flight formation worked their way up individually through a solid stratocumulus cloud layer and assembled on top for the mission. As had been the case for

in Yugoslavia only by the visual method. When the formation arrived at Zagreb they found their target covered by a nine-tenths layer of clouds. After four unsuccessful bomb runs they abandoned the target and returned their bombs to Base.

Mission No. 161 8 January 1945

Target: YJagenfurt Marshalling Yard, Austria

Mission No. 161, which was flown on the 8th of the month, was a, briefed pathfinder four flight formation led by Lt. Colonel Lawhon with the South Main Marshalling Yard at Linz, Austria, as the primary target. At the key point the formation was compelled to make a 360 degree circle to get above the high cirrus. In the target area the solid deck of cirrus was so high that the formation could not get above it for a bomb run. After abandoning the primary target, Lt. Colonel Lawhon attempted an attack on the first alternate target, the marshalling yard at Graz, Austria, but there, too, the high cirrus prevented close formation flying. At Magenfurt, Austria, the formation finally dropped its bombs on the marshalling yard through a solid undercast with unobserved results. The plane flown by 2nd Lt. Thomas R. Wiley became separated from the formation and failed to return from this mission.

months, the crews had been briefed to bomb targets

Mission No. 162
9 January 1945**Target: Vienna South Ordnance Depot, Austria**

Cancelled

Mission No. 162
10 January 1945**Target: Regensburg Oil Storage, Germany**

Cancelled

Mission No. 162
12 January 1945**Target: Regensburg Oil Storage, Germany**

Cancelled

Mission No. 162
13 January 1945**Target: Linz Main Marshalling Yard, Austria
and Bolzano Main Marshalling Yard,
Italy**

Cancelled

Mission No. 162
14 January 1945**Target: Vienna Southeast Railroad Targets,
Austria**

Cancelled

Mission No. 162
15 January 1945**Target: Treviso Marshalling Yard, Italy**

A whole week passed before the Group was able to fly Mission No. 16-2. Finally, on the 15th of the month, Major Poole led another four flight formation in a visual attack on the marshalling yard at Treviso, Italy. Many of the bombs dropped short but others fell in the target area for a score of 3 2. 1 percent. There was not too much flak at the target but it was extremely accurate. As a result, eight of the twenty-three planes over the target were hit and one man was wounded.

Mission No. 163
16 January 1945**Target: Regensburg Oil Storage, Germany**

Cancelled

Mission No. 163
19 January 1945**Target: Brod Railroad Bridge, Yugoslavia**

On the 19th of the month Major Mixson led a three flight formation on an attack on the railroad bridge across the Sava River at Brod, Yugoslavia. Despite the fact that some of the bombs were over, there was a solid concentration and direct hits on the target. The mission was scored at 43 percent, The highest average for visual bombing obtained during the month of January. Again the enemy flak in Yugoslavia was extremely accurate though not too intense. The flak caused a fire in the nose of the lead plane which compelled the 764th Squadron Navigator, 1st Lt. Robert A. MacDiarmid; the Squadron Bombardier, 1st Lt. Robert A Herold; and the nose turret navigator, 1st Lt. John F. Chaklos to abandon the plane near the target. The fire was eventually extinguished and Major Mixson and his pilot, Lt. Parsonson, returned it to the Base. Nine other planes in the formation were damaged by flak and two men were wounded.

Mission No. 164
20 January 1945**Target: Linz North Main Marshalling Yard,
Austria**

For Mission No. 164 Captain Roberts drew the assignment of leading what turned out to be the roughest mission of the month of January. The target was the North Main Marshalling Yard at Linz, Austria. For purposes of destroying rolling stock in the yard, 100 pound general purpose bombs were used. With only four-tenths cloud coverage at the target the flak was extremely intense, accurate and heavy. Twenty-one of the twenty-five airplanes over the target were hit. Two of these were extremely hard hit and exploded before they could completely roll out of the formation on the bomb run.

These explosions spread the formation with the result that the bombs were scattered over a comparatively large area at the extreme northern end of the marshalling yard. The two planes lost were flown by 2nd Lt. Joseph M. O'Neal and 2nd Lt. James R. Yancey. Four other combat crew members were wounded on this mission.

Mission No. 165
21 January 1945

Target: Vienna Railway Work Shops, Austria

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
22 January 1945

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Austria and Fortezza Marshalling Yard, Italy

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
23, January

Target: Korneuburg Oil Refinery, Vienna, Austria and Fortezza Marshalling Yard, Italy

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
25 January 1945

Target: Linz South Marshalling Yard, Austria

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
26 January 1945

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Austria

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
27 January 1945

Target: Linz South Main Marshalling Yard, Austria and Verona Porto Nuova Mar

shalling Yard, Italy

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
28 January 1945

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Austria and Linz South Marshalling Yard, Austria

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
29 January 1945

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Austria and Trento North Marshalling Yard, Italy

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
30 January 1945

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Austria and Trento North Marshalling Yard

Cancelled

Mission No. 165
31 January 1945

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Austria

Ten briefings were conducted during the last third of the month of January before Mission No. 165 was finally flown. On the last day of the month, Lt. Colonel Hardy led the Red Force in a three flight formation on a pathfinder attack on the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria. The mission went very well until the time of the bomb run. On the bomb run Lt. Holmes, the mickey operator, had the target in his scope but lost it when the formation was forced off the heading of the bomb run by another Group. He was unable to pick up the target again on a second attempted attack on the target. Most of the bombs were returned to Base.

The plane flown by 2nd Lt. Edward K. Delano ran out of gas and was compelled to ditch not too far off the coast of Yugoslavia on the return route.

Those killed were the Pilot and 2nd Lt. Frank P. Hower, 2nd Lt. John O. Ungethuen, S. Sgt. Raymond H. Steelman, Cpl. Richard J. Gomez, and Pfc. William M. Gross. After having been soaked in the cold January waters of the Adriatic, the following members of the crew got aboard a life raft where they remained for twenty-two hours before being picked up: Cpl. Robert C. Neel, Cpl. William F. Nourse, Cpl. Wallace D. Olsen, and Cpl. Carl B. Peterson. For nine members of this crew this was their third mission, but S Sgt. Steelman would have completed his tour of duty on the mission had he lived.

Mission No. 166
31 January 1945

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Austria

Major Baker led the Blue Force in a second attack on the Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery on 31 January 1945. His three flight formation dropped its bombs by the pathfinder method with unobserved results.

A graph showing the comparative standings in bombing accuracy of the 21 groups in the Air Force is not available for January. The Group, however, rated 10th, with an average score of 33.2.

Messages and Commendations
HEADQUARTERS, ARMY AIR FORCES
WASHINGTON

Subject: New Year's Message

1 January 1945

To: Commanding Generals, Air Forces and Major AAF Commands
Director, Air Technical Service Command
Commanding Generals and Commanding Officers, Independent AAF Activities
Commanding Generals, All Air Forces and AAF Commands in Theaters of Operations

1. We of the AAF have good reason to be proud of our achievements during the past year, which marks the true coming of age of air power. New chapters in military history and theory have been written across the skies, and our long hard years of research, development, procurement, and training have been more than justified in action by our men and planes.

2. Today's remnants of the once powerful Luftwaffe can scarcely remember the time when they flew supreme over their own conquered lands; and the Japanese Air Force is being taught the lesson of American Superiority. The outer walls of Hitler's vaunted Fortress Europe have been breached by our blows; today the Nazi soldier at the front looks around him at the chaos caused by the devastating attacks of our tactical aircraft, and sees behind him at home the dusty wreckage of German industries and communications. In the South Pacific we have hammered the Jap on base after base along the way to Tokyo until today our forces stand at the gates of Manila. Within the last two months the island heart of the Japanese Empire has only begun to feel the power of our B-29's.

3. Our successes in the Air, however, have not been limited to the purely destructive ones of modem war; we have been building for the peace as well. The Air Transport Command has but shown us the possibilities of air communications and has accumulated valuable experience for the better days to come. In operational theaters, the Troop Carrier Command has done tirelessly and well the work of carrying fighting men both to and from the battlefields. And the vast China theater is entirely dependent for its daily growing supplies on the men flying over the Hump.

4. Those at home have contributed greatly to the performance of their comrades overseas. The procurement of supplies, the work of maintenance, the unending research; the selection and training of personnel, and the provision of replacements; the many special sections and services whose difficult and painstaking tasks so often go unnoticed in final results; the valuable seasoning experience provided for combat crews by our continental air forces; all these are vital factors in the splendid work of the AAF.

5. The practical test of operational experience in the field, both abroad and at home, has resulted in the improvement of many methods of procedure, weapons and equipment, and the improvised development of many ideas, techniques or new applications of materiel and weapons provided. I am vitally interested in receiving at this Headquarters any such ideas so that we may put them to work and disseminate them to other commands. These new ideas can play a large part in giving to the AAF the greatest possible striking power.

6. Gratifying as the results of the past year's labors have been, we must not think that our job is done. The toughness of the enemy's fiber may be judged by the beating he has stood up under thus far. He will take considerably more. Our resolve for the year to come must be to hit him harder and harder, faster and faster, until his strength is finally broken.

7. As we enter the New Year, I want to extend my good wishes to all members of your command, and to encourage you in your determination to attain even greater successes than in 1944.

H. H. Arnold
Commanding General, Army Air Forces

HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

From: CO, 49thBOMB WING (H) 0-11100A11

January 1945

To: CO, 461 st Bomb Gp (H)

Following message received from Twining cite XVAF A234 personal command message following is message received from Eaker.

"After reviewing the operational summaries of your strategic air force for 1944, I believe there is no organization fighting the enemy which has greater cause for pride in its accomplishments. Your leaders have been aggressive, your combat crews have been courageous, and your maintenance and supporting personnel have been industrious.

"Please extend to every member of your command my congratulations and great pride in their 1944 accomplishments and say that I wish ardently for each one of them continued success and safety in the New Year."

HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE Office of the Commanding General

Subject: Commendation

9 January 1945

To: See Distribution

1. The Commanding General, Army Air Forces, has sent the following message which I am pleased to pass to all units of this Air Force.

"The activities of the Fifteenth Air Force during the past year have had far-reaching effects and have contributed greatly to the world-wide successes of the AAF.

"The strategic attacks against the German aircraft industry carried out by your planes have visibly hastened the collapse of the Luftwaffe.

The destruction of Eastern European oil reserves has been felt throughout the German air and ground forces alike. The shuttle run to Russian bases taught the enemy that no corner of Europe was safe from our attack.

"In the year to come we are looking forward to even greater triumphs by the Fifteenth. Though all your hardwon victories, I want you to know that you and every member of your Command carry with you my very best wishes for 1945."

2. It is desired that this communication be brought to the attention of all personnel.

N. F. TWINING
Major General, USA, Commanding

HEADQUARTERS FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

Subject: Commendation

31 January

To: All Units This Command

1. The following letter from General H. H. Arnold to Lieutenant General Ira C. Eaker, Commanding General Army Air Forces, Mediterranean Theater of Operations, is quoted for your information:

"You are well aware how great the successes of the AAF have been during the past year, and I congratulate you on your outstanding share in them.

The powerful attacks against the enemy's oil reserves in Eastern Europe have done much to cripple his mobility against our ground forces, to say nothing of the effect on his aviation. The continual pounding of his communications in the Balkans and in Italy have made it almost impossible for him to send reserves and supplies where he needed them most, or to withdraw when he was hard pressed. The softening-up of the coastal defenses of Southern France before the invasion, and the subsequent attacks against German communications in the same area were of inestimable aid to the rapid progress of our ground forces.

As we close in on Germany, your blows will become heavier and heavier; we at home envy MAAF its chance to share so greatly in the victory. You and your entire Command have my most cordial good wishes for the New Year."

2. Lieutenant General Eaker's letter to Major General Twining in further reference to the accomplishments of our Strategic Air Force is quoted herewith:

"As you appreciate, I believe, I have always made it clear to the higher and to the world at large, through the press, that I credited the Fifteenth Air force, its Commander, staff and fine constituent Wings and Groups, for the remarkable achievement on the strategic side insofar as American forces are concerned in this theater. I shall always continue that policy.

I would, therefore, like to tell your commanders and staffs that General Arnold's commendation really belongs to them. I have had occasion many times in the past year, officially and publicly, to commend Wings, Groups and Squadrons of your organization, and the Air Force as well, for its outstanding achievements. I join with General Arnold in a year-end commendation for your overall effort, which is unsurpassed by any strategic air force anywhere in the world.."

3. It is the desire of the Commanding general that these expressions of commendation from both General

Arnold and Lieutenant General Eaker be brought to the attention of all personnel of your command together with his personal commendation and appreciation for your cooperation and efforts without which, such accomplishments could not have been possible.

By command of MAJOR GENERAL TWINING

STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS

January 1945

Editor's Note: This statistical data is presented because it may be of interest to some of you. It covers just the month of January 1945. The key to the abbreviations is as follows:

A/A	Anti-Aircraft	EFF	Effective	No	Number	
A/B	Airborne	Oper	Operational	O/T	Over Target	
A/C	Aircraft	Av	Average			
		764th	765th	755th	767th	Group

Sorties

No Aircraft Airborne	50	49	50	47	196
Less Non-Eff Sorties	20	12	12	21	65
No Effective Sorties	30	37	38	26	131
% Airborne Effective	60	76	76	55	67
Av No A/C A/B per Mission	6.3	6.1	6.3	5.9	24.5

Early Returns

Mechanical Failures	4	4	2	3	13
Personnel Failures	1	1	1	2	5
Weather	0	0	1	1	2
% A/B Returnmg Early	10	10	8	13	10

Bomb Tonnage

No Airborne	89	87	90	84	350
Dropped Over Target	51	66	64	46	227
% Airborne Dropped O/T	57	76	71	55	65

Victories

Losses

Destroyed	0	0	0	0	0
Probables	0	0	0	0	0
Damaged	0	0	0	0	0
Victories per Loss	0	0	0	0	0
Victories per 100 Sorties	0	0	0	0	0

Losses

To Anti-Aircraft	0	1	1	0	2
To Enemy Aircraft	0	0	0	0	0
Other Combat Losses	1	1	0	2	4
Total	1	2	1	2	6
To A/A per 100 Sorties	0	0.5	0.5	0	1.0
To E/A per 100 Sorties	0	0	0	0	0

	764th	765th	766th	767th	Group
Flying Time					
Combat Hours Flown	344	332	342	324	1333
Non-Combat Hours Flown	241	227	234	183	885
Total Hours Flown	585	550	576	507	2218
Hours per Oper Aircraft	52	59	61	50	55
Hours per Oper Crew	24	24	26	22	24
Combat Hours per Oper Crew	14	14	16	15	14
Aircraft					
Av No Assigned	12.8	11.9	11.9	13.4	50.0
Av No Operational	11.2	9.49.5		10.1	40.2
% Operational	88	79	80	75	80
No Eff Sortie per A/C	2.3	3.1	3.2	1.9	2.6
Crews					
Average No Assigned	26	26	25	26	103
Average No Operational	24	23	22	23	92
% Operational	92	88	88	88	89
No Eff Sorties per Crew Assigned	1.1	1.4	1.5	1.0	1.3



Editor's Note: The following two articles were copied from the "Cerignola Connector", the newsletter of the 455th Bomb Group Association. They provide background information on the original design concepts for the B-24 as well as a review of early combat experiences and resulting aircraft modifications.

The B-24 Liberator

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

Consolidated's initial study was to develop a land-based bomber version of their Model 29 flying boat, designated PB2Y, which accounted for the large rounded fuselage and high wing design of the B-24. The engineers continued design studies, designated XB-24 which incorporated Davis R. Davis' high aspect ratio wing (The Davis Wing) and twinned-finned empennage used on the Model

31 flying boat, the P4Y-1. On 26 October 1939, the Davis Wing was married to the fuselage and on 29 December 1939, the Liberator flew for the first time.

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

The French entered into a production contract in September 1939 for 139 aircraft designated LB-30, the first overseas version. After the fall of France to the Germans in June 1940, the English assumed deliveries of the French order of 139 airplanes and increased it to 165. They started using these in a variety of roles. The United States AAC placed an order for seven YB-24's on 11 April 1939 for service testing. This was soon increased to 38 additional airplanes designated the B24A, enough at that time for a bomber group. The combat experience of the French and English, and

service testing by the AAC led to several major modifications. These included 50 caliber machine guns in the tail in place of the 30 caliber guns, self-sealing fuel tanks, additional armor plate, and engines upgraded from Wright to the Pratt and Whitney R1830-41 with turbo superchargers. Gun turrets were added to the tail and above the flight deck. With these improvements, the designation progressed from YB-24 to B-24D, the first version to see combat service by the United States AAC. Its gross weight had gone from 46,400 to 56,000 lbs. with a service ceiling of 28,000 ft. and operational cruising speed of 175 m.p.h. Modifications became so numerous that it became impossible for implementation on the production lines. Modifications centers were established to handle the changes.

The name "Liberator" came from the British and was endorsed by Consolidated through a company-wide naming contest held in 1942. It became a very versatile airplane. Apart from its bombing roll in all theaters of operation, it hauled fuel to France during the push toward Germany, carried troops and fought the Uboats in the Atlantic Ocean. It served as Prime Minister Churchill's personal airplane for his frequent trips to other countries and combat theaters to carry out foreign policy and coordinate the war effort. It also made a major contribution in winning the war in the Pacific. Throughout its relatively short operational career, the B-24 was overshadowed by the B-17 Flying Fortress. It did not receive the notoriety in press or other media that it deserved. The B-17 "glory boys" looked upon the slab-sided B-24 with disdain, referring to it as "the crate our's came in." Some affectionately called it "the pregnant cow." It is probably best remembered for its use in the low altitude raid on the Ploesti oil refineries and storage facilities during August 1943. A total of 18,188 were built, more than any other aircraft before or since WWII.

Other companies built B-24's from the Consolidated design: Convair and Douglas Aircraft Companies at Ft. Worth, Texas, and Tulsa, Oklahoma respectively; the Ford Company at Willow Run, NEchigan, where the latest production line techniques were employed; and the North American Company at Dallas, Texas. Construction of the Ford plant started in 1941 and, at completion, cost 165 million dollars and was a quarter mile long with 70 assembly lines. Although North American did not go into production until 1943, they were the first to introduce the nose gun turret with 50 caliber machine guns. Additional improvements were made resulting from early

combat experiences. The belly turret, with 50 caliber machine guns was also added. The bomb sight was tied into the auto pilot to improve bombing accuracy. The bombardier was able to make course corrections with the system rather than the pilot manually making them by following the pilot directional indicator (PDI). There were three other improvements made which were important for high altitude bombing operations, seldom if ever, written about. The first was a change to the oxygen system. The early version, operating from England, had a pressure feed system whereby oxygen flowed constantly to the face mask. The mask had a rubber sack at the bottom to collect the oxygen. After a few hours at high altitude in frigid weather, the mask tended to freeze up from the collection of moisture from a man's breath, cutting off the oxygen supply. The radio operators, having the least to do in and out of the target area, saved many crew members by feeding the oxygen from a "walk-around" bottle while restoring the operation of the mask. The installation of the demand system and redesign of the oxygen mask corrected the problem. Another improvement was the addition of electronic supercharger controls, replacing the manual type. After reaching altitude, the pilot changes the power for formation flying by changing the setting of the superchargers rather than the throttles. The problem was that the control handles to the superchargers had to be staggered to get uniform power from all four engines. If the pilots used the throttles for changing power, it would sometimes "blow" the supercharger gaskets, thus loss of power. The electronic controls, operated by turning a knob on the throttle pedestal, synchronized the four superchargers to the engines. This feature made it considerably easier to fly high altitude formation.

The introduction of the electric flying suit, including gloves and boots, saved crews from frostbite in the frigid weather at high altitudes. Unfortunately, they often shorted out and caused bums at the most crucial times. Crews that would use them, wore them inside flying suits and jackets in case of failure. Also, if a man had to bail out over enemy territory, he needed more than an electric flying suit to survive prison camp or escape enemy capture. Another important improvement was in the sights of the 50 caliber machine guns. Although the gunners were making high claims for shooting down enemy fighters, actual results were disappointing.

The sights were simplistic, amounting to only a spike at the end of the barrel and a sighting ring at the stock. The gunners had to judge the distance and speed of the incoming fighters. Although every fifth bullet was a tracer to assist the gunner's accuracy, there wasn't time to make aiming adjustments during the attack. The gunners were instructed to lead the fighters more in their sighting. There was no account taken of the fact that both the bombers and the fighters were moving forward. One could observe the tracers going behind the oncoming fighters. Mathematicians and armament officers designed new gun sights that had a series of circular rings to aid the gunners in determining range, speed, and direction. Improvements in accuracy resulted overnight.



The B-24 in Early Combat

The first group of B-24's, the 93rd Bomb Group, to fly combat arrived in England during September 1942. The B-24 remained in the shadows of the B-17 Flying Fortress for some time. Over 100 Fortresses, enough for three groups, had been flying high altitude bombing missions over France since 17 August 1942. The maiden B-24 mission from England was flown on 9 October 1942 against the Fives-Lille steel works in Belgium. The Group came under heavy fighter and anti-aircraft fire. In October 1942, the 44th Bomb Group was the second B24 group to arrive in England. It fell to the B-24 and B-17 Groups to prove conclusively that daylight precision bombing could succeed in the deadly skies over Europe. The British Royal Air Force (RAF) remained unconvinced. In November 1942, even American instructor's doubted their crew's ability to bomb in daylight and survive German opposition.

Daylight high altitude precision bombing started gaining credibility after making equipment and operational improvements which led to good bombing results on the early missions. The first equipment change was the installation of two additional 50 caliber machine guns in the vulnerable nose section to combat head-on attacks by Luftwaffe fighters. The Luftwaffe soon learned they could make quarter head-on attacks without being fired upon. This modification was concocted by enterprising armament officers and installed by a small company in Northern Ireland. The guns had a ball joint, making them movable for sighting by the navigator and bombardier.

One pointed forward and one out each side of the

plexiglass nose section. The navigator and bombardier had to lie on their stomachs to sight and operate the guns. Also, automatic belt feeding systems were installed on all gun armament through field modifications, replacing the cumbersome process of changing 36 round drums during the heat of battle. The Luftwaffe soon developed a respect for the new armament and their losses started to mount from the B24 gunners' improved fire power and accuracy. Consolidated started adding these improvements to future production models.

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

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

The method of making bombing runs changed with

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

The accuracy of high altitude daylight bombing started taking its toll on German targets. Some called it "pinpoint" bombing. The bombers were getting through in spite of enemy opposition, but they suffered heavy losses on some missions. They were getting through, nevertheless, without fighter escort. The Germans started to realize that a large buildup of the American bomber forces could wreck havoc on their military/industrial complex. A defense had to be developed. To defend against the bombers, they moved many fighter aircraft from the Russian front and the Mediterranean area to Germany, France, Belgium, and Holland. This relieved pressure from the air in these active war areas and greatly assisted the Russians on their front and also helped the British and Americans in the African campaign. The German fighters started to inflict heavy losses on the B-17's and B-24's, especially on those missions that were beyond the coastal targets of France, Belgium, Holland, and Germany.

The RAF provided some escort, but its Spitfires had very limited range, thus providing protection for bombing only the coastal targets of Europe. American P-38 and P-47 aircraft were in production, but had not been fitted with external fuel tanks nor were there enough numbers for effective bomber escort on long missions. The lack of escort fighters resulted from an

error in planning in 1941 and 1942. By August 1943, the P-47's were fitted with auxiliary fuel tanks which gave them the capability of longer range bomber

escort. Shortly thereafter, up to 200 of these aircraft were dispatched to fly bomber escort, but they were greatly outnumbered by the Luftwaffe. It was not until the fall of 1943, that the P-38 started flying escorts in small numbers. This fighter aircraft had early design problems with its twin engines and tail booms and external fuel tanks had not been fitted.

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

Editor's Note: The following article was borrowed from the Fall 1997 newsletter of the 486th Bomb Group Association. It is entitled "With This Story About the Norden Bombsight We Concluded the 'Sight' Series." It begins with a note from their Editor.

Editor note: The fact that I was a bombardier likely has some influence about the importance I place on the bombsights used by the AAF in WWII. However let us be realistic, without those precision bombsights the bombing of Hitler's Europe may well have been a completely different course of action.

Rivalry and Salesmanship

The Norden company was not pleased with Sperry's growing competition. As early as July 29, 1937, when the Air Force's Major General Andrews began encouraging Sperry to develop a bombsight for Air Force planes because Norden could not meet the

demand, a conference was held at the Norden company in New York City between Navy, Air Force and Norden personnel. According to the meeting report, Norden's president Theodore H. Barth, spoke somewhat disparagingly of the Sperry company and stated he was much grieved that the Air Force was purchasing an inferior 'sight from Sperry, and offered to set up a separate factory exclusively for the Air Force - a suggestion the Navy did not accept.

When the Air Corps asked Norden to cooperate with Sperry to make a Sperry autopilot standard equipment even on Norden equipped planes, the company balked, even though Sperry signed an agreement that it would not take any steps in the way of filing suits, etc., regarding the possible infringement of patents on the part of the Norden company that may be incorporated in the Norden.

To get around the stalemate, in January 1942 the Air Corps contracted for autopilots with the Honeywell Regulator Co., Minneapolis, MN. The Honeywell autopilot, called the C-1, was based on the Norden SHAE gyros, but incorporated the electronic rate circuits and servos from the Sperry A-5. At the request of the Air Corps, Honeywell engineers went to Sperry for information and a demonstration of the Sperry A-5, and the Air Corps acquired a license so that Honeywell would have a free hand in incorporating certain features.

Meanwhile, Norden's Barth was working hard to ensure Norden's primacy in Military procurement. Barth was a personable and flamboyant salesman for the company, with extensive contacts in both the Navy and the Army, all of whom he enthusiastically wined and dined. Even though by World War II the Norden bombsight's classification had been reduced from top secret to confidential, Barth and others within Norden skillfully cultivated a top *secret* mystique about the Norden bombsight that exists to this day. During wartime the top portion of the sight, dubbed the *football*, was removed from the bottom of the stabilizer when the aircraft was on the ground, and was escorted by armed guards to the Norden lockup on each base. Bombardiers had to swear to an oath *to protect the secrecy of the American bombsight, if need be with my life itself* (Norden bombardiers would often say that they could drop a bomb into a pickle barrel from 20,000 feet (6 km), and legend was, they complained that they were not told which pickle to hit. Another story circulated that the reticle of the Norden was so fine that it required especially fine human hair from one blond woman named Mary Babnick, who was known as Arcadia

Mary because she taught dancing to soldiers at the USO's Arcadia Ballroom at the Pueblo Army Air Base in Colorado. Even in the 1940s radio serial *Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy* offered as a premium the Secret Norden Bombsight - a wooden box that allowed sighting through a miffor arrangement down to toy Nazi U-boats, and then dropped little red bombs on the toy cutouts.

The Sperry bombsight, on the other hand, was not only classified top secret, it was also company policy that no one tell anyone without a need to know, that the Sperry Gyroscope Co. even made bombsights. There was no publicity, no stunts. Sperry's chief military marketing representative, Fred Vose, was a more sober personality than was Norden's Barth, but forged strong connections with the Air Force through Major General Andrews. In April 1942, however, Vose was killed in an airplane crash near Salt Lake City, Utah, and in early 1943 Andrews was lost over Iceland. With these deaths, Sperry lost two strategically placed advocates.

The Navy also had reservations about Sperry's status as a multinational commercial company, which before the war, had been seen not only in London, but also in Germany and Japan. The Tokyo thing made them boil, Frische recalled. We were practically accused of being disloyal. Barth, in the meantime pointed out that as a dedicated source Norden could not only devote its entire attention to the interests of the government, but also maintain a high degree of secrecy not possible with an international organization engaged in world trade.

Moreover, Norden had a ten-year head start over Sperry in bombsight contracting, and was well established with the Navy in 1937 when the Air Force began encouraging Sperry to build a new sight. In addition, Frische noted, before Esval's high-speed gyro was installed in the C-1 to create the S-1 sight, our gyros and azimuth servos were not very good. We almost flunked out, and that aura may have stuck with us.

In any event, by May 1943, Navy officials - after years of complaining about a bombsight shortage - said they were concerned about having a bombsight surplus. One month later, the Navy decided to dispose of surplus facilities with the least experience.

General Barney M. Giles, chief of air staff of the GHQ Air Force, recommended on August 4, 1943, that the Air Corps standardize on the Norden. One week later, Major General Davenport Johnson, commander of the second Air Force, a training command in Colorado Springs, Co, sent a letter to the commanding general Henry Harley Hap Arnold of the GHQ Air Force, claiming that the Sperry was not as accurate as the Norden. Giles thus recommended that all contracts for Sperry S-1 bombsights and A-5 autopilots be cancelled immediately.

On November 22, 1943, the Air Corps Brigadier General Edwin S. Perrin directed that instructions be issued to the materiel command to proceed immediately with the cancellation of all contracts for Sperry S-1 bombsights and A-5 autopilots with Sperry and Sperry's licensed contractors: International Business Machines and National Cash Register. The Sperry work on the bombsights and autopilots at the plant were shutdown, some 2,600 remaining bombsights were destroyed, their instruction manuals burned, and tens of thousands of autopilots were put in storage.

Through the end of the war, the Air Corps, standard equipment was the Norden bombsight and the Honeywell C-i autopilot - both incorporating technology developed at Sperry.

The Bombsight Legacies

Postwar evaluation showed that precision high altitude bombing was much less effective than believed during the war. Although the visual bombsights worked, the generally poor weather over Europe interfered with their success. By the end of World War II, both radar-guided and television guided bombs were being developed.

Although based on 1914 through 1920s technology, the Norden was important because of its popularity and its role as a morale booster and ultimately because it did equip three-quarters of U.S. bombers. Although less well known, the Sperry bombsight was based on later technology that ultimately facilitated the development of avionics for all-weather flying. Its legacy lasts to this day in electronic autopilots and in the gyrosyn compass that is still the standard heading reference on most commercial and military aircraft.

461st BOMB Group (H) 1943-1945, Inc.

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