The 461st

Liberaider

Vol. 20, No. 1 JUNE 2003 SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

A Veterans Flag

On February 24, 2000 my father, Theodore Pasiuk, passed away. He was 81 years old. As part of his funeral service we were provided with a veterans flag for his casket. I have subsequently donated the flag to the Yacht Club as I did not want it stored in a closet, but I wanted it to be flown daily.

My father was drafted into the Army in February 1941 having just completed his college degree in architecture and engineering. He

(Continued on page 14)

Inside this issue:

Liberators

This is the first in a series of articles by Vahl Vladyka. This first one covers time during his training to be a B-24 pilot. Future articles in this series will include "Operational Training", "Going Over", "Over There", and "Coming Home".

By
Vahl Vladyka

Encased in its coat of matte finish, olive drab paint, the B-24D Liberator parked on the apron brought to mind a boxcar with wings and empennage. With wide-spread landing gear and corpulent belly less than 20 inches above the concrete, it was no beauty on the ground, but, strangely, it had graceful lines when viewed from directly above or below. I crawled under the open bomb bay doors, climbed into the co-pilot's seat, looked out the right window at a wing that appeared to stretch interminably, and began to worry. I was not concerned so much about being able to pilot this seeming monster (in those years) that weighed more than ten times any airplane I had

(Continued on page 5)

The Last Combat Mission of the B-24 "All American"

By
Lt. Col. Robert T. Chalmers, USAF, Ret.

It was late in the month of September in 1944. My B-24 bomber crew was number 23R in the Bomb Group. We were on the callboard for a 3 am wakeup. We wouldn't have all our regular crew this morning. There were two substitute crewmembers. Capt. Chester Rothberg would substitute for our bombardier Lt. Glenn W. Burleson and Lt. Frank M. Dick was replacing our regular navigator, warren S. Steinhauser. The rest were regulars. Lt. Donald J. Rhodes, Co-Pilot, Corporal Lester E. Anderson and Corporal David L. Krause were Chief Engineer and Radio Operator respectively and our four sharp shooting gunners, Patrick J. Kennedy, John F. Mezera, Odie C. Alexander, Jr., and Archie S. Russell.

We tumbled out of bed, dressed, had breakfast and drew what gear we were going to need for the mission and loaded onto the waiting truck that took us to the 461st Bomb Group briefing room. The wall clock

(Continued on page 25)

Taps

May they rest in peace forever

Please forward all death notices to:

Hughes Glantzberg
P.O. Box 926
Gunnison, CO 81230
hughes@hugheshelpdesk.com

or
Bob Hayes
2345 Tall Sail Drive, Apt. G
Charleston, SC 29414-6570
BOB461st@aol.com

HDQ Squadron

Name	Hometown	MOS	Date of Death
Freeman, Robert D.	Middlebranch, OH	917	Dec. 17, 2001
Tomlinson, William F.	Western Springs, IL	8219	May 2, 2000

764th Squadron

Name	Hometown	MOS	Date of Death
Godfrey, David M.	W. Hartford, CT	521	Dec. 23, 1997
Granger, Urbain	Kankakee, IL	748	April 23, 2002
Green, Arnold A.	Trinidad, TX	501	Mar. 29, 2001
Haddaway, Stephen	Cambridge, MD	501	Sept. 21, 2001
Schirner, William T.	Columbus, OH	757	July, 15, 2001
Carter, Arthur D.	San Antonio, TX	1092	Nov. 24, 2002
Tiffany, Donald E.	Glenfield, NY	1092	Aug. 5, 2002
Pearce, James F.	Toledo, OH	1034	Nov.15, 2002
Jones, Henry A.	Greenwood, IN.	750	May 28, 2000
Bescript, William H.	Philadelphia, PA	612	Apr. 1999
Croy, Clayton L.	Duncan, OK	405	Aug. 18, 2002
Householder, Paul L..	Salina, KS	748	Feb. 5, 2001
Clay, Neal Jr.	Westwood, MA	1092	Jan. 6, 2003
Hoffman, Paul A.	Plains, PA	612	Jan. 28, 1995
Hogan, Robert E.	La Porte, IN	612	Mar. 24, 2001
Hlavach, Robert C.	Cleveland, OH	612	Oct. 27, 2001
Farnsworth, John O.	Sandy, UT	1034	July 18, 2002
Vernon W. Giddings	Desert Hot Springs, CA	612	Apr. 14, 2003
Jones, Henry A.	Greenwood, IN	750	May 28, 2000
Smith, Kenneth B.	Indianapolis, IN	1092	Mar. 12, 2003
Tiffany, Donald E.	Glenfield, NY	1092	Aug. 5, 2002

Taps

May they rest in peace forever

765th Squadron

Name	Hometown	MOS	Date of Death
Freeman, James T.	Baton Rouge, LA	754	May 20, 2001
Furfare, Rocco J.	Shortsville, NY	612	Dec. 21,2001
Grettum, William C.	Rogers, TX	573	Nov. 2, 2002
Guest, Calvin W.	Salt Lake City, UT	612	May 28, 2002
Hardebeck, William R.	San Antonio, TX	1035	Mar. 2, 2002
Hatem, Roy A.	Sun City Center, FL	1092	April 24, 2002
Hawthorne, Frank C.	Columbus, OH	757	Jan. 25, 2002
Hayes, John M.	Plainfield, NJ	1092	Oct. 31, 2001
Haag, William C.	Schenectady, NY	612	Feb. 13, 1997
Crawford, Alvin G.	Houston, TX	612	Nov 2, 2002
Dalton, Robert R.	Lansing, MI	612	Mar. 2, 1998
Howe, Sidney P.	Hartwell, TX	1092	Apr. 6, 2002
Hunnicutt, Ben C. Jr.	Winston-Salem, NC	748	Mar. 9, 2000
Corey, Vance T.	Winterville,NC	747	Nov. 12, 1992
Coonan, Robert A.	Melbourne, FL	612	Nov. 9, 2002
Higdon, Joseph	Owensburg, KY	345	Aug. 27,1995
Heyman, Mark S.	St. Louis, MO	1034	June 12, 2002
Moudy, Delmo H.	Lahaima, WI	1092	Jan. 2, 2002
Pasiuk, Theodore	Chicago, IL	1034	Feb. 24, 2000

766th Squadron

Name	Hometown	MOS	Date of Death
Harris, Gail A.	Crestwood, MO	612	Jan. 6, 1999
Jones, Harry J.	Knoxville, TN	686	Jan. 12, 2003
Curbello, Charles W.	Kennedy, TX	345	Sept. 18, 1998
Johnson, Herman G.	Lee's Summit, MO	747	Aug. 3, 2000
Owens, Robert F.	Merrionette Park, IL	748	Mar. 4, 2003

Taps

May they rest in peace forever

767th Squadron

Name	Hometown	MOS	Date of Death
Gavora, John, Jr.	W. Orange, NJ	1034	June 30, 2002
Grable, Maynard J.	Hillview, IL	590	Dec. 29,1999
Graham, Sam A.	Glencoe, AL	1092	Mar. 28, 1994
Grisvard, William B.	Renton, WA	747	Nov. 3, 2000
Hancock, John R.	Morton, WA	1034	Nov. 3, 2002
Heath, Robert S.	Jamestown, IN	1092	Nov. 16, 2002
Rocawich, Nicholas J.	Cleveland, OH	1035	1967
Wright, Walter B.	Cambridge, MD	612	Dec. 12, 2002
Molloy, Francis X.	Hagerstown, MD	612	Dec. 22, 2001
Selden, Norman	Clearwater, FL	757	Dec. 2001
Strother, Donald	Wichita Falls, TX	612	Unknown
Martin, Gerald	Lindale, TX	1035	June 3, 2001
Crinkley, Robert A.	Eastsound, WA	1092	Apr. 25, 2002
Pergola, Joseph S.	Denver, CO	612	May 21, 2002
Friedman, Lester	Belmont, CA	612	May 6, 2002
Curran, George J.	Philadelphia, PA	555	Aug. 4, 1988
Hughes, George Jr.	Forney, TX	612	Mar. 6, 2001
Hoffmeyer, Carl L.	Plantation, FL	1034	Nov. 1995
Hill, William B.	Oakboro, NC	748	Apr. 19, 2000
West, William C.	Decatur, GA	612	Mar. 14, 2000
Witek, George	W. Springfield, MA	1092	Nov. 25, 1993
Wright, Walter B.	Cambridge, MO	612	Dec. 12, 2002
Worlock, William F.	Rome, NY	612	Oct. 30, 1996
Woodson, Riley A.	Ft. Worth, TX	929	Apr. 11, 2000
Friedman, Lester	Belmont, CA	612	May 6, 2002

1921 – 2003

Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Bill Mauldin, who as a young Army rifleman during World War II gave newspaper readers back home a sardonic, foxhole-level view of the front with his drawings of weary, dog-face GIs Willie and Joe, died Wednesday, January 23, 2003, at 81.

(Continued from page 1)

flown, but rather how I could taxi without tearing off its wingtips and that of every other parked aircraft in view.

* * *

I had routed my trip from Marshalltown to Smyrna Army Air Field, located near Nashville, Tennessee, by way of Blytheville, Arkansas, where I had finished advanced flying training, but spring floods along the Mississippi River delayed my train, necessitating my continuing on to avoid being AWOL. As it was, I would have been late enough to be in mild trouble, had I not been fortunate enough to catch a ride with an Air Transport Command navigator who was driving from Memphis to Smyrna.

* * *

Once again Bill Washburn, my roommate since we were in primary flight training as student officers, and I shared a room, this time on the corner of the second story of a BOQ, from which on still nights we could hear the screech of B-24 tires, as student pilots shot touch and go landings. In short order, we were back to the familiar training routine, but this time, by virtue of our silver wings, instructors treated us more as equals, but merely unlearned. For about the first half of this phase of our flight training, we were under the tutelage of a combat veteran, Captain H. A. Meyer, one of the few officers I saw during the war with a mustache. Unfortunately for us, this very knowledgeable and gentlemanly instructor was then promoted to a more responsible assignment, and we found ourselves matched with a much less experienced lieutenant who had not been overseas. His initials, ROE, appear in my file, but I have forgotten his name.

Scheduled routine was much the same as flight school: nominally six-day workweeks, with ground school, physical training, and half-days and some nights in flight. We were scheduled for 105 hours of flight training during the next ten weeks; however, with typical army "hurry up and wait" methods, Bill and I actually concluded 117 hours and 35 minutes in the air in just six weeks and three days, between May 3rd and June 17th, with flights ranging from one to over five hours in duration. During this period, my log shows no time in the air for the eleven days beginning May 27, so this may have been one of the two occasions I was hospitalized with minor problems. In the army, there was no such thing as a day off for illness; one either was on duty or in the hospital.

From May 14 to May 26, we flew every day, Sundays included, and on three of those days, we logged two flights. From May 3 to May 26, we spent 83 hours in the air and shot 173 practice and final landings.

On April 29, the day after my arrival, Captain Meyer took Bill and me up for a five-hour orientation ride, and since I received "non-pilot" time on my log, I assume we were not given the opportunity to handle the controls. Still, I vividly recall my first impression from the co-pilot's seat of the long wing, so I also assume Bill and I probably alternated in that position, while our instructor did all the piloting. On that day, and on every flight thereafter, we were accompanied by one or another NCO engineer, each no doubt wondering if he would be safer back in combat.

Since B-24's and B-17's were the largest of our aircraft without some sort of power steering, we mistakenly believed that a great deal of muscular effort was required to handle the controls, and for reasons I still do not understand, this misconception was not dispelled by our instructors. Perhaps they considered it a lesson that could be learned only by experience. After 60 hours, I wrote home that I had developed calluses on my hands "like I had when I worked on the farm gang." It was not until a half-dozen combat missions that I learned earlier anticipation of my next move would permit me to handle the controls with a light touch. Overcorrection was always a problem for inexperienced pilots. However, great muscular effort was required when power was lost on one side or trim tabs were destroyed by gunfire.

* * *

B-24 D and E models, still in combat during the fa-

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

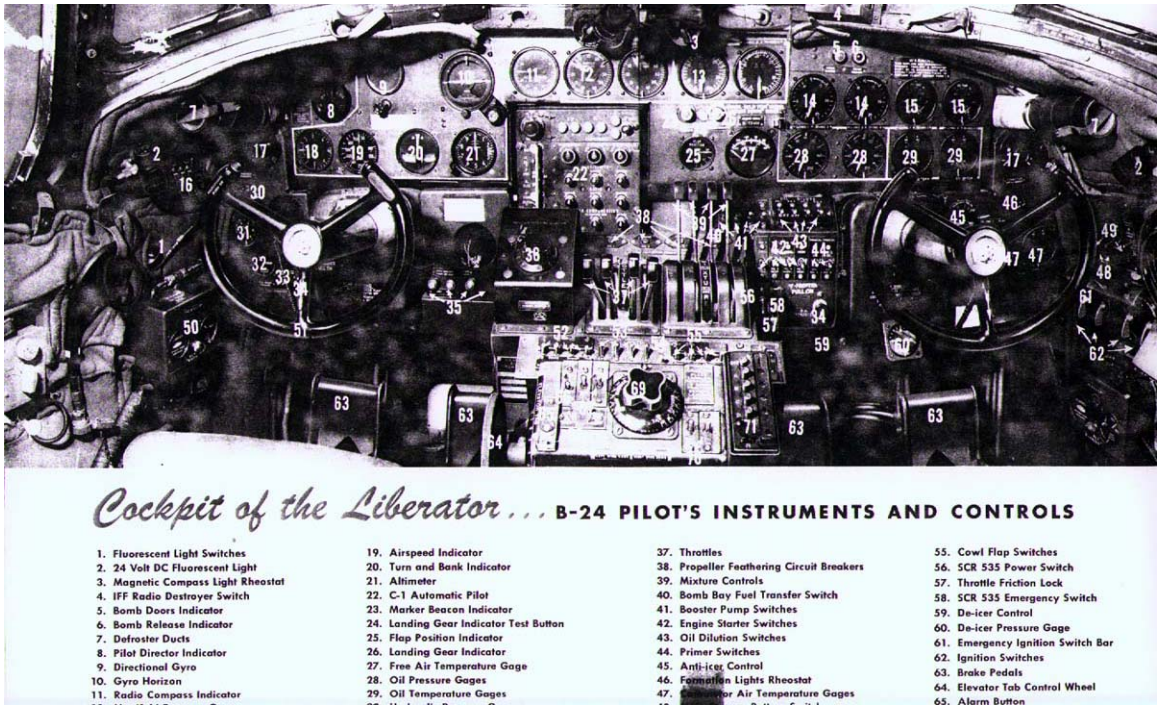
mous 1943 low level mission from North Africa to Ploesti, Romania, were about 8,000 pounds lighter than the G's and subsequent models I flew in operational training and combat, mostly because of the addition of nose and ball turrets. Without these added turrets, and minus bombs, machine guns, and ammunition, our earlier models were ideal for transition from our diminutive twin-engine trainers. Many of our D's and E's at Smyrna were well-worn veterans of the war in North Africa

Models after the E's had more electronics, including controls of turbo superchargers and autopilots. In D and E models, the autopilot was hydraulically operated, while the turbo superchargers were manually controlled through four levers on the throttle quadrant. While flying J's, L's and M's in formation in Italy, I taught myself to adjust speed with minute rotation of a single electronic rheostat knob less than two inches in diameter, which controlled all four turbo superchargers. Bill and I took one look at the maze of instruments and levers and realized we had much to learn.

tached to control cables under the flight deck, and they operated by sliding along the floor. The control wheels also were different: rather than rocking to and fro on a yoke attached to the deck, these were attached to a piston-like device that moved in and out of the instrument panel. They both operated very smoothly.

While faster and longer ranging than the B-17 at lower altitudes, the later models, with this added weight above design level, never could achieve the higher altitudes of the Flying Fortress, and for this reason, it suffered more severe losses in the European theater, where German fighter pilots and anti-aircraft artillery chose the nearest target. My highest altitude on a mission was 26,500 feet, where the airplanes were wallowing nose up, while B-17's regularly flew above 30,000 feet. With the lighter D's and E's for transition training, Bill and I once flew to 28,500 feet and still were below ceiling.

It was an entirely different matter in the South Pacific, where range mattered far more than altitude. Long before I went to Italy, we were informed that



Cockpit of the Liberator . . . B-24 PILOT'S INSTRUMENTS AND CONTROLS

1. Fluorescent Light Switches
2. 24 Volt DC Fluorescent Light
3. Magnetic Compass Light Rheostat
4. IFF Radio Destroyer Switch
5. Bomb Doors Indicator
6. Bomb Release Indicator
7. Defroster Ducts
8. Pilot Director Indicator
9. Directional Gyro
10. Gyro Horizon
11. Radio Compass Indicator
19. Airspeed Indicator
20. Turn and Bank Indicator
21. Altimeter
22. C-1 Automatic Pilot
23. Marker Beacon Indicator
24. Landing Gear Indicator Test Button
25. Flap Position Indicator
26. Landing Gear Indicator
27. Free Air Temperature Gage
28. Oil Pressure Gages
29. Oil Temperature Gages
37. Throttles
38. Propeller Feathering Circuit Breakers
39. Mixture Controls
40. Bomb Bay Fuel Transfer Switch
41. Booster Pump Switches
42. Engine Starter Switches
43. Oil Dilution Switches
44. Primer Switches
45. Anti-icer Control
46. Formation Lights Rheostat
47. [illegible] Air Temperature Gages
55. Cowl Flap Switches
56. SCR 535 Power Switch
57. Throttle Friction Lock
58. SCR 535 Emergency Switch
59. De-icer Control
60. De-icer Pressure Gage
61. Emergency Ignition Switch Bar
62. Ignition Switches
63. Brake Pedals
64. Elevator Tab Control Wheel
65. Alarm Button

From my B-24 Pilot Training Manual

Unlike other airplanes, where rudder pedals were suspended from above, those on Liberators were at- the longest mission ever flown to that date was to

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

bomb Japanese oil installations at Balikpapan, Borneo, now part of Indonesia. At that time in the war, only B-24's were capable of such a 2,400 mile, 16-hour flight. Even longer missions were flown, after Charles Lindbergh visited that theater and demonstrated to Air Forces pilots how to nurse maximum range by increasing manifold pressure and decreasing RPM's, previously believed by army authorities to risk engine failure. Liberator pilot Johnny Wilson, my erstwhile cadet friend born in China and a retired major general from the West Virginia Air Guard, told me in the late 1980's that in 1945 he once flew a 20-hour mission in the Pacific. No other airplane before the B-29 could do that.

To this day, most old pilots still believe that B-24's were more dangerous than B-17's. However, air historian Allen G. Blue cites official Air Force records that in 1943 only basic trainers and C-47's (DC-3's) had lower accident rates. It was, for a fact, much more difficult to fly, and for that reason many pilots were leery of it. Blue conjectures that confidence of crews was relative to ability and confidence of their pilots, and comments in later years by members of my crew, some via their offspring, support that thesis. After my one brief experience as co-pilot of a B-17, I was convinced that, for pilots, the B-24 was far superior ergonomically, even though I never had heard that word in 1945. Our instructors stoutly maintained that a competent B-24 pilot could fly anything with wings. True or not, I believed it and never felt uncomfortable about piloting the "flying boxcar".

After the overweight problem, other faults of Liberators included their twin tails and poor visibility for pilots, navigators and bombardiers. I have recounted elsewhere the impossibility of maintaining course and altitude when all power was lost on one side, and how the last model was fitted with a larger single fin to correct this defect. Because of the small windows, especially after addition of the nose turret, navigators and bombardiers had difficulty seeing landmarks and targets. Pilots also had great difficulty with vision when flying formation on a lead airplane positioned on the right, and vice versa for co-pilots.

Its greatest early fault, however, was its trick of exploding on takeoff. Early in the war, this problem threatened continued utilization of this aircraft, until the cause was located and rectified. With its high wing, some of the fuel tanks were located *above* the bomb bay, and vibration caused by use of maximum power on takeoff occasionally caused small leaks of fuel cells. With high octane gasoline accumulating on bomb bay doors, fumes would fill the interior, and after takeoff, when the flight engineer turned off the auxiliary hydraulic pump, located in the bomb bay, the arc of electricity sometimes detonated the gasoline vapor.

When the cause was recognized, Tech Orders were issued for engineers to turn off the auxiliary hydraulic pump *before* takeoff and also to crack open bomb bay doors to ventilate accumulated fumes. Ignorance of this procedure may have been the cause of the takeoff explosion I witnessed at Gander Field, Newfoundland, since that unfortunate crew was in ferry service of various type aircraft and may not have known of this particular problem. Neither my later dated B-24 Pilot Training Manual nor my Pilot's Information File of Tech Orders, mention this problem.

This airplane's greatest assets were the design and quality of its R-1830 Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasp engines. Although each had 1200 horsepower, iden-

(Continued on page 8)

The 461st Liberaider
461st Bombardment Group (H)
Activated: 1 July 1943
Inactivated: 27 August 1945
Incorporated: 15 November 1985

Officers:
Robert V. Hayes, President, 2345 Tall Sail Dr., Apt. G, Charleston, SC 29414-6570
Carl H. Peter, Vice President, 2523 I Street NW, Washington, DC 20037-2211
Ed Stevenson, Treasurer, 6485 Pinehill Rd., Shreveport, LA 71107-9698
O'Bannon, Frank, Historian, 9260 N Fostoria Dr, Tucson, AZ 85742-4884

Directors
Nye E. Norris, Hdqtrs Sqdn, 559 S. Waverly Street, Columbus, OH 43213-2756
Don C. Johnson, 764th Sqdn, 8513 Underwood Avenue, Omaha, NE 68114-3514
Walter D. Fries, 765th Sqdn, 3958 Howerton Road, Northampton, PA 18067
Eugene W. Brock, 766th Sqdn, 1332 Nursery Road, Anderson, IN 46012
Socrates Delianedis, 767th Sqdn, 305 Caracas Drive, Las Vegas, NV 89128-0137
Gail M. Peterson, Director at Large, P.O. Box 461, Spencer, IA 51301-3024

The 461st Liberaider
Hughes Glantzberg, Editor, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230
The Liberaider is published twice yearly on behalf of the members of the organization.

(Continued from page 7)

tical to the power of R-1820 Wright engines on B-17's, the R-1830's were far quieter and more reliable. I never experienced an engine failure on this or any other airplane I ever flew (only a handful of which had Wright engines), but Wrights were notorious in this department. Further evidence was the fact that the most reliable of all World War II combat aircraft, the Douglas C-47 (DC-3 in civilian use), was fitted with R-1830's. In the noise department, B-17 and especially B-25 Wright engines were ear shattering.

In addition the R-1830 had two banks of cylinders, seven each, making it much smaller in diameter than the B-17 engine's single bank of nine larger cylinders. This feature lessened drag and probably contributed to the B-24's higher speed and longer range at lower altitudes. Its fourteen cylinders also permitted it to run more smoothly, thus with less noise.

For whatever its faults, the Liberator was available in quantity in time of need, and over 19,000 eventually were built, compared to only 12,000 B-17's. In August of 1944, there were 1,600 more B-24's than B-17's in overseas operations. At the height of hostilities, former factory workers, housewives, farmers, secretaries, and students were churning out the flying boxcar at five plants: San Diego, Fort Worth, Tulsa, Dallas, and Willow Run, Michigan. Henry Ford's assembly line at Willow Run completed an airplane every hour, 24 hours a day! We were told that such mass production methods had lowered the price to less than $250,000 per airplane, but the Air Force Museum website states that its specimen cost $336,000.

* * *

We welcomed Saturday nights, when busloads of debutantes from Nashville's Cotillion Club arrived in formal attire for an evening of dancing at the officers club, located across the street from our BOQ. The girls were chaperoned, and all went home in the busses that brought them, but there were no rules prohibiting arrangement of weeknight dates. I am certain the chaperones recognized the futility of attempting that restriction.

Music was furnished by a very good Nashville band of about 12 pieces, under the baton of a fiftyish leader named Francis Craig, who, after the war, landed a record at the top of the national charts.

At one of the Saturday nightclub dances, Bill suddenly was among the missing. After a brief search, I found him in a remote corner of the dance floor, screened from our sight by a corner of the bandstand, observing two young African-Americans in starched white cotton jackets dancing a "jitterbug" unlike anything I previously had witnessed. Bill was clapping his hands and moving in rhythm to the "hot" number being played by the band, and when I asked what was going on, he told me he had seen the couple dancing while they were working in the kitchen and had brought them out where they had more room to do their stuff. After that, I had to force myself back to what I previously had thought to be dancing.

Late in our sojourn at Smyrna, the officers club turned one of the Saturday night dances into a "hard times party". Attendees were permitted to be out of uniform, but since few officer's wardrobes included ragged overalls and bandanas, most appeared in summer khaki trousers and white "T" shirts. The girls were in Belle Meade deshabille, but their makeup and hairdo's were perfect as usual. I wore my GI shoes, under shorts, a knee length terry cloth bathrobe, and a necktie, with my alarm clock suspended from my robe sash.

* * *

In a letter home, I noted that Bill and I went to Nashville, a "couple of times a week", where we found abundant entertainment. I did *not* mention that clubs were prohibited by law from serving mixed drinks. The Tennessee prohibitionists apparently had been able to halt liquor by the drink, but they had not succeeded in closing liquor stores, so service men walked from liquor store to club to club carrying fifths of gin or cheap blended whiskey by the neck of the bottle, feebly camouflaged by brown paper bags. Clubs would serve glasses of mix and ice to order, and we added our own libation, keeping the

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

brown bags on the floor, except at refill time.

Because Army Regulations prohibited bringing liquor on army posts and air bases, the efforts of the "drys" probably resulted in more drunken soldiers and flyers, for some drank the bottle dry, rather than discard a partial empty.

One member of the Cotillion Club drove me by the Ryman Auditorium, home of the "Grand Old Opry", and when I mentioned that I would like to attend one of the Saturday night nationwide broadcasts, she sniffed and said she did not care for that sort of thing. She also informed me that I would have to get in line in the morning in order to obtain a seat. At home we called it "hillbilly music", and on that snobbish note, I decided to spend my Saturday nights elsewhere, since I had wished to attend only out of curiosity. This building is now a national historic site, venerated by all country and western music fans.

Two favorite watering holes were clubs in the Hermitage and Andrew Jackson Hotels, Nashville's finest at that date. Both had pleasant atmosphere and small bands, with reasonably good musicians, usually older men above draft age. Most of the young ladies we dated preferred these spots; however, the best music was found by Bill on street corners, where groups of four or five African-Americans played jazz and blues on various instruments, but always including a string bass consisting of an inverted galvanized wash tub, broom handle and one bass viol-like string.

After one late night on the town with a group of student pilots, I decided to stay in the city, since I did not have an early call for the following morning. The only available room was in the venerable, but somewhat down at the heels, *Maxwell House,* source of the name of the famous coffee brand. When I walked out on the street the following morning, a newspaper street vendor was hawking an extra edition of the *Nashville Tennessean,* evidence in those years of the occurrence of an extraordinary event. The date was June 6, 1944, and headlines disclosed that the Allies had invaded Normandy. For the remainder of the war and through 27 subsequent moves, that newspaper has accompanied me and now reposes in our bedroom closet.

To find myself still in training after two years in the army was very sobering. However, I need not have felt pangs of conscience, for my old outfit, the 785th Tank Battalion, where I had served as a new 2nd lieutenant and platoon leader, never arrived overseas until after the surrender of Japan.

* * *

In a letter home, I mentioned that I had accumulated 21 hours flying time, and we had attended a dance at the haute Belle Meade Country Club, surrounded by homes of the old rich of Nashville. Strangely, I have no recollection whatever of this latter experience. It may be a case of mental block, brought on by my five years as a caddie for the "old rich" of my hometown of Marshalltown, Iowa.

I later was invited to a Sunday afternoon tea dance given by a Vanderbilt University sorority, where I met a pretty, effervescent, brown-eyed young lady from Copper Hill, Tennessee. Strange I remember her hometown, but not her name. After the dance, she was delegated to clean up the kitchen, so with my vast experience in the field, I volunteered to wash the dishes, while she dried. On later dates, we attended a Southern League baseball game, went bowling (she won), and took in a movie, where we sat together in an oversized seat designed for overweight people. I turned my attention to greener pastures, however, when I learned that she was "pinned" to a student who was away at ROTC summer camp.

I again wrote home that I was about to have a tonsillectomy, this time "in about two weeks", and that I had intended to have it done at Fort Knox, but was frustrated then by my unexpected early transfer to the Air Forces. I have no idea why this later plan at

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

Smyrna never was realized.

* * *

On our last flight together, Bill and I, accompanied by our instructor and an engineer, flew to Middletown, Pennsylvania, our first cross-country in a B-24. Bill made a good landing in light rain on the ridiculously short 3,000 foot runway, skillfully avoiding locking the brakes and coming to a halt only feet from the fence surrounding the airport. There barely was room to turn the airplane around, to taxi to the terminal.

After a brief stopover, we flew on to Harrisburg, where Bill and I spent a quiet night in a decent hotel. I have always assumed our instructor had a wife, girl friend, or relatives in the area, otherwise, why Harrisburg? There must have been a number of more attractive localities in the eastern half of the United States. However, at the time, I did not give it much thought, since I was nursing a sty in one eye, doubtless brought on by my chronically ill tonsils.

On the following morning, I awakened with the eye firmly closed, but our instructor nevertheless allowed me to take my turn at the controls for the first leg to Pittsburgh. The old airport, at what then was a smoky steel town, was situated on a sort of mesa, with the eastern end of our runway commencing at the edge of a steep bluff. Wondering how many airplanes had flown into that bluff while attempting to land, I learned that I could fly an airplane with one eye, a la Wiley Post, but not very well. In the manner of some present day airline pilots, I made what army pilots then called a "controlled crash" landing, with no visible damage to airplane or those in it.

West of Pittsburgh, now with Bill at the controls, we ran into bad weather and icing conditions, allowing me my only opportunity to practice use of the rubber deicer boots on the leading edges of the wings of our transition aircraft. We also witnessed the phenomenon of St. Elmo's Fire, with static electricity, in the form of balls of fire, dancing about the leading edges of wings and on propellers. It was interesting and a little exciting, but after our considerable study of meteorology during the past nine months, we did not experience the superstitious fears of ancient mariners in sailing ships. We had been told, and we believed, that aircraft in flight could not be struck by lightning, and it is fortunate that none of us knew that future studies would prove this to be untrue.

* * *

On the morning following our return to Smyrna, I went on sick call to obtain some medication for my eye, and the flight surgeon abruptly sent me to the hospital, where I went through yet another lancing and draining procedure. I was getting pretty tired of this, and I *resolved* to have a tonsillectomy before going overseas.

During this stay, a flight engineer was brought into our ward suffering from horrible third degree burns over most of his body. He was placed in a rubberized canvas bathtub directly across from my bed, with his body immersed, according to my nurse, in a tannic acid solution, the burn remedy of that moment. His moans and groans were pitiful, and he died during the night.

I learned that he had been up with an instructor and two students, and on a takeoff, the instructor, meaning to feather an engine for emergency procedure practice, inadvertently hit both buttons, feathering both engines on one side of the airplane. The airplane immediately rolled over to the dead side, inverted, and crashed in that position, where it exploded and burned. All were killed instantly, except the poor engineer.

It was a severe lesson that close attention was required at all times, if one wanted to live to be an old war veteran. This rule was buttressed by an experience Bill and I had with our second instructor.

Bill was in the pilot seat and I in the right seat, with the instructor standing between us and slightly to our rear. The engineer was a few feet in the rear, doubt-

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

less running his rosary. Just after takeoff, the instructor began an earnest discourse about some matter or other, and Bill and I both turned our heads toward him to hear better, when he suddenly shouted a warning. We turned our eyes forward just in time to see a stray Liberator, obviously out of place in the pattern, cross our path perpendicularly, not more than 50 yards away. Bill thrust the wheel forward, but by this time the other airplane had passed. We used up a lot of luck on that one and thereafter listened to instructions with one ear.

* * *

After we finished our flying requirements, we had a great deal of spare time on our hands, since we had no duty, except half-days of ground school and physical training an hour a day. Bill and I had many serious discussions during this period, including such subjects as the necessity of my attending college after the war.

The so-called "GI Bill of Rights" by this time was law, or about to become law, so my financial needs for further education were assured. I still had no occupational goal, having long before given up on the idea of a military career, but Bill encouraged me to study law, a career my mother also favored. We even discussed his alma mater, Yale, but the GI Bill proved not *that* generous, and, in my haste to graduate and get a job, I also never obtained the pre-law requisites for an Ivy League school.

We also had several contentious discussions about politics. I had turned 21 the preceding January, and Bill, now 24, also had not been of voting age in the 1940 presidential election, so we were very interested in the Roosevelt-Dewey race for the White House. Coming from financially comfortable circumstances, it was no surprise that Bill favored the Republican, while I, having grown up with a picture of FDR on our living room wall, fully intended to cast my first vote for his unprecedented fourth term. In retrospect neither of us was very well informed in political history and philosophy, but that never hindered our respective expositions of views.

Bill also confided that he had fallen in love with a beautiful, redheaded Vassar girl, and that his intentions were serious, but he wondered if she reciprocated his feelings. Late in July, he was granted leave of about ten days, and upon his return, he informed me that he was engaged to be married, and also that he was going to vote for Roosevelt.

My social life during all this free time was extensive, and I was always broke before payday. Bill kept his checkbook, the now out of date size, with three oversize checks per page, in his suitcase under his cot, and I still visualize him pulling out and opening the valise, placing his checkbook on his knees and writing me a loan. My debt was always repaid on payday, but his patience with my spendthrift ways was remarkable, and I have never forgotten it.

For no particular reason, certainly *not* because of any problems with our friendship, Bill and I fell in with different groups during our last weeks at Smyrna. Many of our new associates had been cadets with us in flight training, and Bill also found a friend from college days, so several of our social sojourns found us taking different paths. Little did we realize our days together were numbered.

* * *

In my piece on hitchhiking, I wrote of the generosity of the Belle Meade Country Club allowing service men to rent a set of well-used clubs for one dollar and play golf gratis. After we completed our flying requirements, Bill and I, joined by another student or two whose identities now escape me, enjoyed this sport on three or four occasions. I also was introduced to poker dice, found on the tables in the men's locker room, and these games took place after golf, while we refreshed ourselves from our endeavors in the Tennessee summer heat. Sometimes we became so refreshed we could hardly make it back to the base in time for supper.

* * *

On one occasion, I was sent up on a night flight with Billy Sullivan, with whom I had shared our first instructor in primary flight training, our mission being to slow-time (break in) a new engine. With only an

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

engineer for company, we soon tired of flying in circles in the vicinity of the field, as ordered, so we decided to visit St. Louis, where Billy had been reared. After circling his parent's home for a half-hour or so, with landing lights flashing on and off, we made our leisurely way back to base, consuming about 200 gallons of gasoline per hour, at a time when motorists were rationed to three gallons per week. *C'est la guerre* once again, and for good measure, *T. S.* for those *pfc's* (poor f_____ civilians).

* * *

While I was on the ground at the field one day, all traffic was ordered to stay in the pattern, while the crew of an aircraft resolved its difficulty with one wheel that refused to be lowered. We later learned that both pilots were combat veterans, and we watched in awe as they brought the airplane down to the runway, bounced it on the one good wheel, then made a running takeoff to check that inertia had brought the balky wheel to the down and locked position. After a tour of the pattern, they made a routine landing. We were very impressed.

We also heard, but could not confirm, a rumor that another pair of combat veterans, both captains, had performed a loop, the stress bending the Liberator's wingtips upward a noticeable amount. If the story was true, that engineer no doubt was ready to join the infantry in Normandy.

* * *

In the mess line one day, I noticed that the student pilot behind me was wearing the *Mexican Border* campaign ribbon, paired with his *American Defense* ribbon, the latter granted to men who had been on active duty in the armed forces on December 7, 1941. When I questioned him about the former, he responded that he was entitled to the ribbon because he had been stationed at El Paso, Texas before entering pilot training. I did not ask if General Pershing had been with him, since that medal was granted for action with "Black Jack", during his punitive expedition against Pancho Villa in 1916.

* * *

After we had completed flying training, we were in a ground school class one afternoon late in June, when a typical mid-continent summer thunderstorm blew in on a cold front. Preceding rainfall, the sky turned black and the wind howled, and suddenly two small L-5 observation airplanes came into view, bobbing about several feet above the ground and floating down the base street, with tie-down ropes and attached stakes dangling from wingtips and tails. Urged on by our instructor, most of us dashed into the street and caught the ropes of one of the airplanes, but the other escaped our efforts and was severely damaged when it fell some distance down the street. We hung on for dear life through the storm, until the wind finally abated, but by then we were thoroughly soaked by rain. As consolation, our efforts and wet clothing got us excused from school for the afternoon.

We later learned that a near new B-24 had been damaged substantially in a freak accident associated with the storm. A Navy pilot in some sort of single engine combat type aircraft, the identity of which now eludes me, decided to take refuge on our base, and when he touched down, he found himself on a *taxi strip*, rather than a runway. Recognizing his error, he "poured the coal" to his engine, then instantly realized he had insufficient room for takeoff, so he again clamped on brakes and then skidded into the side of the parked Liberator. He was uninjured, but a ground crewman sleeping in the B-24 must have thought it was Armageddon, as he removed himself in record speed from the tangled aircraft.

All of which reinforced our somewhat jaundiced opinion of naval aviators. We long had heard the legendary army insult that a navy formation consisted of "two airplanes flying the same direction on the same day", but this "Sad Sack" not only *flew into a thunderstorm*, but then made *three more bad decisions* in a matter of seconds.

* * *

I was granted leave that enabled me to spend the anniversary of my enlistment, July 11, in Marshalltown. I was home on leave in July all three years of

(Continued on page 13)

my service.

Shortly after Bill returned from his late July leave, he was posted to Westover Field, Massachusetts. Rumor had it that all of us were headed for the same base, so it was assumed we soon would be reunited. Army rumors were not called "s___house rumors" without good cause.

After Bill's departure, Francis Sugrue, a pilot I had known as a cadet during flight training, moved in and roomed with me, until I, too, received transfer orders. I was in bed and nearly asleep after the hard times party, when my new roommate returned from the club by way of the fire escape ladder at the end of the hall outside our room. With each rung of the ladder, he shouted, "I'm the one who shovels the coal! I'm the one who makes her run, not those officers on the bridge!" Those were lines uttered by steamship stoker William Bendix in the film version of Eugene O'Neill's "*The Hairy Ape*". Francis was known as "The Hairy Ape" thereafter.

Orders for my transfer to Westover Field finally arrived, and I departed on the evening of August 7th, with train changes scheduled for Louisville and New York City. With generous time allowed for travel, I was able to spend the night of August 9th in Gotham, with which I promptly fell in love. Since that date, I have always agreed that there is only one "city" in America, and the rest are all "towns".

On advice of my cab driver, I checked in at the Lexington Hotel, a skyscraper (by Marshalltown standards) at the corner of Lexington Avenue and 48th Street, took my bag to my room, and promptly headed for the subway to the Bronx. Acting on information from a motherly woman, I managed to get off at the proper stop for the fabled stadium of Babe Ruth, Lou Gehrig and Joe Dimaggio, where I saw the St. Louis Browns defeat the Yankees by the score of 3-2. With almost all of baseball's stars in military service, the Browns won the pennant that year, a meteoric rise from their usual spot in the basement of the American League. An old baseball expression about the Browns was "First in war; first in peace; and last in the American League."

After the game, I went to Times Square, where I searched out and studied the inspirational statue of Father Duffy. Lt. Colonel Francis Patrick Duffy (1871-1932) was chaplain of the "Fighting 69th Regiment of the New York National Guard, a unit of Irish Catholics whose record goes back to service in our Civil War. Father Duffy served in the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Mexican Border Campaign of 1916, and the World War I, when the 69th was federalized to the 165th Infantry. His decorations included the Distinguished Service Cross, the Distinguished Service Medal, the Conspicuous Service Cross, the Legion of Honor, and the Croix de Guerre. In 1940, the theater where I worked played "The Fighting 69th", with Pat O'Brien (who else?) portraying Father Duffy; George Brent as Medal of Honor winner William J. ("Wild Bill") Donovan, noted lawyer and World War II lieutenant general who headed the Office of Strategic Services; and Jeffrey Lynn as Sergeant Joyce Kilmer, the poet who wrote "Trees", read by every school child of my generation. Kilmer was killed in action.

Afterward I attended a movie and stage show at the *Strand Theater;* then walked across the square to the *Aquarium,* a huge, ground floor nightclub, which I suspect catered more to tourists than locals. As I entered, the band was playing "I Am From Ioway, Ioway", and in my best drill sergeant baritone, I boomed out the lyrics to the last two bars — "That's where the tall corn grows." A drunken sailor, witnessing my unrehearsed solo, rushed up, threw his arms about my neck, and cried out, "I'm from Grinnell", a town 30 miles south of Marshalltown.

Exactly two years later, while on our honeymoon, I took my new bride to the *Aquarium*. We stood close enough to touch the piano of the performing Count Basie, and an enthusiastic Buddy Rich, the headliner at the *Strand* at that moment, stood next to us in front of the bandstand, while he was between shows.

On the following morning, I paid my hotel bill, (total $4.46, including a phone call and valet service to press my blouse), took a cab to Grand Central Station, and boarded a New York, New Haven & Hartford train to Springfield, Massachusetts, near Westover Field, for my final training before going overseas.

Mail Call

You'll remember me for writing a book about B-24s in the Fifteenth Air Force. That was two years ago, and it now seems like forever. Here's some info on my latest book.

I'm the author of "Air Force One."

Maybe you'll consider spreading the word about this book about the "Flying White House"---a mix of post-September 11, headline-grabbing developments and history that dates back more than half a century.

"Air Force One" is in bookstores and is available directly from me, from the distributor at (800) 826-6600, or at www.motorbooks.com. It's a big, beautiful, hardbound book with about 80,000 words of text and about 120 photos, most in color. It deals with presidents from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George W. Bush, and it reveals much that has never been disclosed before.

I'm available to talk to groups about presidential aircraft.

Robert Dorr
RobertDorr@aol.com

P.S. The publisher wrote this (below):

Air Force One is the aircraft that carries President George W. Bush. "Air Force One," published by MBI in September 2002, pushes aside the secrecy surrounding the president's plane, presidential travel, and its meaning to a nation now at war.

Before September 11, 2001, the blue and white Boeing 747-200, or VC-25A, was celebrated for its beauty as it whisked the chief executive to fundraisers and ribbon cuttings. An Air Force officer called the plane a "cruise ship," comparing it to a luxurious seafaring vessel.

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 1)

was assigned to a cavalry unit in Texas and spent his early service days mastering the art of 18th century warfare in the 20th century and was assigned duty as an intelligence scout. With the US entrance into the war he was offered the opportunity to transfer to the aviation cadets and eventually became a navigator in B-24 bombers. Part of the unit's training missions was flown from Hamilton AFB in Marin County. When finally deployed overseas, the planes were flown from California to South America and across the South Atlantic to North Africa. This was quite an adventure in itself. The unit's combat missions were then flown from North Africa and Italy. The 46 missions he completed were flown over Germany, Austria, France, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Romania, and both he and his unit were awarded many decorations and citations including the Presidential Unit Citation.

In 1989 my father, somewhat reluctantly, attended for the first time, a reunion of his bomber group. Upon arriving at the hotel he started to enter into the ballroom where the event was being held. At the doorway he immediately turned around and proceeded out of the crowded room. When his wife asked him what the problem was he said they were in the wrong room, as this room was filled with old people. His wife exclaimed that this was the right room and they were the old people that he saw in that room!

My father was not a super hero, nor a flag-waving patriot. He never considered his actions as anything more than a job he was asked to accomplish, and never discussed his individual exploits. He just happened to be part of the most incredible generation of Americans ever, a generation that were asked to defend their country and in the process saved the free world. He and his contemporaries did so without fanfare or protest; they did it with bravery and with dedication to cause the likes of which we will never see again.

(Continued from page 14)

The terror attacks changed everything. We learned that Air Force One is a military aircraft. The book begins with the plane's zigzag path during hectic moments of the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Why did officials believe that Air Force One itself was an intended target? Why did they dust off a hush-hush plan for continuity of government, designed for nuclear war?

"Air Force One" is also a history of presidential air travel. We learn of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Flying White House," a C-54 Skymaster modified with a special hoist to accommodate FDR's wheelchair. We see Harry S. Truman signing national security legislation aboard his C-118, the Independence. We follow the travels of presidents from Eisenhower to Reagan, including November 1963 when Air Force One brought the slain John F. Kennedy home from Dallas.

==========

Great time at Baltimore. Got to see the wife of our deceased bottom turret gunner, Tillie Fitzpatrick, for the first time since we were in training at Tucson in '45. Sorry to say, learned that Lee died in 1989. Lee was the only crewmember that we had not been able to locate. His son Jim and his wife and mother Tillie all had a great time. Jim lives in San Diego and has volunteered to give help at next years reunion. Information pertaining to our crew's arrival on the web site at Torretta is still wrong.

I called it to the attention of Rob Hoskins but nothing was done. We left Topeka on 7/9/44 and flew to Bangor. On 7/13 we left Bangor for Gandor Lake. On 7/15 we left Gandor Lake for the Azores. On 7/16 we left the Azores for Marracech. On 7/17 we left Marracech for Gioia, Italy. On 7/18 we went from Gioia to Torretta by truck, a 6-hour ride. So we arrived at Torretta on July 18, '45 and flew our first mission on 7/25 over Linz and were the only crew getting back from the 767th. Our pilots name was Bob Luebke.

The real reason I am writing you is that I was talking to a young man today and he was asking a lot of questions and I could not answer them all. I made an effort at most of them but could not give him any info on how the 461st got its name, the 461st Bombardment Group and what went into naming the squadrons 764, 5, 6, & 7th. Maybe there is a reason that I have overlooked in my readings. Will write more later about some of the missions we flew with your dad, because we became lead ship very shortly after that first mission and he flew with us when we led the group. Our regular co-pilot got a crew of his own. Thanks for all that you are doing. It may be rewarding but it is also a very tough job, and I know that the group appreciates your work. God Bless you as you continue to keep the 461st alive.

George Iubelt
767th Squadron

==========

During World War II as the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) built up its forces, the Adjutant General's Office, which was responsible for the constitution and establishment of additional units and organizations, often in the press and urgency of the situation simply took the next numbers sequentially for designations. In May 1943, this office established bombardment groups numbered 452 through 468. Each group was allotted four squadrons, and these were constituted in May and June to be activated as soon as possible by the appropriate numbered air force. For example, on 1 Jul 1943, bombardment squadrons numbered 748-772 were activated. For more on the history of groups and squadrons, see AFHRA Homepage (URL below), on menu page, click on "USAF Organization, Lineage & Honors, and Heraldry," then on next page click on "Guide to USAF Lineage & Honors." Scroll down to the sections on groups and squadrons.

Thank you for your interest in Air Force History.

A. TIMOTHY WARNOCK
Chief, Organizational History Branch
Air Force Historical Research Agency
Telephone DSN 493-5152
(334) 953-5152
Homepage: http://afhra.maxwell.af.mil/

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

==========

My 2nd cousin was one of the crewmembers of Lt. Thomas K. West aircraft, his name is Thomas E. Deibert his position was top turret gunner, I am currently waiting for his MACR and if there is any info that you don't already have I'll be happy to E-Mail it to you.

I was stunned when I saw his crew picture on the website and I'd like to say thanks for all the good work you've done on it..

Patrick Gilbert

==========

The pilot was sitting in his seat and pulled out a .38 revolver. He placed it on top of the instrument panel, then asked the navigator, "Do you know what I use this for?"

The navigator replied timidly, "No, what's it for?"

The pilot responded, "I use this on navigators who get me lost!"

The navigator proceeded to pull out a .45 and place it on his chart table.

The pilot asked, "What's that for?"

"To be honest sir," the navigator replied, "I'll know we're lost before you will."

John Bybee

==========

We are announcing the opening of our new website, CombatLeadership.com.

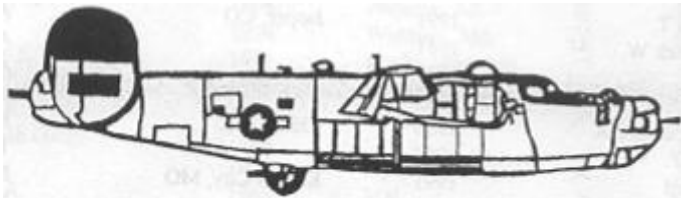
This website is run by veterans who want to ensure that the experiences and insights of combat veterans of past conflicts are passed on to current and future generations of American fighting men.

Please take a minute to look at the website. We'd be honored if you would share your experience and knowledge with those who are following in your footsteps!

http://combatleadership.com/

Semper Fi, Mike Ettore

==========



461st Bombardment Group (H) Membership

This article is primarily aimed at spouses, widows and children of those who served in 461st Bomb Group (H). According to a change approved at the business meeting in Shreveport in 2000, the following is now true:

"Membership in this organization shall be open to all who were members of or attached to the 461st Bomb Group (H) during wartime. Spouses, Widows, (AND CHILDREN) of those who served in the 461st Bomb Group (H) during wartime are eligible for membership. All other persons interested in the goals of this organization may become Associate Members. Associate Members may attend meetings, and other activities and will receive the organization's mailings. Associate Members may not vote. The membership year shall be the calendar year for all members.

Dues for children are $10.00 per year. Dues for Associates are $10.00 per year."

With this in mind, if you are as interested in maintaining the history of the 461st BG as I am, contact Ed Stevenson (address is on page 7) and send him your dues. Let's keep this organization alive!

American Ex-Prisoners of War

"We exist to help those who cannot help themselves."

We of the American Ex-Prisoners of War have a wonderful motto. It describes a support group that began back in 1942. Women, mainly back home, deeply concerned for loved ones captured in the on-rolling Japanese juggernaut enveloping Far East Asia.

It has evolved into a group of veterans and their loved ones who still bond in support that finds strangers with common experience as prisoners of war becoming friends quickly, because "we were there."

Yes, it's a great motto. And we must make sure it means more than words. But who are these "who cannot help themselves?" It really is not a demeaning term about someone who is destitute in health and wealth to that point. Though it surely is that for some.

Some are in that category, just because they are unaware of the special benefits available for former POWs through the Department of Veterans Affairs. And many of those are even members of AXPOW. That unawareness should not be happening!

Some went to the VA in years long past and were "turned away and turned off," and swore off and at the VA. They just don't believe there have been twenty presumptive conditions legislated in recent years, providing special benefits that apply to former POWs and their spouses or widows. And they play doctor and self-diagnose, "Oh, that couldn't apply to me." You do get used to those pains over the years. And many of these are even members of AXPOW. That put-off should not be happening!

Others long ago received a low VA disability rating of 10% or 20% or so, and have not been back, for fear of having that taken away. And now, with the special POW presumptives, that might easily be increased to 100% Disability Compensation of over $2,000.00 per month tax free income, plus other benefits, such as possible widow's benefit of almost $1,000.00 a month. BUT YOU HAVE TO APPLY for re-evaluation; you have to speak up and come forward. And many of these are even members of AXPOW. That inaction should not be happening!

AXPOW has a resource that is busy helping those who still do not have the possible 100% Disability Compensation rating. That serving asset is the heart and soul of what makes our great motto a reality, not just words. The AXPOW National Service Officers program is that resource. Their numbers are not as large as they need to be, but as you read this, our National Service Officers, all volunteers, are helping former POWs apply to the VA for their rightful benefits. Find one; use one; in fact, be one. They put the reality into those fine words:

"We exist to help those who cannot help themselves."

NSO Fred Campbell
3312 Chatterton Drive
San Angelo TX 76904
(915) 944-4002 (Voice and Fax)
Fredrev@WebTV.net

How To File Your Claim With The VA

By
Fred Campbell

There are many ways...and you can, just walk into a VA facility and say, "I was a prisoner of war in World War II and I need help." Could the response be: "Oh, when was that?" No. Not likely. BUT, think about it. The VA personnel who will be evaluating your claim were most likely not even born then. SO, let's make sure we help them get the "picture."

First, if possible, try to contact an AXPOW National Service Officer for help. There are county veterans service officers, as well as those of the DAV, VFW, American Legion and others, but a well-trained AXPOW Service Officer should be most knowledgeable about the POW experience and the POW presumptive conditions that may entitle you to benefits.

Here goes: I want you to let your memory go back to those "good old day's" that you endured and survived all those years ago as a prisoner of war. VA Form 10-0048, Former POW Medical History, (Let the Service Officer get one for you.) can be a big help in remembering things like: Some of the scariest combat times... How captured... How injured...POW abuse, torture, intimidation...What did you have to eat... Describe prison accommodations...Forced marches in ice/snow... Boxcar joy rides.. Special suffering times...

Try to remember...and then begin writing, telling, dictating (however you need to do it) YOUR NARRATIVE. We've got to paint the picture for these young folks who will be evaluating our claims. In your Combat and POW narrative, tell your experience including a couple of the scariest times in combat, and certainly when you were wounded, shot down, captured. Then describe your experience as a POW...always cold, nothing much to eat, frozen potatoes, weevils for protein, the "little friends" that lived with you daily and kept you up to scratch...special problems you had. Put it all in there, on to liberation.

Next, DESCRIPTION OF DISABILITIES. We're talking about NOW. The VA provides benefits related to at least 20 health maladies NOW that were presumed to be initiated because of severe prisoner of war conditions suffered in the hands of the enemy. These presumptives include frostbite, certain heart problems, post traumatic stress, malnutrition, osteoarthritis, and many others. Describe your health problems over the years. Have you had heart trouble? Do you have arthritis due to trauma suffered when you parachuted and hit the ground hard, or when a shoulder was jammed; or are your feet, hands, extremities numb, tingly, always cold or burn a lot? Many do not realize the frostbite residual damage they have. Irritable bowel problems...don't leave home without a portacan! Agitation, disturbance, nightmares, difficulty sleeping, etc. Write all this out and let your Service Officer help you put it in the best order. Now, complete VA Form 21-526 that he/she will give you, if you have not already had a POW Protocol Examination by the VA.

Then, it's time for input from others.

BUDDY LETTERS can be very important. Your wife will be very important; most likely she knows you better than you know yourself--your sleep disturbances, nervousness, irritability, bugaboos, bowel discomfort, reluctance to talk about it. Buddy letters from your children, with their observance of you over the years. can be very helpful. AND, a buddy letter or two from those who were with you in your POW experience could be most helpful. "Oh yeah, Joe's feet were so swollen he was afraid to take off his shoes, for fear he could not get them back on."

AND ask your doctor(s) for their records on you over the past years. The VA will want to see them, and it will be much quicker if you go to your doctor's office and get them, to send in with your claim. Make it as

(Continued on page 19)

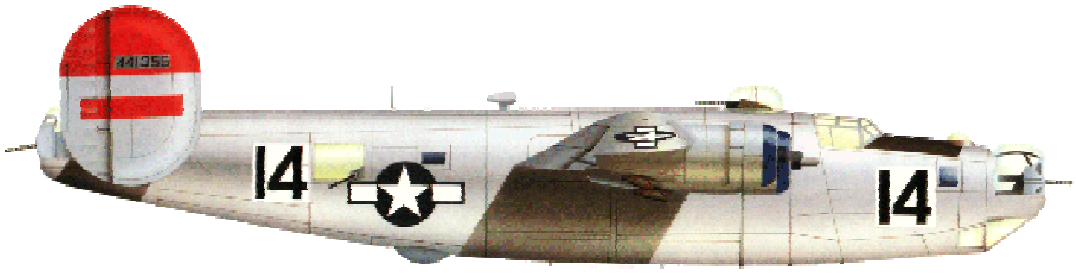
(Continued from page 18)

easy for the VA as you can. When you've done all this, your children will be especially glad, that you have finally put your unusual war/POW experience down in writing...for them and their kids...family history.

Make copies of all this for your files. Then get all of it to your Service Officer. He/she will write the proper cover letter, with all the necessary legal references (Public Law 97-37, etc.) to your VA Regional Office, directing it to that office's POW Coordinator where possible. They will look over your claim and assign you for examination appointments at the VA Medical Center nearest you. If possible, be sure to take your wife with you for your examinations; her input could be invaluable. Be sure to tell the doctors what ails you. Be honest. When they ask, "Well, how are you?" don't say, "Oh, I'm fine," when you're not. Tell it like it is. Don't hold back. Your exam results will then be sent to the VA Regional Office for evaluation of your claim.

It will take several months for your claim examinations and evaluation by the VA...BUT it will be worth the wait, when one day you get in the mail this nice VA letter, saying you have been approved for benefits.

And you'll wish you'd done it sooner.



Senior Chuckle

This is a song you can sing to the old Elvis tune "Are You Lonesome Tonight"…

Are you lonesome tonight? Does your tummy feel tight?
Did you bring your Mylanta and Tums?

Does your memory stray, to that bright sunny day,
When you had all your teeth and gums?

Is your hairline receding? Your eyes growing dim?
Hysterectomy for her, and prostate for him.

Does your back give you pain? Do your knees
Predict rain? Tell me dear are you lonesome tonight?

Is your blood pressure up? Good cholesterol down?
Are you eating your low fat cuisine?

All that oat bran and fruit, Metamucil to boot.
Helps you run like a well-oiled machine.

If it's football or baseball, he sure knows the score.
Yes, he knows where it's at, but forgets what it's for.

So your gallbladder's gone, but your gout lingers on,
Tell me dear, are you lonesome tonight?

When you're hungry, he's not. When you're cold, he's hot.
Then you start that old thermostat war.

When you turn out the light, he goes left and you go right.
Then you get his great symphonic snore.

He was once so romantic, so witty and smart;
How did he turn out to be such a cranky old fart?
So don't take any bets, it's as good as it gets,
Tell me dear, are you lonesome tonight?

Charleston Travel and Cruise Center

1525 Sam Rittenberg Blvd., Charleston, SC 29407
800-868-0132 843-556-8646 843-556-3365(fax)

May 7, 2003

461st Bomb Group
Reunion 2003

Hello Liberaiders,

This year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the 461st Bomb Group. It is also our 22nd annual reunion.

The reunion is scheduled for October 8th-12th, 2003. It will be held in San Diego, California at the Four Points Sheraton Hotel. This hotel has a AAA Three Diamond rating and specializes in hosting military reunions. If arriving by air, the hotel offers complimentary airport transportation. We will be in San Diego four days. Registration will begin Wednesday, with Thursday open for exploring the city on your own. The hotel offers complimentary transportation to the San Diego Zoo, Balboa Park, Old Town and Mission Valley.

We plan to attend the Marine Corps graduation on Friday October 10th. Afterwards we will have a luncheon at the Admiral Kidd Conference Center where you will enjoy a spectacular view of the San Diego harbor and skyline. We will have squadron seating at the luncheon, as there will not be a dinner on Friday evening. After lunch we visit Cabrillo National Monument.

Saturday, our bus tour will include a one-hour narrated tour of the San Diego harbor, including the largest naval base on the west coast, (aircraft carriers may have returned from the Middle East), and Coronado Island. Lunch will be at a harborview restaurant, and then a tour of scenic La Jolla and Mount Soledad. Saturday evening we will have our annual dinner and dance at the hotel featuring a DJ playing 40's music.

Our reunion will close with a memorial service and breakfast Sunday morning. We look forward to seeing you there.

Sincerely,

/s/ Bob Hayes
President, 461st Bomb Group

461st Bomb Group

22nd Reunion
October 8th-12th, 2003
San Diego, CA

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS REGISTRATION FORM AND MAIL WITH CHECK TO:
Charleston Travel and Cruise Center
Attn: Kelly McKenzie
1525 Sam Rittenberg Blvd.
Charleston, SC 29407

Registration Fee _____**@$10.00 per person** **subtotal** _____
# of persons

Oct. 10th
Marine Corps Grad. _____**@ $42.00 per person** **subtotal** _____
Squadron Luncheon **# of persons**
Cabrillo Monument

Oct. 11 th
Harbor Cruise/Tour _____**@$43.00 per person** **subtotal** _____
Lunch/La Jolla **# of persons**
Mt. Soledad

Oct. 11
Dinner and Dance _____**@ $49.00 per person** **subtotal** _____
# of persons
Please select one per person: Roast Prime Rib _____
Alaskan Filet of Salmon w/ Garlic Crab Sauce _____

Oct. 12th
Memorial Breakfast _____**@$18.00 per person** **subtotal** _____
# of persons

TOTAL _____

NAME _____ SQUADRON _____

SPOUSE _____

CHILDREN/GUEST NAMES _____

NAME(S) FOR NAMETAGS _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____

STATE _____ ZIP _____ PHONE _____

461st Bomb Group-Reunion 2003

HOTEL INFORMATION

DATE:	October 8-12, 2003
LOCATION:	Four Points Sheraton-San Diego 8110 Aero Dr. San Diego, CA 92123
ROOM RATES:	$99.00 plus tax, per room per night (1 king bed or 2 doubles) Group rate available 3 days prior, and 3 after the reunion dates on a first come first serve basis.
RESERVATIONS:	Call 1-800-992-1441 Be sure to mention that you will be attending The 461st Bomb Group Reunion. Major credit card required for guarantee.
PARKING:	Free

AIRPORT SHUTTLE: Complimentary, 5:30am-10:00pm.

Be sure to make your room reservations prior to September 17th, 2003

In response to your unexpected phone call earlier this month, I wish to express my appreciation for the information about someone trying to get in touch with me about photographs. I have heard from her, a friend who was a civilian employee at Hill Air Force Base in Ogden, Utah, a depot overhaul base for B-24's.

I mentioned in talking with you that I was unhappy about what transpired during my tenure with the 766th Bomb Squadron, 461st Bomb Group. No one on my crew, and other crews that arrived in that time period, received the rank or pay specified by the table of our organization. The reason as given by the squadron commander was that all we had to do was survive our tour of duty and then we could go home, whereas the ground crew to whom the rewards went didn't get to go home until after the war. Apparently he felt their boredom was more important than the combat missions. I do not know when this situation began or how many crews were denied their just rights. It would be interesting to learn. Also, how many of the combat crews treated thusly were killed in action. I'm sure that with access to the records, such facts can be ascertained.

If the squadron commander felt it was more important to relieve the ground crew, he should have considered this: I served five years in service in World War II and it was a hell of a lot longer than they spent overseas in a non-combat position.

I do not place the burden of this on your back nor do I expect anything to come of it except, in particular, those people who were killed should receive just recognition and compensation.

This unfair treatment has been a great concern to me all these years. It has influenced my life in more ways than one. I am sure others involved did not appreciate it either. Every year on Memorial Day the news media makes a big deal about how much the nation owes the veterans of WWII, and all wars, and yet it is unbelievable that no one has addressed this issue to my knowledge.

So this is my concern. I would appreciate hearing from you.

Curtis Carr
766th Squadron

==========

Ralph Charles

The Associated Press on Friday, February 7

Somerset, Ohio (AP) – Ralph Charles, who built planes for Orville Wright and was one of the nation's oldest pilots, died Sunday from Pneumonia. He was 103.

He last flew in the summer of 2001 and appeared on NBC's "Today" show and the "Late Show" with David Letterman when he flew a plane on his 100th birthday in 1999.

Charles was a barnstormer in the 1920s, co-piloted passenger airplanes for Trans World Airlines in the 1930s and was a civilian test pilot for the Navy during World War II. He also built planes for Wright in 1919 and operated a space shuttle simulator after NASA invited him to a launch in recent years.

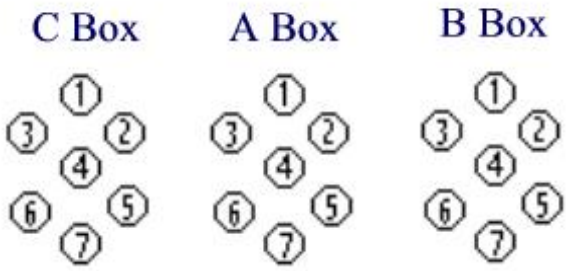
He quit flying after the war at the insistence of his wife, Leona, and settled in Columbus where he had an automotive repair shop until the couple retired to Perry County in 1965.

But he never lost his passion and took up flying again in 1995 after her death.

Copy of Notes from 1944 Log

October 4, 1944

Box formation - 3 boxes to a flight
2 flights to a group
Total of 42 planes



Today's mission was to Munich, Germany. We got over the Alps Mountains when my pilot called me over the intercom phone to unload some of my bombs because our B-24 was using too much fuel and had trouble staying in our box formation. I dropped four 500 lb bombs (2,000 pounds). We took a new position in our box. #6 had taken over our spot and we took his. When we dropped our bombs, the flak got damned thick and furious. Our group made a sharp right turn after bombs away. In the formation before us, on one of the planes a bomb hung up on a bomb shackle. That bombardier pulled the salvo switch and the bomb dropped out. As our box turned right, that bomb hit our #1 plane that exploded causing two other planes in the box to explode. Lt. Herrin, the pilot of the plane that we had bailed out over Corsica was killed. Our co-pilot dove our plane 3,000 feet and just missed the wing of one of the exploding B-24s. The nose of our plane was pushed in and the windows blown into my lap by the explosion. I freed the nose gunner from his turret and watched the altimeter to get ready to jump if necessary. We got out of the target area and we were in bad shape. The results of our squadron losses – 3 planes lost over the target, 2 crash landed in friendly airfields, our plane and one other badly damaged plane landed on our home base. Both crews were safe. Out two planes never flew again. They were used for spare parts.

Joe Breshinsky

(Continued from page 1)

showed exactly 4 am.

The crews all filed in and settled down when the briefing officer pulled the curtain back exposing a wall map of Europe. In a few moments we saw that our target was to be the city of Vienna. The 461st would be the second group over the target. The briefing indicated we would encounter heavy flak fields of fire and possibly more than the usual number of German fighter aircraft. The briefing officer pinpointed the locations we could expect to encounter them. I made mental notes. Our target would be the railroad marshalling yards just outside Vienna. Our initial point, the point where we would begin our bomb run, was just a little north and west of the target. That would give us a little help, having the wind almost on our tail. The final item in the briefing was covered by the Intelligence Officer and concerned what to do if you were shot down in the target vicinity. We were told the best chances for evasion and escape was to identify a "certain streetcar" and take it to the outskirts of Vienna, then try to evade and make it into Yugoslavia. There were, he said, many pockets of friendly Yugoslavians who helped downed fliers return to the Allied side. In our case, Italy. The briefing over, we packed our gear onto trucks again and headed for the airfield and the waiting B-24s.

In our case there were no regular aircraft assignments. Each mission would probably be flown in a different ship. On this particular morning, however, we were to fly aircraft number 24, an already famous plane. It's nose-art (most bombers, and fighters too, had some kind of device, or favorite cartoon of the pilot, painted on the nose) depicted an outline of the United States and the legend "All American". Beside the nose-art, fifteen small German swastikas were painted. The history of the plane had it that on a mission over the city of Linz, Austria in July 1944 it was attacked by a squadron of Luffwaffe fighters and the "All American" gunners were successful in shooting down fourteen of them. Most of the time, the "All American" was flown by Capt. Bob Arbuthnot and his crew. But today, it was ours.

At the plane, we were met by Master Sergeant Jacob Genuardi, our mission ground crew chief. Jake was standing by with his aircraft maintenance crew in case we should find something that was not just right. We had almost completed our preflight checks when we saw red flares bursting over the control tower. We all knew what that meant, "scrub the mission". For some reason or another, probably weather en route, the mission had been scrubbed. So, we packed up our gear again, boarded the trucks and returned to the 765th Bomb Squadron area.

We checked the callboard again late that afternoon and saw the mission was rescheduled for the following day and again we were to fly aircraft number 24, the "All American". However, although we went through the same procedures for the next couple of days, each time the mission to Vienna was scrubbed.

But on the morning of October 4, 1944 the air was clear and crisp. After breakfast and the ride to the briefing room we found out the target had been changed. We were going to attack railroad yards again, but this time the huge marshalling yards west of Munich. I'll admit I was a little relieved because I had dreamt the night before that I had been shot down over Vienna, had bailed out and landed somewhere in downtown Vienna. Of course, I immediately did what the Intelligence Officer had told us to do during the briefing. I packed up my parachute and carrying it under my arm, began to look for the "certain streetcar" that would take me out of town.

On the mission to Munich, the 461st Bomb Group was to be the second group of sixteen groups that would attack this particular target. Lt. Col. Philip Hawes was to be our group leader. The 461st would provide twenty-eight aircraft for the mission. Engine problems made it necessary for two of our planes to abort early, so there were only twenty-six planes that made it to the target area.

The sky was clear and blue as we turned onto the initial point about 11:45 am. Target time was 11:55 am and as we completed our turn onto the bomb run I

(Continued on page 26)

(Continued from page 25)

could see that the lead group was almost to the target. It was a beautiful day and from the cockpit you could see for miles and miles all around. Everything was calm as we started the bomb run. Then, suddenly, all hell broke loose. The German flak guns roared into action with a continuous fire. At first I was happy they had misjudged our altitude that was about 23,700 feet and the deadly little black puffs burst high above us. It didn't take them long to correct however, and soon the death dealing black puffs were bursting among the air group. I felt the plane shudder as we sustained a number of hits. I felt an engine misfire and immediately shut it down to prevent fire. With the loss of one engine I began to fall back from the main group and soon realized I was losing altitude. We still had our full bomb load on board and were operating on three engines.

I felt things going from bad to worse and knew it would be impossible for us to continue on to the target and keep up with the group. It was essential for the safety of the ship to keep formation and not lose the protection of other bombers. I ordered the word passed to the bombardier to jettison the bomb load. This was done immediately and as the ship lightened we gained a little air speed.

The rest of the group had reached the target by now and the bomb run had been completed. They were making the turn that would take us back home to our base in Italy. I turned behind them and tried to stay as close as I could but we were still several miles behind and I realized we would be hard put to keep up.

Once out of flak range, I polled the crew to check for casualties. I was relieved that even though the aircraft had sustained some major damage, none of the crew had been injured. Our navigator quickly plotted a new course that would keep us following behind the Bomb Group and our flight engineer nursed the three remaining engines coaxing as much power as possible from them. It didn't take much time for all of us to realize that we were falling farther and farther behind and losing altitude all the time. I passed the word for all excess gear to be thrown overboard; everything that was not bolted to the plane except the guns and the crew's personal effects.

We approached Yugoslavia and the weather turned bad. Huge cloudbanks loomed on the horizon and the sky began to get murky. I rechecked my instruments and reconfirmed our position with the navigator. I realized then that we were not going to make it back to Italy. I began to get concerned about the mountains. We continued to lose altitude. In minutes we would be in a zero-zero visibility situation in the clouds. With the crew on the intercom, I passed the word that just before we got into the clouds, everybody would bail out. As we approached the clouds I rang an alarm bell and gave the order to bail out. I double-checked to see if everybody was out. Satisfied, I watched as my co-pilot went out through the bomb bay. I was right behind him.

A rush of frigid air blasted me away from the aircraft as I tugged at the ripcord of my parachute. I felt the small pilot 'chute pull the main canopy out and in minutes I drifted down through the clouds and saw the terrain spread out under me. It was very mountainous in this part of Yugoslavia and I could see the rugged countryside all around me. I spotted where the "All American" had crashed. It had just missed a small church and crashed into the adjoining field. It was still smoking and burning a little but I could see people darting back and forth taking away what parts they could without getting burned or injured. I later saw the planes' tires stacked alongside of a road. I hit the ground on a sloping hillside and my 'chute collapsed around me.

In a matter of minutes, a soldier in a light blue uniform of some sort ran down the hill behind me. He pointed his rifle at me and yelled, "Deutsch?" I yelled back, "Americano!" He immediately smiled and lowered his rifle. He walked up and we shook hands. He told me as best he could in broken English that he was a Yugoslav Partisan. After helping me out of the parachute (which I noticed quickly disappeared) I followed him back up the hill to a small house that I later found to be the Partisan headquarters. It was not long before another chap arrived in the same kind of makeshift uniform. He seemed to be in charge and spoke passable English.

(Continued on page 27)

(Continued from page 26)

I told him there were nine other American airmen who had left the aircraft with me. He immediately understood and gave orders to the Yugoslavs around him to find the Americans and bring them to the headquarters. In a few hours, six of the crew had been rounded up and we were all together. The head guy told us it was too dangerous to travel at that time, so we spent the day at the small headquarters in the mountains. Early in the evening we started off for a larger unit headquarters located in the Yugoslav town of Bela Krajina. By now we knew we were with a group of Yugoslavians known as the Mihailovich Chetniks. I have never forgotten them.

The going was slow through the rough, hilly country and narrow paths and by five o'clock in the morning (we had traveled through the night) we were all just about exhausted. But as luck would have it, our blue-shirted leader had received word a German patrol was spotted in the vicinity and we would have to move out immediately. We stumbled on to a new rest area about an hour farther on and rested there until nightfall. Under cover of darkness and with several of the Mihailovich men to guide us, we quietly passed through the German lines.

We followed what seemed like endless trails and mountain paths and at one point passed by a small settlement where the guides told us to wait while they went ahead. We watched them trudge off in the darkness and sat down to wait. The waiting seemed endless sitting around in the pitch dark, but finally the guides returned and we resumed our trek up and down mountainsides. Although we did not know it at the time, we had acquired a new set of guides and were now in the hands of Tito's Partisans.

We traveled through the night and with the first light of dawn came to a small town where to our surprise and pleasure the rest of our crew joined us. One of the crewmen had landed near a Catholic Mission and the Nuns there wanted him to stay and teach English, but he managed to explain that he had to rejoin us and try to make it back to the Allied lines. Two of the others had been brought to the town by different Partisan groups without mishap. So we were all back together again, all ten of us through some miracle or other and I suppose each man gave thanks in his own way. The townspeople were friendly and shared their meager supply of black bread and milk with us and for a moment at least, the war seemed far away.

We were enjoying what one might call an afternoon siesta when we were abruptly awakened by heavy gunfire, cannon fire. The Partisan soldiers quickly got us together and we were hustled out of town up a small goat path. We stopped briefly to catch our breath and the Partisans told us that a German field artillery unit had moved into the area. We were still somewhat tuckered out but surprisingly were able to move notably faster after that.

We came to a kind of crossroads and saw two horse-drawn carts approaching. The leader of the Partisans stopped them and asked them to give us a lift to Bela Krajina. After a brief but heated argument the drivers agreed to take us. It seemed not all the Yugoslavians were as eager as the Partisans to help us and I noticed from then on the Partisans rifle barrels remained pointed more or less toward the cart drivers.

Continuing on toward a destination known only to the Partisans we finally crossed the mountaintops and from then on it was all downhill. The roads were very narrow and the bridges spanning the small creeks were even narrower. This however, did not seem to bother the cart drivers or Partisans and we rumbled and bumbled down the tricky mountain cart path at what all of us considered reckless speeds. Most of us were sure that before that journey was over we would meet our final end at the bottom of one of the sheer drop-offs. Guardrails were unheard of in that time and place. The road spread out abruptly as we came to a small town that we expected to be our destination. However, this was a different village called Semic rather than Bela Krajina. It was here in Semic that the faithful Partisans would leave us. Many of us had struck up good friendships with them. The Partisan leader that had been with us almost all the way had taken a liking to my heavy bomber jacket. As he was getting ready to leave and take the carts back, I put the jacket around his shoulders. His large dark eyes said more than he

(Continued on page 28)

(Continued from page 27)

could have managed in English and slipping on the jacket he smiled a big toothy grin and started back up the mountain path.

We were quickly taken to a British Mission located in Semic. We learned there that this was the collecting point, for returning escaping prisoners of war, mostly British, and downed airmen, to Allied control. We attended a briefing and were told what to expect while we were there. We were given a welcome and necessary toilet articles and a place to sleep. They told us that their connection for our return was a British aircraft that landed in a pasture close by. The plane landed every other night, and would take us to the Italian city of Bari. On alternate nights, a Russian plane would land, but the Russians would not take us back to Italy.

Here we were, all ten of us, in a safe place, finally. Needless to say, we were much relieved. This area was controlled by Tito Partisans who told us to be ready to leave in a day or two. The British plane however, did not arrive for several days. The Russians came every other day, but continued to refuse to take us anywhere. To my surprise I learned inadvertently that American airmen had priority on leaving the Mission even though some of the prisoners-of-war had been there for some time.

Many of us struck up lasting friendships with some of the others there at the Mission. There was not much to do except stroll outside around the hillside, take in the sun, and talk about home. A couple of days stretched into a week and on some days we would see contrails in the sky coming from bombers on their way to a target in Germany. The medium of exchange in the area was Italian Lira. We all had some of it from our escape and evasion kits and used it to buy things in the local marketplace. On one occasion we chipped in and bought a whole pig and had it roasted for a special dinner. It turned out to be a great dinner and everyone enjoyed it thoroughly. We were invited to a dance at the local schoolhouse one evening and it turned out to be quite a shindig. The Partisan soldiers, male and female stacked their guns at the door but kept their hand grenades attached to their belts. What with all the wild dancing, we all kept our jaws tight hoping one of the grenades would not come loose.

A little more than a week had passed when the head of the Mission told us to prepare to be airlifted out that night. Shortly after dark we started out for the pasture that served as an airfield. Stacks of hay had been lit up to illuminate the airstrip. After a few moments we heard the drone of aircraft engines and an American made C-47 landed and taxied over to where we were waiting. To our surprise, instead of British markings the plane carried Russian markings. Someone came up to us and said arrangements had been made with the Russians to take our crew back to Italy.

The plane's right engine continued to run but the left engine was shut down so that we could enter the left-hand door safely. I was the first to climb aboard and as I got inside the plane, the door was abruptly closed behind me. The left engine roared into life and the C-47 quickly taxied to the end of the runway and took off. I couldn't see a thing because all the windows had been covered. As my eyes slowly became accustomed to the darkness (there were no lights in the plane) I realized I was the only American aboard. All the other passengers were Russian. I later learned that the planes' crew were Russian females. They took me safely to Italy. I continued to be mystified as to why my crew had been left behind at the Mission.

On arrival at Bari, Italy, I was immediately taken to the hospital where I underwent a physical check and was pronounced ready to return to duty. I returned to my base with the 49th Bomb Wing, 15th Air Force located at Torretta Air Field near Cerignola, Italy where I discovered that the day after my mysterious exit from the Mission at Semic, the rest of my crew were flown out too.

We were all debriefed by American Intelligence and allowed to return to routine duty. Some of the first people to greet us at the airfield was Jake Genuardi and the ground crew of the "All American". They said they were all glad to see us and Jake asked if there was anything wrong with the "All American"

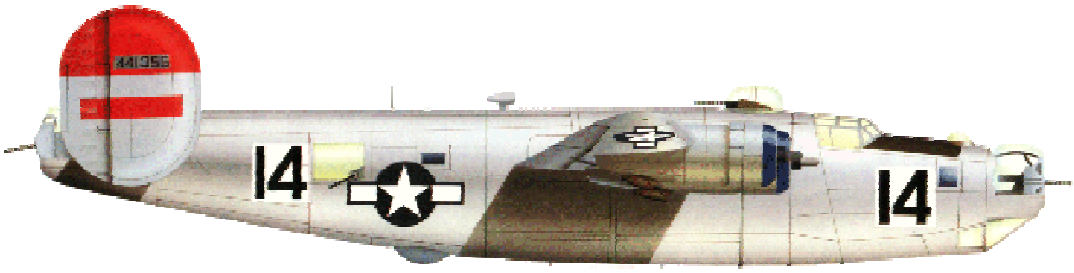
(Continued on page 29)

(Continued from page 28)

that the ground crew might have missed that caused the crash. We assured him and the ground crew that the plane had been disabled by anti-aircraft fire and until then had operated just fine.

So there it is, the story of the last combat mission of the gallant B-24 Bomber "All American". If you happen to be in Kissimmee, Florida sometime, stop in at Rielly's Flying School. Find out where the Collings Foundation hanger is and ask if someone could let you take a peek inside. If it isn't out flying in an air show somewhere, you may be lucky enough to see the only flying B-24 in the world today, preserved and completely restored in all its military splendor. Oh, yes, be sure to look at the nose. Yep, you guessed it. She lives again, the "All American" honoring all the B-24's that flew in World War II.

At a recent air show in Titusville, Florida where I reside now, I had the pleasure of watching the restored B-24 named the "All American" fly by, low, over the ground, her engines throbbing, her nose proudly proclaiming her namesake. I must have gotten a cinder in my eye from the prop wash because when I looked again I could just about make out her twin rudders beginning to fade in the sunset.



Douglas W. Morrell

From
International Combat Camera Association, Inc.
Winter, 2002

Douglas W. Morrell was born 15 May 1919 in Douglas, Nebraska, the son of a prominent Methodist Minister.

He shot and sold his first motion picture documentation at age 12 covering a lawsuit and received $10.00 for the effort.

Doug graduated from high school at Scottsbuff, Nebraska in 1935. He then went on to attend Nebraska Wesleyan University at Lincoln, Nebraska for 2 ½ years.

He attended the Art Center in Los Angeles for cinematography and photography.

Doug joined the Army Air Corps on 3 October 1939 at March Air Force Base, CA as a motion picture and still cameraman.

He was assigned to one year on special duty observation status at four major Hollywood studios, three months at each studio (20th Century Fox, MGM, Warner Brothers, and Paramount).

He returned to the Army Air Corps and made training films specializing in field production and aerial documentation.

He spent one year in glider pilot training and Sergeant Pilot duty covering the training in motion pictures at the same time.

He was transferred to Africa and Italy in 1943-1944 flying 33 combat missions in B-17 and B-24 bombers hitting Germany, Italy, Hungary, Austria, Yugoslavia, France and Romania.

In March 1944, his B-24 Liberator bomber was disabled by anti-aircraft fire over the "Iron Gates" of Romania forcing the crew to bail out. He evaded capture for 27 days while walking across Yugoslavia and northern Albania to the Adriatic Sea where he bribed a fisherman for a ride in the bilge of a fishing boat back to Italy.

He was sent back into combat documentation duties and, because of a green-brown visual color deficiency, was able to discern a fake Messerschmidt factory in Austria. He photographed the area in infrared still coverage and intelligence was able to re-target the factory. He also spotted two German submarines under a camouflage near Venice and recorded them in infrared. They were destroyed the next day.

In May 1944, while documenting his fifth raid against the oil refineries at Ploesti, his aircraft was disabled by anti-aircraft fire and forced to leave the formation. Attacked by several German ME-109 fighters, the lone bomber was engaged in a 10-minute running battle before being set afire at 18,000 feet altitude. Doug bailed out moments before the aircraft exploded killing five of the ten crewmembers aboard. He was immediately captured by German troops on landing and was held as a Prisoner of War in Bucharest until released by the advancing Russian Army four and one-half months later.

Doug returned to the CONUS and spent 4 months in rehabilitation status in hotels on Santa Monica beach in California.

He was sent to Tinian in the Pacific to document a "special" bomb drop over Hiroshima but was not aboard the Enola Gay due to a last minute decision. (They didn't get the coverage they needed.) During the 3-month stay in Tinian, S/Sgt. Morrell flew six B-29 firebomb missions over Japan as practice for the big raid on Hiroshima.

On his return to the CONUS, he was immediately assigned to the 509th Composite Group and sent to Kwajaline as a senior (lead) photographer/cameraman to document the atomic tests at Bikini in the Marshall Islands from converted B-29 aircraft (F-13) heavily loaded with motion picture and still cameras. Over one million feet of film was exposed during the first minute of the blast. Morrell documented two devices set off during the test, one air blast and one under water blast in Bikini lagoon.

Upon returning again to the CONUS, he was immediately assigned to document guided missile tests in the Sahara Desert in Africa for 2 months and Alaska for 2 more months. Doug was voluntarily discharged from the Army Air Force 12 February 1947.

Doug was a professional photographer in Helena, Montana until he returned to the service for the Korean War on 2 March 1952.

He served three years as lead and standardization 1st photo on RB/GRB-36 aircraft with the 99th Strat Recon Wing at Fairchild Air Force Base, Washington. He also made training films for the wing during this time.

He had a career diversion to Loadmaster aboard C-124 aircraft of the 2nd Strat Support Squadron at Pinecas-

(Continued on page 31)

tle Air Force Base, Orlando, FL for 3 months before escaping into a special assignment as an Air Force Advisor (Photo) to the Alabama Air National Guard at Birmingham for the next 5 years. He made 10 training films for the Guard during this period.

Doug was back into the regular motion picture business with assignment to 1365 Photo Squadron (APCS) at Orlando where he became chief documentary cameraman for the Air Force New Review until September 1963 when he was sent to the Canal Zone to open up a new Detachment for coverage of Air Force activities in Latin America. He received commendations from three Latin American Presidents for coverage of civic actions in their countries. He arrived in Panama as a T/Sgt. and left 5 years later with a line number for Chief.

He was assigned to Det 2, 1352 Audiovisual Squadron at Ent Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, and was sent to Keflavik, Iceland for 3 months to fly with F-102 Delta Dart fighters intercepting Russian "Bear" aircraft over the North Sea. He documented a total of 24 intercepts (14 in one day) and made an honorary member of 57th Fighter/Interceptor Squadron.

Doug was then assigned to 601 Photo Flight, Koret RTAFB, Thailand in November 1968 as the Operations NCOIC and Chief of Aircrew Standardization.

Two months after his 50th birthday, he was documenting a sensor drop over the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos when his O-2 Forward Air Controller aircraft was hit by anti-aircraft fire knocking half of the left wing off and setting the stub on fire. Morrell and the pilot bailed out at 5,000 feet and were fired upon by the anti-aircraft gunners most of the way down. Morrell landed in the jungle about 100 yards from the Ho Chi Minh trail in the middle of a truck servicing and parking complex guarded by six anti-aircraft gun positions. Calling in the rescue team with his survival radio, he assumed the role of a ground controller directing fire on the guns until all were silenced by rescue team fighters. After a combined effort involving 34 aircraft, he was picked up by a "Jolly Green Giant" rescue helicopter 9 hours after he hit the ground. His pilot was captured on landing and held prisoner of war in Hanoi for four years. After 3 months in the hospital at Clark Air Force Base in the Philippines, his tour in SEA was curtailed under evader rules and he was reassigned to HQ Aerospace Audiovisual Service at Norton Air Force Base, California where he served as Chief of Aircrew Standardization for AAVS worldwide until his retirement 30 June 1974.

Chief Morrell spent the next 5 years in college earning his degree in Anthropology from the University of California in Riverside. In 1980 he returned to HQ AAVS as a civilian critiquing documentary projects and coordinating the Air Force combat documentation program.

During the next 15 years he conducted 2-day seminars on combat camera documentation techniques at each AAVS unit worldwide each year. He wrote practically all of the Operational Regulations including a comprehensive Combat Camera Documentation Techniques manual, the Combat Camera Basic Unit Supplement (BUS), and supplements to DOD and AF regulations and directives.

Chief Morrell managed the Military Cinematographer of the year competition for the Department of Defense and was a leader in the establishment of the Military Motion Media Studies Program at Syracuse University that he managed for the Air Force. He was also very active in the Air Force Aircrew Survival program and lectured to aircrews and survival instructors all over the world on combat survival.

Prior to his retirement on 3 September 1994 he was awarded the Combat Camera Lifetime Achievement Award and on his retirement, the Air Force Outstanding Civilian Career Service Award.

461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

P.O. Box 926
Gunnison, CO 81230

Phone: (970) 209-2788
Fax: (501) 694-7858
Email: hughes@hugheshelpdesk.com

We're on the web!
Visit
www.461st.org

Webmaster Comments

The 461st website continues to grow at an astounding rate. When I first took it over, I thought I would never fill the 50-meg of space I got for it. Within a month, I had filled that 50-meg and was on my way to filling the next 50-meg. Recently I have had to request another 50-meg taking the size to 150-meg. This may not mean a whole lot to you, but most websites are in the neighborhood of 5-meg. This will give you some idea of how much information is available. And it's still growing. I have several projects I'm working on.

Many of you are aware of the addition of the old Liberaiders to the website. This has been a major project and most of them are now available online in the Liberaider section of the website. My thanks go out to Jon Moran for his help in getting these done.

The Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs) contain a lot of valuable information about aircraft and crews lost during WWII. Our website has had a list of the aircraft along with the MACR numbers of those that were lost. I have started requesting the MACRs from Maxwell AFB and putting them online. You can find them in the Aircraft section of the website under Originals and Replacements. Find a particular aircraft and scroll to the right to see the MACR number. Eventually they will all be linked to the actual MACR.

Most recently I've learned that Maxwell AFB has detailed reports of missions. I'm still trying to verify this, but if this is true and I can get copies, this might provide a lot of information previously unavailable.

In the Missions section, I have started posting bomb plot photos for those missions where they are available. I still have a ways to go on this, but I have about half of the bomb plot photos online now.

Keep the information coming as everything adds to the story of the 461st Bombardment Group.