



*The 461st*

# Liberaiders



Vol. 30, No. 1

JUNE 2013

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

## Reunion Information

The 2013 reunion of the 461st/484th Bombardment Group (H) will be held in Omaha, NE. Although we've been there before, there's much more to see and do in this fascinating location. See page 18 for details and sign-up information.

## Daily Log of a World War II B-24 Pilot

by  
2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Robert E. Harrison  
1944-1945  
767<sup>th</sup> Squadron  
Crew #81-R

John G. McGarr  
Lester M. Friedman  
Clarence E. Farris

October 1944 – June 1945

Part II

### Overseas Log of R.E. Harrison and Crew

Wellington A. Gillis  
Pat R. Macarelli  
Edward A. Loyko  
Ernest E. Gilbert  
Richard G. Bickel  
Bertrand A. Benedict

Part I of this log was started in the December 2012 issue of the Liberaider. Copies of that issue are available on the 461st BG website ([www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org)) in the Liberaider section.

**Friday, December 1, 1944**

*(Continued on page 4)*

## John William Mattheis, Jr.

Fifteenth Air Force  
461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H)  
764<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron  
1944-1945

### Crew #17-2

**Pilot:** Charles Saur, Lives in Sparta, Michigan 49345. Wife is Jean who refuses to fly. Charles attended Michigan University. Charles took over from his dad and managed their hardware store in Sparta, Michigan. Charles was a very good pilot.

**Co-Pilot:** Herbert Frank, Born in Iowa and now lives in Ft. Worth,

Texas 76132. His second wife is Lanice. Stayed in the service after the war and flew tankers. They use a large motor home for travel. Lanice is a button collector.

**Bombardier:** Frank Rosenau, W. Redding, Connecticut 06896. His wife is Pat. Frank was born 25 March 1923 and died 8 September 1997. I believe he had MS. He regretted dropping bombs. They never came to any reunions. He worked at a newspaper. We visited him once after the war in Connecticut in the early 1950s. In later years he

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# Taps

May they rest in peace forever

Please forward all death notices to:

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P.O. Box 926  
Gunnison, CO 81230  
[editor@461st.org](mailto:editor@461st.org)

## **Headquarters**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Hometown</u></b>	<b><u>MOS</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Death</u></b>
Cole, Leonard O.	Osage Beach, MO	070	02/20/13

## **764<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Hometown</u></b>	<b><u>MOS</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Death</u></b>
Leasure, George A.	Van, TX	1034	03/27/13
Underwood, John L.	Orchard Lake, MI	1092	12/21/12

## **765<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Hometown</u></b>	<b><u>MOS</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Death</u></b>
Daniels, George C.	Audubon, NJ	612	02/18/13
Gribble, J. B.	McMinnville, TN	612	06/10/12
Meisenheimer, Charles W.	Rainbow Lake, NY	1035	05/01/10
Miller, Val R.	Oklahoma City, OK	1035	04/01/13
Winham, Clifford L.	Scottsdale, AZ	1037	02/25/13

## **766<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Hometown</u></b>	<b><u>MOS</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Death</u></b>
Assante, Philip A.	Ridge, NY	1035	03/37/13
Brock, Eugene W.	Brentwood, TN	1034	03/10/13
Daley, Richard F.	Mountain Top, PA	612	12/27/12
Kerth, Robert F.	Los Alamitos, CA	748	03/25/13
Kobell, Joseph E.	San Antonio, TX	612	02/21/13

## **767<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

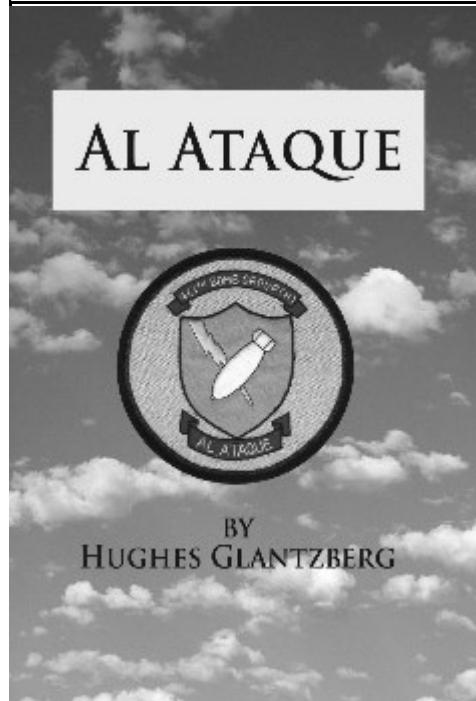
<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Hometown</u></b>	<b><u>MOS</u></b>	<b><u>Date of Death</u></b>
Dundeen, Robert W.	Hilton Head Island, SC	612	03/21/13
Hettinger, William P., Jr.	Deerfield Beach, FL	1092	12/02/11
Kussler, Edward A.	Lincolnshire, IL	1035	12/24/12
Lomax, Charles T., 3rd	Magnolia, NJ	1092	01/01/13
Sturm, Robert N.	Cincinnati, OH	1092	10/26/12



*One More Mission  
A Journey from Childhood to War*  
by  
Jesse Petley  
*An autobiography about growing up during  
the depression and fighting in World War II*

With a special interest in World War II and the 461st Bombardment Group in particular, I found this book excellent. Most of the men who fought during WWII were in their late teens and early 20s. It's amazing to be able to read about their activities. Liberaider Editor

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and Xlibris (at a 15% discount) (<http://www2.xlibris.com/bookstore/bookdisplay.asp?bookid=11013> ).



## Al Ataque

History / General

**Trade Paperback**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$26.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

ISBN: **0-595-41572-5**

413 Pages

**Trade Hardcopy**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$36.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

ISBN: **0-595-86486-4**

On Demand Printing

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Ingram Book Group, Baker & Taylor, and from iUniverse, Inc

To order call 1-800-AUTHORS

describes the preparation a bomb group goes through before being deployed overseas as well as the problems of shipping over five thousand men and supplies along with some eighty B-24 aircraft from a stateside base to a foreign country. The book details the establishment of Torretta Field which was used by the 461st for the duration of the war in Europe. The 461st Bomb Group flew two hundred and twenty-three combat missions between April 1944 and April 1945. Each of these is described in the book. Personal experiences of veterans who were actually part of the 461st are also included.



## Music Bravely Ringing

by  
Martin A. Rush  
767th Squadron

This is the story of a small town boy who, during WWII, wandered onto the conveyor belt that turned civilians into bomber pilots. Initially awed and intimidated at the world outside his home town, he began to realize that this was an opportunity to have a hand in stimulating and challenging dealings larger than he had expected. He had a few near-misses, but gradually began to get the hang of it. His story is that like the thousands of young men who were tossed into the maelstrom of war in the skies. He was one of the ones who was lucky enough to live through it. Available from Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Ingram Book Group, Baker & Taylor, and from iUniverse, Inc.

*(Continued from page 1)*

We were up for a mission last night but it was cancelled out. Some of the fellows were a little high last night and their noise kept me awake part of the night.

There wasn't much done today. They started putting in the sink and Ed made some changes in the plumbing. We had a meeting or a ground school class right after breakfast.

It rained most of the day, but in the afternoon, Mac and I went to town for rations. I met John Hammond and also ran into Kain again.

I came back without Mac. He had to see the girls again. It was another wild ride. The truck I was in had to tow another and more than once we both nearly went off the road. The drivers weren't entirely sober.

At night, I wrote to Ruth and got to bed at ten or so. We're up for the mission tomorrow. The weather looks bad now, but perhaps it will clear.

#### Saturday, December 2, 1944 Mission #3 -

Blechhammer, Germany

I was awake as hour or more before briefing which was at 0545. The target was oil refineries at Blechhammer. The takeoff was all messed up and I didn't get off with my flight. I couldn't find any of our ships in the air so tagged on to another group going in the same general direction. As it was, they were hitting the same target. It was a long cold ride. We had no heaters and my feet froze just as we hit the target. It was rough. The flak really came at us. We got a few small holes – one quite near Loyko. We came back more or less by ourselves and got in before some of the ships of our group. My back ached something wicked and I was tired. I hope all missions aren't like that.

There were two letters waiting for me from Ruth. That helped.

There was a critique at seven and there was some ear chewing. Wrote to Ruth and got to bed.

Today's combat time 7:30  
Total combat time 19:00

#### Sunday, December 3, 1944

We stayed in bed this morning and didn't have any breakfast. Because the formation for the Cluster Award Dinner was at 1030, they had stopped serving breakfast at 0730. By the time I shaved and dressed it was time to eat. I wasn't very eager about the whole thing and just before it was time to leave, I had to "check on the enlisted men." Loyko also got out of it. We spent the afternoon writing letters. I had to taxi a ship later on and the four of us went out and with the help of some other people we picked up two barrels of gas. It will help to keep us warm for a while.

I didn't write too much – just a couple of letters and one v-mail. Ed and I also took down the stove pipe and cleaned it out.

There was no mail today except a letter from Innis.

At night I wrote to Ruth and we were all in bed before nine. There is a stand-down for tomorrow – weather I guess.

#### Monday, December 4, 1944

Nothing much to talk about today. Mac and Ed went to Naples, but Gil and I had to stick around. We were scheduled for a practice mission at noon. During the morning we fixed up around the hut. We leveled the ground and fixed up the doorstep. After lunch we went on a practice gunnery mission. While we were on the range I thought we lost an engine, but all the instruments began to go haywire and we found out that three of the generators were out. One more came on so we finished the range and came back on two. I let Farris fly the thing back.

I didn't do anything after that. Received three letters and two cards from Ruth. They were really nice.

At night we all went to the show – at least Gil and I did.

I wrote to Ruth and headed for bed. It's going to be a windy night. The tent is rattling like a boiler room.

Today's flying time 1:50  
Total flying time 50:00

#### Tuesday, December 5, 1944

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There isn't much to write about today. The night was windy and consequently I didn't sleep as well as I might have. Gil and I had Link at 0800 so we had to get up a little earlier than usual. After that was over, he and Mac took off for Bari. I took a sponge bath and shaved before lunch and then went to Cerignola. I got a couple of money orders and then nosed around town and the PX. Picked up a few things including a babies bonnet and a little jacket. Both are pink so if it's a boy I will charge it up to profit and loss – better luck next time.

I met "Pop" Lane in the Red Cross. He left Latrobe a month or so before I did and graduated from Stuttgart with a 4-C.

There was no mail except a Christmas package from Ruth and a silhouette that she had made.

I wrote to her after supper and after a meeting that Gilbert and I had to attend.

We're not up for tomorrow's mission.

### Wednesday, December 6, 1944

Before I got to sleep last night the mission was off so gave us another free day. We all stayed around here and worked on the hut. Gil made himself a desk; Mac fixed up the door and Loyko and I fooled around with the water system. He also put in a drain so that now we can use our astro-dome basin. It works OK.

At night there was a show. It was a mystery picture and after a half hour or so the power failed and we were left out on a limb. I don't suppose I'll ever know how the thing turned out.

There was no mail today. I still have a few of Ruth's letters to answer so they help out my writing quite a bit.

We were up for tomorrow's mission but it's a 'stand-down' so we'll probably have a practice flight.

### Thursday, December 7, 1944

They called us this morning in time for an 0800 "briefing" for a practice formation flight. We were scheduled for three spot, but just before takeoff the flight leader had to stay on the ground so we flew

two position. We were up a couple of hours.

This afternoon was more or less wasted. I helped a little – very little – with Gil on the clothes rack and lugged some more oil. That accounted for most of the time.

The Italians whitewashed the walls so everything in the hut had to be moved away from the walls and then put back.

After supper, Gil and I came back to the hut and I wrote to Ruth. As I write this, Mac and Ed are at the club gambling.

I received two letters from Ruth and one from home. That always helps make the day worthwhile.

Today's flying time 2:05

Total flying time 52:05

### Friday, December 8, 1944

Not much to talk about today. Mac and Ed came in drunk last night. Ed was sick part of the night and I didn't sleep too well. I didn't bother to get up for breakfast. They had us scheduled for practice formation after lunch. Nobody was eager for it and we were late in taking off - or rather taxiing. The wind was up to 45 MPH – cross – and after the first three ships took off, the tower threw me the red light. After a few minutes they told me to go back to the hardstand. But the afternoon was more or less used up. I received mail including three letters from Ruth.

At night we went to the show. The picture was pretty good, but the sound wasn't so hot.

I wrote a long letter to my wife tonight. When I started I hadn't intended to write for long.

We're up for the mission tomorrow – five hundred pound incendiaries.

### Saturday, December 9, 1944

They woke us at five this morning for briefing which was forty minutes later. It was raining and takeoff looked improbable to us, but Air Force had different ideas. Target was the yards at Linz.

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We got off the ground OK and followed the flight up to seventeen thousand through clouds. Planes were all over and no one could find anyone else. Our flight went into a cloud bank and we were in it for 2500 feet or more. The flight broke up and we saw no more of any of them. Icing was terrific and then after flying around for a while we lost a turbo. Gilbert changed the amplifier, but by that time I had decided on going back. We went into the clouds at twenty-one thousand and didn't see anything until almost 8000. We ran into hail which broke the top turret glass and I called in for three fixes. By that time the mission was called off. I guess we were the first ship to get back in.

I wrote some letters during the afternoon and to Ruth after supper. We're up again for tomorrow's mission.

Today's flying time 2:50

Total flying time 54:55

### Sunday, December 10, 1944

This was a repetition of yesterday. We were up at the same time and briefing was at 0535. This time we were headed for Brux way up in Germany. It was raining again and the sky looked terrible. We took off and flew around for an hour at 1500 feet or so. There were no breaks and they gave us a rendezvous point up the coast. Our flight headed up and at 5000 or so we went into the clouds. At nine thousand we were still in it. The flight leader told us to go back down and assemble over the Adriatic. It was 1400 feet when we were finally in a position to see anything. We didn't find any of the flight. By that time it was 1000 and we decided to come back. We dropped our two time bombs and followed the coast back. It was rough in the pattern too, at 500 feet. It rained all afternoon and we stayed in the hut. We slept a while too. I'm tired. These instrument flights aren't much fun. The mission was eventually called off.

We saw a show tonight and I then wrote to Ruth.

Today's flying time 3:15

Total flying time 58:10

### Monday, December 11, 1944 Mission #4 – Vien-

na, Austria

Briefing was at 0630 this morning – target, Vienna – everything went along fine and the weather was good. The formation was rough, but when we heard that there was a possibility of fighters in the target area, we pulled it in close. As we turned on the bomb run, I lost a turbo, but kept up OK. Then came the flak. It was wicked. The group ahead of us was hit and hit hard. The boys saw six ships go down in flames. I saw one and it wasn't a pleasant sight. It dropped like a rock. Boyer's co-pilot was hit as was Rawchuck's top turret gunner. We were in flak for a long time. The rally was rough, too. There were ships all over the sky. I've never seen so many at one time. My feet were freezing and it seemed like a long ride back. We ran into more flak over Yugo, too. It was getting dusk when we got back to the base – an hour later than flimsy time. The landing was OK. One wheel, but very gently. In all, it was a rough mission and we're glad to be back. At night I wrote a short letter to Ruth and got to bed after I shaved. My eyes were tired.

Today's combat time 7:40

Total combat time 26:40

### Tuesday, December 12, 1944

Not much to log today. There was a mission scheduled for today, but it was cancelled just after briefing. We didn't do anything worthwhile. Gil, Ed and I were going in to town, but only Ed and I went in the morning. We caught a ride in OK, but it took us three hours to get back. Gil and Mac came in as we were waiting for a truck. I just got a haircut and we both got our PX rations. We also had a caricature done just for the laugh. I sent mine home to Ruth.

At night we all went to the show. The picture was good and quite funny.

I received two letters from Ruth. They're coming over irregularly now, but I guess there isn't any kick as long as I get something. The packages must be lost somewhere.

I was a little tired tonight and only wrote a short

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letter. It wasn't such a good day.

### Wednesday, December 13, 1944

Today was much the same as yesterday. Gil and I Link at 0800 and that was all the work there was. We dubbed around during the morning and after lunch I decided to go into town again. I had a snapshot taken and picked up my rations for the week. I shouldn't have to go in again until next Wednesday or Thursday. By the time I got back it was about time for supper. I had something at the Red Cross in town and subsequently I wasn't exactly hungry.

There was no mail today. I wrote to Ruth and sent the picture along. It wasn't very good. The day was dark and it was going on for four when I had it taken. We were talking quite a bit tonight and I didn't write very much to Ruth. It was going on for eleven when I got to bed.

### Thursday, December 14, 1944

This was a mean, wet day. It rained most of the time up until later afternoon. The mission was called off early this morning.

I did very little. I had planned to do some writing but managed to write a short note home.

We cleaned up this morning and listened to Gil play a clarinet. This afternoon, Ed borrowed an accordion and we all fooled around with that. At night there was a show that I had seen before, but we all went.

I wrote Ruth a fairly long letter for a change and after washing up, got to bed about ten-thirty. We're not scheduled tomorrow so I don't know what we'll be doing.

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

Officers:  
Hughes Glantzberg, President, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230  
Glenda Price, Vice-President, 1621 Devoe Drive, Lincoln, NE 68506  
David St. Yves, Treasurer, 5 Hutt Forest Lane, East Taunton, MA 02718  
Glenda Price, Secretary, 1621 Devoe Drive, Lincoln, NE 68506  
Hughes Glantzberg, Historian, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230-0926  
Directors  
Lee Cole, Hdqtrs Sqdn., 9010 North Grand, Kansas City, MO 64155

Received a letter from Ruth this noon.

### Friday, December 15, 1944

There is very little to write about tonight. Slept pretty well last night until the trucks woke me. This morning I borrowed a trumpet and spent the morning fooling around with it. Gil had a clarinet and together with Loyko and the accordion, we had quite a time. During the afternoon, I wrote letters while Ed played the accordion. Mac and Gil went to town. The only mail today was a letter from Anne.

Tonight I wrote to Ruth and then played the accordion for a while. It's fun fooling around with it. Keep at it long enough and one could master it without taking any lessons.

Gil is playing in the orchestra at the group headquarters party. We're up for tomorrow's mission. Will probably be a long one.

### Saturday, December 16, 1944 Mission #5 – Brux, Czechoslovakia

They woke us up in plenty of time for briefing which was at 0540. There were two missions on which we were briefed. The one we went on and one to northern Italy. We've started for Brux three or four times, but we finally hit it today. It is a long haul up there. Formation was rough and we had a couple of hot running engines an hour or so before target time. One of the turbos acted up a little too.

There was plenty of flak at the target. If we ever had gone through the cloud they put up, we'd never had made it. As it was, we didn't get hit at all. There were supposed to be fighters in the area, but

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we didn't see any.

It was getting dark when we arrived back at the base. The whole trip took nine hours.

After supper we took in a short G.I. show. There was no mail today. Been kinda slow the past few days.

Today's combat time 9:00  
Total combat time 35:40

### Sunday, December 17, 1944

Not much doing today. Had a bailout lecture on the one this morning, but that's all. After lunch I took a shower and then wrote to Anne and Mr. Davis. Picked up some oil and then had Gil take some pictures. I'll have to finish the roll of film I have and send it to Ruth.

There was no mail again today. It's beginning to be a bad situation. Before supper, I started to reread some of Ruth's letters. It helps anyway.

The group was hit by fighters today. Our squadron lost four ships and one squadron lost all they had up. That's not encouraging and it brings the war that much closer.

We're scheduled for tomorrow's mission so I guess I'll get to bed. Just finished writing to Ruth. Makes me feel better.

### Monday, December 18, 1944 Mission #6 –

Blechhammer, Germany

Briefing this morning was at 0515 so we were awakened over an hour before. We only had three ships flying and the group had the grand total of fifteen. The target was Blachhammer – the same as yesterday. Naturally no one was happy about it.

We had the same ship as we had the other day and had the same trouble of hot running engines. The flak was light but fairly accurate. We had a piece come in at the half deck which cut an oxygen line. Another ship was hit and we haven't heard from the crew yet. A few of the ships didn't have

enough gas to make it all the way back and had to go in to another field.

We have a total of six ships left that can be flown. Not so good.

The mail was fairly good today. A couple from Ruth and one from Lew among others.

We went to the show at night. The picture was "Follow the Boys" and was good. We went to bed early.

Today's combat time 8:05  
Total combat time 43:45

### Tuesday, December 19, 1944

Very little to write tonight. The main event of the day was the arrival of two more letters from Ruth. Other than that I can't say much. I spent the morning straightening up my clothes and rereading some of Ruth's letters. This afternoon I fooled around with the trumpet and the accordion. Also wrote a couple of letters.

Mac and Gil went to Bari and, as I write this, haven't come back. In all, everything was very quiet.

A couple of new crews came in and we also received three new ships for the squadron. They should help out considerably.

So far as I know, we aren't scheduled on tomorrow's mission. The enlisted men are on guard duty so if I flew it would be with someone else's crew.

Wrote Ruth a half decent letter tonight for a change. I was too tired to write much last night.

### Wednesday, December 20, 1944

I suppose I can write something just for the records. There isn't anything of real importance to record though. We all went to town this morning and about all I accomplished was to get a haircut. Can't get rations at the PX anymore. The squadron will take care of it.

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I came back early and picked up a couple of packages. Two from Ruth and another from Margie. One contained the light bulbs; the other we'll see on Christmas.

There was a show tonight, but I've seen the picture twice and didn't want to sit through it a third time. I wrote to Ruth and went to bed. There was no mail although I did get a couple of packages. One had the old APO number.

### Thursday, December 21, 1944

There wasn't much doing today. There was a stand-down and the weather began to turn bad. The wing general was here at noon and that was just about the only excitement for the day. Mac and Gil went to visit Kesterson and I didn't see much of Ed all day.

I cleaned up my corner during the morning and then took a shower before lunch. We were supposed to have a meeting at two, but on seeing that it was just another parachute lecture, I decided not to go. I came back and wrote a few more letters.

That just about did it. There was no mail except for a couple of cards and a package of envelopes from Ruth.

At night I just wrote to her and went to bed about nine-thirty. We're not scheduled for tomorrow's mission.

### Friday, December 22, 1944

Today was just a little different from yesterday. It rained most of the night and it was damp and dismal all day. During the morning we all hung around the hut. About ten or so they came to inform me that I was to go down to Gioia and pick up another ship. I flew QD with a co-pilot who is going to check out as a first. We had to fly low and then they wouldn't let us land so we came back. After lunch I went to the movies they had. The picture was good. I wrote a letter and started Ruth's before supper. We ate late and then went to the USO show. It was good and certainly a morale booster. One of the girls was from Massachusetts. More of the same would be very welcome.

I finished Ruth's letter and this is where I am now. No mail today. Things are rough all over, I guess. Today's flying time 1:15  
Total flying time 59:25

### Saturday, December 23, 1944

And so another day passes and we're no further along now than we were yesterday. I had Link at 0800 this morning, but that was the only diversion during the day. It's getting cold and was damp all day. I read some of Ruth's letters, brought my log book up to date and then wrote a couple of letters.

Tonight the group orchestra was playing at the theater, but I didn't go. Wrote a fairly long letter to Ruth and spent the night in the hut.

I received a letter from her this noon and also another package arrived. It looked as though it had gone through plenty, but at least it got here.

There was another stand-down this morning and the weather for tomorrow doesn't seem to be any better. We're not scheduled so it doesn't make much difference to us.

Nothing much to do now except go to bed.

### Sunday, December 24, 1944

Don't know what I can write about today. The main event was the arrival of two letters from Ruth and a couple more packages. The packages came late tonight or rather this afternoon and seemed to have been timed perfectly.

We loafed around all morning. There was a stand-down. It rained off and on during the day. I fooled around with the accordion during the morning and took a shower before lunch. I spent most of the afternoon listening to a radio in another hut. Heard some familiar musical programs and also the Boston Symphony.

We went to the show after supper. It was pretty good. From then until about eleven I wrote to Ruth and we just sat around and talked.

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(Continued from page 9)

Oh, received a card from Edna – quite a surprise.

I guess there is plenty of Christmas spirit around depending on whether one drinks or not.

### **Monday, December 25, 1944**

Another Christmas come and gone. I hope it's the last of its kind we have to see. It was better than last year in a way. It rained most of the day and although there was a mission, they had to land at another field because of the weather.

I opened my packages this morning. Ruth sent a lot of things that I've been running low on and can use.

I fixed a switch for my light and then during the afternoon read a little and started a letter to Ruth. Mac went to town and Ed was with the enlisted men most of the day.

We had a good meal at night and then listened to a two hour "Command Performance" broadcast. It was good. When we got back here I finished my letter to Ruth although it was going on for eleven when I did.

For me it was rather lonesome throughout the whole day. Most everyone was homesick during the program.

### **Tuesday, December 26, 1944**

They decided that we had hung around long enough so as the planes came in this morning we were scheduled for a bombing practice mission for the afternoon.

This morning I didn't bother to get up for breakfast and didn't accomplish anything except to write a letter home. I had planned to do some writing during the afternoon, but that will have to wait now.

The bombing mission was high altitude and by PFF. The weather wasn't too good on the way back and we had trouble with a runaway prop. It was almost dark before we landed.

At night there was a show – not too good, but then

it was a show. I wrote to Ruth a short letter afterwards.

Received another package from her and one from the church. Also another of her letters. Perhaps now that the rush is over, the mail will improve – maybe. We're scheduled on tomorrow's mission.

### **Wednesday, December 27, 1944 Mission #7 – Venzone Viaduct, Italy**

We didn't have briefing until 0620 so we had a little more sleep than usual. There was nothing very unusual or exciting about the whole mission. Weather was good all the way and the target – a viaduct – was clear. We bombed from twenty-thousand, but our flight missed the target. And as we found out later, so did the rest of them. For a change, we were back at the field about three. We saw very little flak and no one had any trouble. There was a critique at night and there was some chewing done. I guess we'll be getting more practice in everything from now on.

I received a couple of letters from Ruth which, of course, are very welcome. Wrote her a fairly short letter at night. I was a little tired and other than to answer her letters, there was nothing to write.

Today's combat time 5:45  
Total combat time 49:30

### **Thursday, December 28, 1944**

We loafed around today. We were scheduled for ditching and bailout practice, but because of transportation difficulties we didn't get out to the line. That was the main event during the morning and nothing was accomplished.

During the afternoon, I wrote some notes in answer to Christmas cards and began a letter to Ruth before the show. There was a meeting after the movie and I figured that we'd be up for the mission tomorrow and would want to get to bed early. And that's the way it was. The picture was "Christmas Holiday" and it wasn't bad. The mail situation was very good today – four from Ruth and one or two

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*(Continued from page 10)*

others.

It wasn't too early when we got to bed, but I guess we were all asleep by ten or so.

#### **Friday, December 29, 1944 Mission #8 – Passau M/Y, Germany**

I'm writing this six days hence so I may not have all the facts as straight as they should be. Today's mission was a mess from start to where it is now. The weather wasn't too good at take-off and we had an exciting time for a while getting assembled. The target was the marshaling yards at Passau, but we finally hit the second alternative via PFF. Some flights didn't even hit that and had to go to a target in Italy. In between our main and alternate targets, we did some circling and were riddled with flak. One of the boys was shot up pretty bad. On the way back, about 100 miles north we hit bad weather and the flights split up. Our flight finally turned back to Jesi, an emergency field operated by the South African Air Force. Everyone was trying to get in there when we arrived. It was four when we landed. The mud was terrific – a foot deep and sticky. After some dubbing around we were taken in to town to a service squadron (U.S.) and they managed to feed us. I decided to sleep in the plane.

Today's combat time 8:00  
Total combat time 57:30

#### **Saturday, December 30, 1944**

To go on with the story, the rest of the boys were put up in an old warehouse on the floor and some slept with "permanent party" which, by the way, were negro boys. They were the only Americans around. The meal situation was funny. We ate with anything that could be scraped up. They gave us eight blankets last night and although it was a little chilly, I didn't do too badly. I didn't get any breakfast this morning and got back into town a little before noon time. It's much nicer than anything in Southern Italy. We couldn't take off so we just roamed around town. There was a U.S.O. show during the afternoon. We had seen it, but it helped break the monotony. During the late afternoon I spent some time in the YMCA having tea no

less and met a Scotchman with an English outfit. We talked for some time and I went back to the field with him. It was going on for ten when I went to the ship.

#### **Sunday, December 31, 1944**

Today we thought we might take off. It was cold sleeping last night and I didn't leave the plane all day. The boys came out about ten and we spent from then until late afternoon trying to get off. All the ships were hopelessly stuck and we had to be hauled out of the mud by a tractor. Five of the ships did get off including one with Gil. Capt. Poole decided to fly with me because he wanted to be the last to leave and my ship was in such a position that it would be the last. At four, the weather was bad and they wouldn't let any more ships off. We were stuck in the mud again anyhow. So back we came to town – pretty disgusted. The South African boys had invited the officers up to their place for supper and a New Year's party so some of us went. The meal was good and although I didn't drink anything but fruit juice, I enjoyed myself after supper. They had some empty beds so Capt. Poole, Mac, Beckman and I put up for the night. My bed was in a tent that was open all around and had no stove.

#### **Monday, January 1, 1945 New Year's Day**

I slept with all my clothes on. The camp was on a hill and it snowed during the night. I got up about nine and we hung around all morning and part of the afternoon. They haven't very much as far as luxuries go. We just roamed around looking for something to do. Everything was closed up. We looked like a bunch of freaks walking around in all kinds of clothing and flying equipment. My beard was getting very black and long. After supper we went to a stage show that was playing. It was British but wasn't too bad. It broke up the monotony a little. I can't remember what I had for supper – I think we stopped in some place and had tea and cakes. Loyko met some Polish fellows and talked with them for quite a while. When we got back to the negro squadron, we had to draw blankets once again. This time we slept in some rooms behind

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the orderly room.

### Tuesday, January 2, 1945

It was fairly warm but again, I slept in my clothes. I made up my mind to get a shave the first thing this morning if the weather was bad. So after breakfast (some eggs on bread) we took off for town again and all of us got a shave. Then we started to wander around again. Mac and Beckman "flirted" with the girls and we spent more time in the "café" having tea and cakes. Lunch consisted of a pork chop on bread. During the afternoon, we thought we could get off and so we dashed off for the line again, but they talked us out of it. We came back to the squadron and after a good chicken dinner, we came in town to see a stage show, but the line was two miles long and then some. We decided not to wait so went over and had more tea. Then we went to the show. The picture was old but good. Tonight we slept on the floor of an old warehouse right next to a room the Negros used for a bar and over the kitchen.

### Wednesday, January 3, 1945

After spending most of the morning sitting around in the ship waiting for the tractor to haul us out of the mud, we finally dug ourselves out and at 1140 convinced the boys in the tower that it was OK for us to take off.

We didn't sleep at all last night between the bar and the kitchen.

We came back at 190 MPH and got here a little before one. It was good to get back. There was a lot of mail waiting and I'll have quite a bit of writing to do.

They haven't flown any missions and the weather has been pretty bad. I don't think that we'll be up for tomorrow's mission, but don't know for sure.

Wrote to Ruth tonight and now it's time to get to bed for some sleep, I hope.

Today's flying time 1:10  
Total flying time 60:35

### Thursday, January 4, 1945

Really slept well last night and didn't wake until 0730 this morning. After breakfast, I shaved and went to town. Gil says that they wanted me to fly about eleven. I didn't get back until about one. I got paid and then went to the post office and had some money orders made out. There was nothing at the PX to get and after some coffee at the Red Cross, had my hair cut.

During the afternoon, I wrote a couple of short letters and helped Ed install one of the tanks we brought back from Jesi. In all, I didn't accomplish very much. We did a lot of talking and that didn't help any.

After supper, I wrote to Ruth and we're up for the mission tomorrow. Got to bed about nine or attempted to anyway.

### Friday, January 5, 1945

Today we did something that I've been hoping we wouldn't – abort. On takeoff we began leaking gas and it didn't get any worse, but it didn't improve. The bomb bay was full of fumes and I couldn't make up my mind. The mission was a short one to Yugo and I didn't want to miss it (Gil was riding as pilot with another crew). Finally, a prop ran away and that decided the issue. We were back before noon.

I spent the rest of the day reading the mail that came and also wrote a couple of short letters. At night there was a show – "Up in Mable's Room". It was a riot. The group reached target all right and made four runs. There was an undercast though and according to orders, didn't drop the bombs. They got credit for the mission though so Gil is one up on us. I wrote to Ruth. We talked baseball for a while and it was eleven when I got to bed.

Today's flying time 1:35  
Total flying time 62:10

### Saturday, January 6, 1945

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Not much to say about today. Something I ate yesterday didn't set very well and I was awake most of the night. At five this morning I had to get up and let it go. I went to the dispensary after I got up and got some pills. I was scheduled to fly, but Doc grounded me for the day. The weather wasn't too good and the flight was eventually called off. I didn't begin to feel good until late in the afternoon.

During the afternoon I wrote two or three v-mail letters and that is about all. Time just flies by whether I'm busy or not.

I didn't eat anything all day until supper. By then I was beginning to feel pretty good. I wrote to Ruth and then just fooled around. I guess it was going on for eleven when I got to bed.

Ed has an electric motor all fixed and as soon as the floor is put in we can have our shower.

### Sunday, January 7, 1945

Six days passed since "today" and a lot has happened. I don't quite remember what happened today so this won't be any too accurate nor long. All I can remember is that around noon time I took a shower. On and off during the day I fooled around with Ed and the water system. During the afternoon I wrote a letter or two and started writing to Ruth before supper. There was a show although I can't remember what the name of the picture was.

I finished writing to my wife and got to bed. We're up for tomorrow's mission and in the same ship we had the other day. No mail.

### Monday, January 8, 1945 Mission #9 – Southern Germany

And this was another messed up mission and costly as we found out later. We were supposed to go to Linz, but ran into clouds and weather in northern Italy. They decided to go on and climbed on up to above 25,000 feet pulling power like mad. Gil was riding with another crew and they began having engine trouble. Another ship was also having trouble and our #3 oil pressure wasn't doing so well either. Our windows frosted up and our flight became separated from the group. Gil finally

dropped out. The lead ship also feathered an engine and in a little while, we dropped our bombs (somewhere) and we lost #3. We left the formation and headed home. Our gas was low and part way across the Adriatic I decided to head for Jesi - #1 scared us for a minute, but we reached Jesi and on the approach #2 ran away so Gilbert feathered that. We landed on two engines. So there we were back at our "alternate base." I was really sweating. My co-pilot was Clay, a fellow from group. We got ourselves set up and then went to see "The Desert Song."

Today's combat time 7:30

Total combat time 65:00

### Tuesday, January 9, 1945

Nothing much to talk about today. I sent a message to group requesting transportation. They tell me that the engine will have to be changed. The weather is bad so I don't imagine they'll be up for us very soon.

We hung around the warehouse (I slept on the floor all night) and roamed around town for a while. We also spent some time in the café for "tea and crumpets."

Mac and Ed went out after a radio. I guess they managed to get one, but I won't say from where.

It's almost as comical as it was last week, but at least we know a little about what's going on.

At night we went to the small American Theater and saw "The Sky is The Limit" with Fred Astaire. It's old but I haven't seen it before and it was very entertaining. I also wrote a short v-mail to Ruth.

### Wednesday, January 10, 1945

This morning there was nothing much to do. We went in to town fairly early expecting to get a shave. Most of the shops weren't open so we went down to the finance office where one of the boys was paid. After that we dubbed around town until lunch time.

I read a little and then we went back to town and

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got a shave. While we were at the café, a brawl started in which there was a chair throwing and a gun went off. No one was hurt.

We then took in another show – the South African one. The picture was OK, but the power wasn't too good and consequently the music which made up most of the picture was just no good.

I read for a while before going to bed. I have a cot tonight which will be much better than the floor.

### Thursday, January 11, 1945

I stayed in bed reading for quite some time this morning. There was nothing to do so I just didn't bother getting up. After lunch we just hung around some more and I read a couple of more books. Really going in for it in a big way.

Loyko and the rest of them bought some turkeys which they were going to have about eight-thirty tonight. I didn't feel like having any. They went in to town early. I had supper and then went in. I wrote a v-mail to Ruth while at the café and then went down to the American Theater for the eight o'clock show. It was "Lost Angels" and was very good.

I got a message this afternoon saying that transportation was being sent for us.

### Friday, January 12, 1945

Again this morning, I stayed in bed reading until Benedict came in and said that our ship was going to be ready this afternoon. I got up then and found out that it would be set to go after it had been serviced. So after lunch we went out to the ship. Someone had made a haul of parachutes and flying equipment. We "borrowed" some chutes and at 1520 we took off from there. Our oil was a little low and there was no oil on the field at the time so we left anyway.

When we got back to the base, we found that Gil's ship had not been heard from. The lead ship also went down at Vis, but the crew had come back yesterday. Our tent had caved in with the weight of snow and although the boys had put it back up,

things were in a mess. In general, we feel low tonight. I wrote a short letter to Ruth.

Today's flying time 1:20  
Total flying time 63:30

### Saturday, January 13, 1945

No one knows just what did happen to Gil's ship. If I didn't try to come across the Adriatic he may be OK. We'll just have to wait and see what happens.

Today wasn't interesting at all. Kunkes, the co-pilot on the crew Gil is with moved in with us and he brought a radio. Ed and I got some fuel and we straightened up the tent. It was in a mess as a result of the cave-in.

During the afternoon I just dabbled around. Waited in line for rations and other than that, the afternoon just went by.

At night the orchestra played at the show and there was a couple of bond drawings. Then there was a brief talk about the doings of this group during the past year. They also had a short G.I. movie which wasn't bad.

No mail today except a couple of old pieces including one written by Ruth in October.

### Sunday, January 14, 1945

A wet, dreary and lonesome Sunday describes this day. We had nothing to do except some ditching in the morning. I spent the rest of the day in the hut. The power was off until supper and we didn't have the benefit of the radio.

Since Monday there has been no mission because of the weather and today was no exception.

I had to make out a list covering the stuff we lost at Jesi and during the afternoon I wrote a couple of letters. We also fooled around getting some water into our tank.

At night I started a letter to Ruth and four hours later, I was still writing. On the third page though I

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couldn't put my mind to it. A couple of the enlisted men were in to talk over the results of an incident that took place yesterday. We straightened it out.

There was no mail – very discouraging.

### Monday, January 15, 1945

And what am I to say about today? It was a very cold monotonous, uninteresting, dreary and wasted day. There wasn't anything scheduled and no further word about Gil. I mailed a package to Peggy and one to his mother that he had wrapped and addressed last week.

Ed and I fooled around with the water system and we have a panel with a couple of valves mounted that controls the hot and cold water.

I wrote a couple of short letters and more or less dubbed around.

It wasn't a bad day as far as weather was concerned and there was a mission.

At night I didn't go to the show. I had seen it and didn't want to see it twice. Wrote to Ruth and then listened to the radio for a while. We aren't up for the mission tomorrow.

### Tuesday, January 16, 1945

Today was made bright by the arrival of two letters from Ruth – one of them being her "Christmas Letter." It certainly was good to hear from her again.

There was a stand-down again this morning. The weather became steadily worse during the course of the day and it's been raining for the past three or four hours.

We became ambitious today and worked on the hut exclusively. The Italians cemented in our sink and I painted the door, my window and desk. Mac and Ed did their windows and desk. It kept us busy and broke the monotony.

Four fellows from two crews who went down a month ago when the group was hit by fighters came

back today. That's always a good morale booster.

There still hasn't been any word about Gil. We'll have to begin packing his things. I wish that we didn't have to do it. I still think that he's OK somewhere. We all hope so and that he'll get back here.

### Wednesday, January 17, 1945

This was a very cold, wet and dreary day. It rained all day and is still coming down. We spent the day in the hut the best place on this kind of day.

I didn't accomplish very much during the course of the day. Cleaned up the hut in the morning and wrote four short letters in the afternoon. We had the water tank fill up our two supply tanks and now the water system is working fairly well. The steam has been eliminated.

Tonight I wrote to Ruth and then played a little solitaire. Right now I'm listening to the radio. I did a little reading during the day and also reread some of Ruth's letters. There was no mail and no word on Gil.

The Russians are moving again – Warsaw has been liberated.

### Thursday, January 18, 1945

This is getting tiresome. Today we had the day off, officially, and I loafed just a little more than I have during the past week or so. This morning we fooled around some more with the water system and I got ten gallons of fuel. Then before lunch I went down and took a shower. During the afternoon I didn't even write any letters. I went over to see the enlisted men for a while and then reread some of Ruth's letters. It's the next best thing to getting mail. I didn't hear from her again today. Getting a little aggravated about the whole thing. Received a letter from Mrs. Dixon written Jan. 2 so at least I know that she's OK up through then.

Tonight I wrote to my wife and then listened to the radio. Mac and Ed burlesqued in a couple of dresses that Mac received from his mother for use in his "operations."

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### **Friday, January 19, 1945**

Fair, mild and not much change in activities. They did schedule me for a couple of lectures this morning that broke up the monotony a little. This afternoon was just another. I packed most of Gil's stuff and put together his letters and pictures, then took them over to supply. They will keep his things for a month and then send them home.

There was no mail again this afternoon – very discouraging.

At night there was a fairly good show. At least it was good for some laughs – Abbott and Costello in "Lost in a Harem." I tried writing to Ruth, but one sheet was the best I could do.

Got to bed by ten. We're flying tomorrow. Number ten, I hope.

### **Saturday, January 20, 1945, Mission #10, Linz, Austria**

And it was a rough day. We briefed at six and took off two hours later for Linz. We were flying #3. Encountered cirrus on the way up and were in it for a thousand feet. It was cold, -58°F and one of my fingers just about reached the limit. My feet must have been cold too because one heel nearly killed me after we landed. Anyway, the target was rough. One ship caught fire and blew up. Another split in two. And we got a broadside too. Benedict was hit in the leg – it may be fractured. We counted almost 40 flak holes mostly in the waist section. The thing looked like a sieve. An oxygen line was shot out and Kunkes went dry as did Mac. We had to think fast, but made out OK. The bomb doors wouldn't close so we came back with them open. The landing was lousy – 25 MPH – and I leveled too high. I didn't do anything today worth mentioning so I Landed off the runway – got on it and skidded most of the way down it. We came back part way with A Flight – lost them coming down through the overcast and then came on in alone. Don't care if I never fly combat again.

Today's combat time 7:00  
Total combat time 72:00

### **Sunday, January 21, 1945**

I tried writing to Ruth last night, but just couldn't get my mind on it. They had a critique but it didn't last long. To (one "o") top the day off, we had a rough wind storm around one. Hy and I got up and tightened up the ropes. I went back to sleep in a half hour or so, but woke again at three. This time it was really blowing. The wall moved each time the wind blew. Hy and I moved our beds out from the wall and it was some time before I got back to sleep.

We were scheduled for formation practice, lead ship. It was a little rough. We were down before three and missed the USO show. From then until supper I just fooled around not doing much of anything. Oh! We're going to Capri tomorrow after the show which was a good western for a change. I wrote to Ruth and then packed up my clothes that I'm taking tomorrow. The music tonight was good and it was midnight before I got to bed.

Two letters from Ruth today and they are swell.

Today's flying time 2:30  
Total flying time 66:00

### **Monday, January 22, 1945**

Well, our plans were changed today and consequently I haven't much to write about. We woke up this morning with two or three inches of snow on the ground and it's still coming down. It was a mean day, but the snow began to melt and it's gone now. It's getting cold and the wind is blowing like the devil.

The main event was the arrival of four letters from my wife. That was the only advantage of not going to Capri. If it is a good day tomorrow, I imagine we'll go then.

I didn't do anything today worth mentioning so I won't.

### **Tuesday, January 23, 1945**

Today was wasted and nothing was accomplished. The plane for Naples was supposed to be ready to

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go at 1130. We waited around until after noon before we even got out to the line. There were about twenty-five in the ship and we had just started to taxi when the thing skidded into a ditch. One wheel went down so far that the nose wheel caved in and the plane rested on the bomb bay and left wing.

We were ready to take off in another ship when one taking off cracked up on the runway. The Colonel closed the field. I didn't feel like going then anyway. I saw Major Poole and asked that we be taken off orders until next week. He agreed to that.

There was a show tonight – not too good. Received a letter from Ruth and wrote her after the movie.

The Russians are still making good progress. We're rooting for them.

### Wednesday, January 24, 1945

Another wasted day, another stand-down although the weather wasn't too bad. During the afternoon, I wrote four or five short letters. The morning was spent cleaning up the hut and generally fooling around. I guess I luggered a few gallons of fuel some time during the course of the day.

A couple of the enlisted men went in to see Benedict this afternoon. From what the doctor knows now, I guess they may send him home. He may also have a stiff leg permanently. I hope that they do send him home. He's going to be moved to Bari the first of next week. I should get in to see him before then.

The day ended with a letter to Ruth and I got to bed at ten-thirty. A little early for a change.

### Thursday, January 25, 1945

Today varied little from the previous days of this week. This morning after the weather had cleared a little we flew some practice formation – lead ship again. Set up the C-1 on the radio compass and take it easy. We were only up a couple of hours until noon.

During the afternoon, I cleaned my gun and made a couple of trips to the "tailor shop" just getting around to getting patches put on my shirts. I also

read a story before supper and then took in the show. It was an old picture I had seen before, but....

Soon after I began writing to Ruth the lights went off. I finished the letter and am writing this by flashlight. Guess I might just as well go to bed.

Three pretty nice letters from my wife today.

Today's flying time 2:00  
Total flying time 68:00

### Friday, January 26, 1945

Little change today – another stand-down with not much to do. We did have to go out to the line at ten to practice ditching and bailout. During the afternoon I read and wrote one or two short notes. At three I had to fly with a new crew on an orientation ride and at the same time, slow time a new engine. We didn't get off the ground until after four and it was getting dark when I landed.

The evening was the same as usual. I couldn't write a decent letter to Ruth to save myself. Wonder what she must think.

We haven't yet heard whether or not we're going to Capri this coming week. I'd just as soon go.

Tomorrow I'm going to try and go in to see Benedict. He's supposed to leave for Bari on Monday.

Today's flying time 1:15  
Total flying time 69:15

### Saturday, January 27, 1945

Today was a little different – at least the afternoon was. The morning was just about the same as they have been. There was another stand-down and I didn't have anything to do.

This afternoon Mac and I went in to town to the hospital. It's the first time I've been in town since before Christmas.

Benedict seems to be OK and, of course, he's much elated over the possibility of going home. We stayed not quite an hour and then went to the PX,

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# **461<sup>st</sup>/484<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group**

## *Annual Reunion*

### **October 10-13, 2013**

## **ITINERARY**

### **Thursday, October 10<sup>th</sup> - Arrival and Check-In.**

Thursday - Sunday - Registration in Hospitality Room (Rose Room). Hospitality Room will be open all day with refreshments.

**4:00 PM** - 461st Board Meeting in Board Room

**7:00 PM** - All Group Welcome and Information Meeting in Regency Room.

### **Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup> - Boys Town and SAC Museum**

**9:30 AM** - Depart Sheraton Hotel

**9:45 - 11:30** - Father Flanagan's Boys Town Tour

**12:00** - Lunch at Mahoney (State Park) Grille

**1:15 - 2:30** - Strategic Air and Space Museum Tour

**3:00** - Return to Sheraton Hotel

**6:00 PM** - Social hour with cash bar outside the Rose Room

**7:00 PM** - Group dinners. 461st in Dodge 3 Room; 484th in Dodge 1 &2 Room

### **Saturday, October 12<sup>th</sup> - City History and Landmarks and Offutt AFB**

**9:00 AM** - Depart Sheraton Hotel

**9:30 - 11:30** - Omaha City Tour (pick up guides at Omaha Visitors Center)

**11:35 - 12:15** - Box Lunch at Durham Museum

**12:15 - 1:30** - Durham Museum - Omaha Union Train Station Self guided tour

**2:00 - 3:15** - Offutt Air Force Base and SAC Chapel Tour

**3:45** - Return to the Sheraton Hotel

**6:00 PM** - Social hour with cash bar in the Dodge Room.

**7:00 PM** - Combined Group Dinner in the Dodge Room

### **Sunday, October 13<sup>th</sup>**

**8:30 AM** - Memorial Breakfast in the Regency Room

**10:30** - Reunion Ends Until Next Time

**NOTE:** The Offutt Air Force Base portion of the Saturday tour is an ON BASE tour and each person that plans to be on board the bus that day must be on a pre-approved list. If you're taking the tour that day and DO NOT have a D.O.D. identification card (Military or civilian ID) you MUST provide a name and drivers license number with state of issue or other state issued ID. Anyone not on this pre-approved list will not be allowed on the base tour. Please submit this information on a separate piece of paper along with your registration form.

**NOTE:** As reported in the December 2010 issue of this publication, the Association voted unanimously to pay for the cost of 461<sup>st</sup> veterans to participate in this reunion. These costs include: Registration Fee, Group Meal Costs and Tour Costs. When you fill out your registration page, please **DO** include the veteran in the "# of persons" section but **DO NOT** include the veteran in the "Sub Total" section.

# **461<sup>st</sup>/484<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group-Reunion 2013**

## **HOTEL INFORMATION**

DATE: October 10-13, 2013

LOCATION: **Sheraton Omaha Hotel**  
655 North 108th Avenue  
Omaha, NE 68154

ROOM RATES: \$74.00 per room, per night plus tax. This rate will be good for three days prior to and three days after the reunion. There's a hot breakfast buffet available for a discounted price of \$8.15 per person (gratuity not included) .

RESERVATIONS: (402) 496-0850 or (800) 325-3535 to make your reservation. Tell them you are with the 461st/484th Bomb Group. Major credit card required for guarantee.

PARKING: Free

**Free hotel shuttle to and from the airport 24-hours a day. Please contact Dave Blake with your flight number and arrival time so he can arrange for the shuttle. If possible please E-Mail this information to Dave at [reunion@461st.org](mailto:reunion@461st.org). If you must call with this information instead, call Dave evenings at (913) 523-4044.**

**461<sup>st</sup> & 484<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Reunion**

October 10 - 13, 2013  
Omaha, Nebraska



Please complete and return this form by September 19, 2013. Cancellations CAN be made with a full refund if you find later that you cannot attend so please, get this form in soon. Late registrations, however, will be accepted.

Name _____	Group _____	Squadron _____
Spouse _____	Family/Guest Names _____	
(Note: Please enter names as you would like them to appear on the name tags)		
Address _____	City _____	
State _____ ZIP _____	Phone _____	E-Mail _____
Registration Fee	_____ @ \$12.00 per person # of persons including Veteran	Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)
<b><u>Friday, October 11<sup>th</sup></u></b>		
<b>Boys Town &amp; SAC Museum Tour with lunch at Mahoney (State Park) Grille</b>		
_____ @ \$53.00 per person # of persons including Veteran		
Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)		
<b>461<sup>st</sup> BG Friday Evening Dinner</b>		
Chicken Piccatta	_____ @ \$29.00 per person # of persons including Veteran	Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)
Baked Tilapia	_____ @ \$26.00 per person # of persons including Veteran	Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)
Penne Pasta	_____ @ \$22.00 per person # of persons including Veteran	Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)
<b><u>Saturday, October 12<sup>th</sup></u></b>		
<b>Omaha City Tour with lunch and Tour at Durham Museum, Offutt AFB Tour</b>		
_____ @ \$43.00 per person # of persons including Veteran		
Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)		
<b>Combined Group Banquet</b>		
Filet Mignon (Omaha Steaks)	_____ @ \$56.00 per person # of persons including Veteran	Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)
Metropolitan Chicken	_____ @ \$34.00 per person # of persons including Veteran	Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)
Portobello w/ Beans Latkes & Broccolini	_____ @ \$26.00 per person # of persons including Veteran	Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)
<b><u>Sunday, October 13<sup>th</sup></u></b>		
Memorial Breakfast - Traditional Breakfast, Fruit, bacon & eggs with potatoes.	_____ @ \$17.00 # of persons	Subtotal \$ _____ (Do NOT include cost for Veteran)
GRAND TOTAL \$ _____		
EMERGENCY CONTACT: _____		Could You Use a Wheelchair? Yes _____ No _____
PHONE: _____		

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS REGISTRATION FORM AND MAIL ALONG WITH YOUR CHECK TO:  
461st/484th Reunion, Attn: Dave Blake, 648 Lakewood Road, Bonner Springs, KS 66012-1804

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but there wasn't anything that I needed except for a valentine for Ruth.

There was no movie tonight for some season or other, probably a breakdown of the machine.

The flight plan was changed and "C" flight went up for tomorrow's mission. McGarr and Farris are grounded, but they got us a couple of spare gunners. Hope there's a stand-down.

### Sunday, January 28, 1945

They woke us up for briefing at five, but were informed of a stand-down when we reached the mess hall. Didn't make me feel badly. I didn't sleep any too well last night and was hoping that the weather would be bad.

A practice flight was scheduled, but called off before eight. At ten it was called on again. We had begun to taxi when the tower decided to call it off again because of weather moving in. A cold front hit at about one-thirty and it was miserable from then on - snow, cold and windy.

I stayed in the hut and did some writing.

Received five letters from Ruth. The doctor thinks she will have a boy. I prefer a girl, but that is one thing we can't help.

I didn't bother to pack tonight because I don't think that we'll go tomorrow.

### Monday, January 29, 1945

Here we go again. Yesterday's storm continued on through most of the night. Although I had set the alarm for 0630, I didn't even bother to get up until an hour later. There was no ship going to Naples so I don't know when we'll go to Capri.

It was quite cold all day and I spent most of the time in the hut. I didn't even go to lunch (they say it was terrible anyway).

I did quite a bit of reading. I attempted a letter this afternoon, but gave it up as a bad job. There was a show tonight, but it was pretty bad.

I learned from Major Poole that the enlisted men will get their promotion this month. They'll be glad to hear that.

Received one letter from Ruth today. Mail has been good this past week just for a change.

### Tuesday, January 30, 1945

Not much to talk about tonight – another stand-down and we didn't get off for Naples.

Just hung around the hut all day mostly reading. It was cold and the best place to be during the day was in by the fire.

Major Poole said that if we didn't go tomorrow, we'll probably go off orders.

At night I wrote to Ruth and stayed up quite late listening to the radio.

The Russians are beginning to press Berlin and the western front is showing signs of starting through, I hope.

### Wednesday, January 31, 1945

I decided today that I didn't want to go to Capri. We got our orders this morning and went out to the ship. It was being fixed and come to find out group called the trip off. In the meantime, the ship was fixed, but the squadron decided that it was too late to go.

So I went in to town. I went to see Benedict and then picked up my pay. Got a couple of money orders and then came back.

There was no mail from Ruth today, but I did get a letter from home. The first time in a couple of weeks or more.

We were taken off orders tonight and put up for the mission tomorrow. Guess I had better get to bed.

More from Robert Harrison's daily log in the next issue of the Liberaider.

## **461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association Membership**

For membership in the 461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association, please print this form, fill it out and mail it along with your check for the appropriate amount to:

Dave St. Yves  
5 Hutt Forest Lane  
East Taunton, MA 02718

If you have any questions, you can E-Mail Dave at [dstyves@pmn.com](mailto:dstyves@pmn.com).

The 461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association offers three types of membership:

- **Life Membership** – Men who served in the 461<sup>st</sup> during World War II and their spouses are eligible to join the Association for a one-time fee of \$25.00. This entitles the member to attend the annual reunions held in the fall each year, receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reunion.
- **Associate Membership** – Anyone wishing to be involved in the 461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association may join as an Associate member. The cost is \$10.00 per year. No renewal notices are sent so it is your responsibility to submit this form every year along with your payment. Associate membership entitles you to attend the reunions held in the fall each year and receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider. You are not a voting member of the Association.
- **Child Membership** – Children of men who served in the 461<sup>st</sup> during World War II are eligible to join the Association as a Child Member. The cost is \$10.00 per year. No renewal notices are sent out so it is your responsibility to submit this form every year along with your payment. Child membership entitles you to attend the reunions held in the fall each year, receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reunion.

Type of membership desired:		<input type="checkbox"/> Life:	<input type="checkbox"/> Associate:	<input type="checkbox"/> Child:	Father's Name:
First Name:				Last Name:	
Street Address:					
City:		State:		ZIP:	
Phone Number:				E-Mail Address:	
Squadron:		Crew #:		MOS:	
Check No.:				Amount:	

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seemed to avoid crewmembers because of his view on dropping bombs and health. Frank was the medical officer on the crew and took care of me until we landed at Foggia, Italy.

**Navigator: Kenneth K. Kase**, Scarsdale, New York 10583. His fourth wife, Sandy, is a school principal. Ken was born 6 October 1924 and died 4 November 2003. Ken was a lawyer. We visited Ken in the early 1950s and he took us to Yankee Stadium and to see Mark Froot our former lower turret gunner. Ken and Sandy came as often as possible to reunions and had a good time. Sandy was a really nice lady.

**Engineer & Waist Gunner: Garland Mattingly**, was from Loogootee, Indiana but died in Indianapolis, Indiana 46256. His wife was Mary. Garland was born 1919 and died 29 April 1993. He sold building supplies. He had been in the CCCs before joining the Air Corps. He worked on planes on the line for several years. Matt was a great guy and because of his age, we called him "Pappy". They came to all reunions while he was alive. My mother and his mother communicated during the war and after.

**Radio Operator & Waist Gunner: Oral C. Craig**, was born in Texas and died 15 May 2005 and lived in Okemah, Oklahoma 74859. His second wife was Judy. O.C. became a lawyer and a judge. He lost his left arm on a bombing mission 13 February 1945 to Vienna Central Repair Shops, Austria. Later he became blind. In the service he had been a radio instructor. He had a daughter, Kay, by his first marriage and a grandson. We all called him O.C. He came to reunions by himself and really enjoyed them.

**Tail Gunner: John W. (Slim)(Bill) Mattheis, Jr.**, Born in Connersville, Indiana 28 September 1925 but his home town was Cambridge City, Indiana. His wife, Betty Lou McCullough, from Cambridge City, Indiana. Wounded in his left chest and left arm on a mission to northern Italy 18 November 1944. He now lives in Maple Grove, Minnesota 55369. Worked at Danners Inc. as an assistant manager, manager, district manager and an assistant vice president of store operations for 35 years. Retired in 1983. Had one daughter, Connie Jo. She

married Al LaTendresse and they have two daughters, Melissa Joann and Lindsey Elizabeth.

**Top Turret Gunner & Armorer: Wallace W. Thomas**, born in Texas and living in Ben Brook, Texas 76126. His second wife is Natalines. We all called him Wally and he loves to play golf. They came to several reunions.

**Ball Turret Gunner: Mark Froot**, lived in New York. Born 30 October 1925 and died February 1975. We visited him in the early 1950s and he told us he was in the plastic business. He was married at that time and lived in an apartment.

**Nose Gunner: George F. Zobal**, born 1923 in New Jersey and lives now in Boynton Beach, Florida 33437. His wife is Doris. They had two children, son Robert, who lives in Minnesota, and a daughter, Dale, who lives in New Jersey. George worked for Exxon Oil. They have a son-in-law, Steve, and grandson, Andrew. George has had both knees replaced. George and I were the stay at the base guys on the crew and ran around together. They came to nearly all reunions. George took over my tail gunner position after I was wounded. George and I were both trained in the tail turret, but since he was larger than I was he was assigned the nose turret.

The Japanese attacked the United States territories in the Pacific on Sunday, December 7, 1941. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and the United States Congress declared war on Japan the next day. I was sixteen at the time and a junior at the Lincoln High School in Cambridge City, Indiana. By taking a few extra courses I was able to graduate in three and a half years of high school. I was graduated in May of 1943 at the age of seventeen and went to work in Connersville, Indiana as an aircraft assembler.

Like many young men at the time I was afraid the war would be over before I was old enough to serve in some branch of the armed forces. I had tried to get my parents, John and Loucille Mattheis, to sign my enlistment papers since I had become seventeen years old. Finally the day before my eighteenth birthday mother signed the papers for me to take the test to enter the United States Army Air Corps.

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Little did I realize what was in store for me.

I received my enlistment papers to report to Indianapolis, Indiana to take the Air Corps mental test. I passed the mental test and went the next day to Stout Field in Indianapolis, Indiana to take the physical examination. Malcolm Bowman, a friend of mine, went with me but failed the eye examination so never got to serve. I had problems meeting the weight requirements. I was five foot eleven and three quarters inches tall and the minimum weight for this height was one hundred and forty pounds. They told me to go out and eat and drink as much as I could and come back. I consumed as much as I could and went back in and weighed the necessary one hundred and forty pounds. I was going into the United States Army Air Corps.

I returned home and volunteered for the draft. The draft board sent me a letter to report to the Cambridge City, Indiana draft board on December 9, 1943 to go to Indianapolis, Indiana to take the army physical. After we got to the place in Indianapolis, they realized that I had already passed the Air Corps physical. They told me to go sit in the bleachers until the rest of the group had completed their physicals. In mid-afternoon they called me to join the group and we were sworn into the United States Army.

I returned home to await the local draft board's call to report for induction into active service. After about a month, I received my papers to report January 11, 1944 to the draft board. Several of us were taken by bus to Fort Benjamin Harrison at Indianapolis.

At Fort Ben we were issued Army clothing and told regularly to police the area for trash and cigarette butts, gotten up at three in the morning to be on K.P. all day till late at night and any other dirty job they could find. They were making sure they got the best of the Air Corps men while they could. Mother, Dad and younger brother Jerry and Betty Howell, came over to visit me on Sunday. After a week at Fort Ben we boarded a train to go to our basic training camp at Greensboro, North Carolina.

All the men who passed the Air Force entrance test

went into, the Air Corps as possible candidates to become officers. On a large bomber there was a crew of ten, four officers, pilot, co-pilot, navigators, bombardier and six enlisted men as gunners.

When we arrived in Greensboro, North Carolina most of us decided the place had been miss-named. There seemed to be dirty red mud everywhere. There was nothing green to be found.

At Greensboro we spent our time taking mental and physical tests, getting shots, learning to march the Army way and watching educational movies. Out of over four hundred men being tested only twenty passed to begin training to become pilots, navigators, and bombardiers. The rest of us headed for basic gunnery school. Later we heard that the ones who passed the test ended up working on the flight line washing planes. We had one full dress inspection while we were in Greensboro, but I was in bed with the flu so didn't have to participate. We camped out a few nights and they had us do some infantry field problems. At the rifle range we qualified with the M1, Carbine, and the forty-five automatic.

At the end of approximately thirty days the men who had passed the test for basic gunnery training were promoted to Private First Class and loaded in a troop train for an unknown destination. The train cars were old converted wooden boxcars with seats-and windows, and we were dressed in winter clothing. After three days we arrived in hot Laredo, Texas on the Mexican border, where we were scheduled to take our Basic Aerial Gunnery instructions.

The first week at Laredo we spent doing general duty such as K. P. and going out in the desert to dig up plants to bring back to decorate the base. There were lots of rattlesnakes in the desert and some of the permanent people at the base would kill the rattlesnakes, cut off their rattles, and sell the tails to local people in town.

I got a terrible sunburn when I went to sleep while lying in the sun. If you can't do regular duty in the service because of sunburn, you can be court marshaled. I was lucky that a buddy slipped me into the back door of the base hospital for some treatment.

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Gunnery training in the AT-6s (AT stands for advance trainer. B for bomber. P for pursuit) was cancelled the week that I started Basic Gunnery School. Thank goodness for that, since most of those pilots weren't happy with their jobs and liked to make the gunnery students suffer for it. They gave students really wild rides. The planes we flew in were AT-18s and the B-24D Liberator.

My first ride ever in an airplane was in a B-24 Liberator on a gunnery mission where live 50-caliber ammunition was used to shoot at a long cloth sleeve. Air Corps women pilots usually flew the towing planes for these sleeves. The tow plane had the sleeve attached to a cable and would fly well ahead of the plane with the gunners aboard. The cable and the sleeve would be released gradually so that each gunner could fire their gun at the sleeve. The ammunition in each firing position had a different color of paint on the tip of each projectile so that the paint would show on the sleeve. After the plane landed everyone went over and counted their hits on the sleeve. You were supposed to have a certain percentage of hits to qualify as an Aerial Gunner.

On this first airplane ride when I was already scared to death, the instructor told me to get in the tail turret. This I did, when all of a sudden there were loud noises and the plane started to shake. I figured the plane was going to crash, so I jumped out the turret and ran up to the waist area. The instructor asked me why I wasn't in the tail turret, so I told him I thought the plane was going to crash. After he got through laughing, he told me to get back in the tail turret and stay there. The firing of the guns caused the noise and the shaking from other gunners' positions.

On other gunnery mission we would have cameras attached to our guns to track attacking AT-6s and P-40s. The film would be reviewed to see if we were tracking the planes correctly. When flying, everything in the world seemed right. The beautiful white clouds looked like you could get out of the plane and walk on them and the sky was never so blue.

Our gunnery class group spent six very busy weeks. We learned aircraft identification, disassembling and assembling several types of guns, evaluating

gun malfunctions and repairing them, shooting BBs from gun turrets at model airplanes, shooting skeet and many other things. Our class was divided into two sections and one section flew in the morning and had ground school in the afternoon, and the other section did the opposite. Some guys failed to qualify as Aerial Gunners because of air sickness or not being able to pass the ground school or gunnery courses.

The weather in Texas was very nice in the spring of the year. One day a couple of my friends and I rode a bus to downtown Laredo and walked over to old Mexico. We did a lot of looking around and I bought a pair of shoes. Unfortunately, these guys were killed later when their B-24 bomber was shot down on a bombing mission over Germany in the fall of 1944.

I really enjoyed shooting skeet. We fired at least twenty-five rounds a day at clay discs. Several times they strapped us in the back of a pickup truck and would drive us around a winding course to shoot skeet coming from all different directions. Some of the guys would fail to get the gunstock onto their shoulder in the right position and would end up with very sore black and blue shoulder and arm. One evening we were taken directly from the mess hall and told to go directly to our barracks, get a blanket from our bunk and report outside our barracks in ten minutes. When we reported they loaded us into trucks and took us out to the airfield. They assigned us two to a plane and told us to lie down on the wings. There was a storm approaching the coast and the planes had been flown to our field from Corpus Christi Air Field for safety. We were to hold down the planes if the storm came inland that far so the planes would not be damaged. Guess who they considered the most important?

After successfully completing our six weeks of Aerial Gunnery School, I was promoted to Corporal and given a ten-day delay enroute to our next air base, which was Lincoln, Nebraska. We were to report at the new base on June 6, 1944. That was D-Day in Europe. I remember waking up the morning of the sixth and hearing about the invasion on the radio.

They promised us that the train we were to take

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north from Laredo was the fastest transportation available, but it seemed to stop at every other telephone pole. We were supposed to go to Chicago, Illinois and then get another train down to Richmond, Indiana. Cecil (Red) McCracken and I got off the slow train in St. Louis, Missouri and caught another train directly to Richmond, Indiana. I hitch hiked from Richmond to Cambridge City, Indiana, my hometown. It was good to be home! I traded cigarettes to my farmer Uncle Raymond Shank for tractor gas for my dad's car. Many years later my Uncle Raymond died of lung cancer. Gas was one of the many things rationed during the war.

After the short leave Red and I caught the train together to go to Lincoln, Nebraska. Red and I hadn't known each other before we went into the Air Corps but were together in most duties in the service. We tried to be assigned to the same aircrew but were not allowed for some reason. We stayed at Lincoln only a short time. They loaded us on a train headed to Overseas Training Units (O.T.C.) at Davis Monthan Air Field at Tucson, Arizona, where we were put with our crewmembers immediately. Our crew consisted of ten men: George Zobal from New Jersey, nose turret gunner, Mark Froot from New York, ball turret gunner, Garland Mattingly from Indiana, engineer and waist gunner, Wallace Thomas from Texas, armor and top turret gunner, and another guy who was supposed to be our radioman and waist gunner who suddenly disappeared one day. O.C. Craig from Oklahoma was later assigned to our crew as radioman and waist gunner. We met our pilot Charles Saur from Michigan., Co-Pilot Herbert Frank from Iowa, bombardier Frank Rosenau from Connecticut. Kenneth Kase from New York was later assigned to our crew as navigator. We enlisted men did everything together. Our bunks were together in one group, we ate together, played together and flew together. I was next to the youngest on the crew, Froot's birthday was in October and mine in September. I picked up the nickname of "Slim".

The first night at Davis Monthan we went into the mess hall and on each table was a large pitcher of milk. I figured this was going to be a great base. I poured out a large glass and found it was butter-milk. What a letdown.

At our first formation we were told by an officer that we could have a delay enroute to go home after our training was finished, if we agreed to take classes and fly seven days a week. Everyone agreed to this at once. Again our group was divided; we either flew in the morning or afternoon and took classes the other half of the day.

We flew practice-bombing missions, live gunnery at a sleeve target, camera gunnery when we used gun cameras at attacking fighters, formation flying, night flying, high altitude and navigation. We flew all over the southwestern United States, especially the Grand Canyon, San Diego harbor, Phoenix, Arizona.

Garland Mattingly, who was our plane engineer and eight years older than myself came from Loo-gootie, Indiana. All of us on the crew called him "Pappy" because of his age, and since we were both from Indiana he acted as my older brother. Our mothers corresponded by mail while we were in the service. Mattingly had been in the Civilian Conservation Corp. before he joined the Air Force. He had worked on "the flight line before volunteering for flight duty. Mattingly was a very well qualified flight engineer. He enjoyed going into town every night he was off duty. He drank a lot, chased the women, and played cards. Many were the morning when George Zobal and I would drag him out to the plane and give him pure oxygen to sober him up. Mattingly used to furnish me money to get into a blackjack game, so when I got a blackjack he would get the deal.

O.C. Craig lived about the same fast life as Mattingly. O.C. had been a radio instructor before volunteering for flight duty. Wallace Thomas had been raised in an orphanage and had been in the service a while before being assigned to our crew. Wally was the only married member of our crew and his wife was at Tucson with him. I never knew what Mark Froot did when he was off duty. George Zobal had been in the infantry before transferring over to the Air Corps. George and I ran around together. Our lives were very tame compared to the other guys.

George Zobal and I had both been trained for the tail turret, so they called us in to see who got the

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tail turret and who went to the nose turret. Since I was a little shorter and not as heavy, they assigned me the tail turret and George the nose turret.

Our crew had very few discipline problems with ground officers, but if we did, we would tell one of our officers and he would clear the problem up with the ground officer.

Our crew had a few close calls while flying on training missions. Once we got in the prop wash of another plane as we were taking off and almost barrel-rolled close to the ground. Another time on takeoff the right wing gas tank cap started spraying out fuel, and we had to land quickly before it faster.

caught fire and get it repaired. On a navigation mission coming back at night from San Diego, California, we ran into a storm and must have gotten lost, as we were running low on fuel. There were several of us by the escape hatch in the rear of the plane ready to parachute out if the engines suddenly stopped.

The weather in June, July and August in Tucson, Arizona is really hot. On the ground the planes were so hot you could hardly touch them. We wore the least amount of clothes allowed when getting in the plane on the ground, but as the plane climbed in attitude it got colder and colder. It was quite a contrast. We only had one rain during the time we were there, that I can remember, and it flooded the whole base for several hours. They didn't have rain often enough to put in sewers so the water had to soak into the ground or run off into ditches.

Near the end of August we finished our O.T.U. training. I was promoted to sergeant, and we were given a ten-day leave enroute to our next base in Topeka, Kansas. They told 118 that any crew that had a crewmember return late from leave would not be assigned a new plane and that the crew would have to take a ship overseas. You can bet most crews made it back on time but a few didn't and had to go overseas on a ship.

Red McCracken and I again took a train home to Indiana. I had fun on leave but the prospect of my going overseas and into combat caused the folks to be uneasy. Red and I returned a day early to Topeka, so we wouldn't foul up our crews flying over sea

in a new plane.

As expected, all our crew returned on time and we were assigned a beautiful new silver B-24J Liberator Bomber. In the bomb bays were extra fuel tanks and cases of K-rations. Several crews had pictures and names painted on the planes thinking these were the planes they would fly on missions when they arrived overseas but this wasn't to be. The new crews were assigned to older planes when they got overseas and older crews with missions took over the new planes. They wasted their money and as far as I know none of the planes were now being painted the olive drab color like the old Liberators were painted. This was supposed to make them

out fuel, and we had to land quickly before it faster. We were only in Topeka a few days, but the Kansas State Fair was on and most of us went broke on our last fling before going overseas. Red McCracken was still in our group but was on a different crew. We saw each other every day.

At last our beautiful new silver B-24 Liberator was given a takeoff time for the beginning of the biggest and scariest adventure of our lives. We flew out of Topeka, Kansas late in the day on September 16, 1944 for Dow Field, Bangor, Maine. Part of the way we flew at night, and the lights of the cities and towns were beautiful. I still can see them in my memory.

The next day we flew to Gander Field, Newfoundland, where we stayed for three days because of storms over the Atlantic Ocean. The enlisted men slept in our planes in sleeping bags and the officers went into the base and slept in barracks. Since most of us were broke, we asked for advancement on our pay. After much begging and promising not to gamble the money away, we were given a small advance in pay.

We left Gander Field, Newfoundland, mid-morning on September 20, 1944 for Lagen Field, Terceira Island in the Azores, which was west of Gibraltar out in the Atlantic Ocean. On the map the Azores

looked very small and we were, hoping our navigator, Kenneth Kase, knew his profession. We hit them right on the nose. They were beautiful to see after all the ocean we had been flying over. On the

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way over we were told to watch for German subs, but we mostly tried out each other's turrets or slept.

Again the enlisted men slept in the plane and the officers went into the base. About, five o'clock we saw men that were assigned to the Azores base permanently heading into town with musical instruments. We asked and were told, that in the Azores for several months you had to serenade a girl you wished to date before her father would allow you to get near to her, even then she had a chaperon. We questioned if it would be worth the effort.

One night while we were there a guy on horseback rode up to our plane and asked if we wanted to buy a bottle of Portuguese brandy. We said yes and he said he would be back and rode off on his horse. Later he returned and knocked on the plane, asking us to open the rear hatch. He handed us the bottle of brandy and we handed him the money. He started to leave, when suddenly he said, "I believe someone is out there. Loan me your flashlight." We handed him the flashlight, he jumped on his horse and off he went flashlight and all. We never saw that flashlight again.

On September 22, 1944 we left the beautiful Azores for Marrakech, French North Africa. According to O. C. Craig, Ken Kase our navigator got a little worried and called Craig to see if he had a radio fix on Marrakech. Craig told him "no" but Craig had a fix all the time. He just wanted to worry Kase a little. We again slept in the plane and were told not to leave the air base. Mattingly and Craig did leave the base and almost got caught. They had to climb over the air base wall to get back into the base. Marrakech was hot and dirty. We were glad to leave.

We left Marrakech on September 25, 1944, to go to El Ouaina, Tunisia, North Africa. Again we slept in the hot plane. Everything was very dirty. Two days later, on September 27, 1944, we left Tunisia, North Africa for sunny Italy. We were told not to fly over or near any ships in the Mediterranean Sea because the Navy was gunnery happy. They shot at anything that came close. We landed at the Gioia Airport on the southern tip of Italy and were told to report at once to operations. We got on the truck with our bottle of brandy and were told the brandy would be taken from us at operations. We decided rather than let them have the brandy we would drink it before we got to operations. This was the

first time I felt the effects of too much liquor.

We checked into operations and were given a pass to go into town. The town had narrow cobblestone streets and wasn't very clean. The people seem poor and begged for chocolates, soap, cigarettes and offered to take you home to have sex with a beautiful señorita. We came to where there was a long line of GIs standing in line around a building. We asked and were told it was a house of prostitution.

We arrived in Gioia, Italy on September 27, 1944, just one day before my nineteenth birthday. It certainly had been a year filled with new experiences and adventures. We again slept in our airplane. While we were waiting for assignment, a new Liberator came in for a landing and crashed. All the crew got out, but the plane burned. No one, that I could see, tried to put out the fire.

After being at Gioia for a few days Cecil (Red) McCracken's crew was assigned to a bomb group, but my crew was not assigned yet. It was a real sad parting, because Red and I had been together since January when we both entered the Air Corps. We didn't know if we would ever see one another again until the end of the war, if we were lucky enough to make it home.

On October 7, 1944 my crew was assigned to the Fifteenth Air Force, 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group and 764<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron near Cerignola, Italy. We flew out north from Gioia in the same B-24J that we had flown over from the United States. We landed at our new 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group air base and turned over the plane and the K-Rations to the ground crew. We were driven in the back of a truck to our new 764<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron. I looked out of the truck when we got to the squadron and there was my old buddy. Red McCracken standing in the chow line. Red and I were both assigned to the 764<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron. It's a small world after all.

We enlisted men were assigned to a six-man tent. The guys who had lived in the tent had been shot down on a bombing raid a few days earlier. This doesn't exactly give you a sense of permanency. We were given the crew number of 17-2. Our tent had six army cots and a half-barrel in the center for a stove. A metal tube from the half-barrel inside was connected to a full barrel out back of the tent

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that was filled with 100-octane gas. The gas would drip into the half-barrel inside the tent for heat. We used to soak our clothes in metal containers of 100-octane gas under our beds. After a while we would take the clothes outside and hang them up and they would be clean and dry in minutes. One time when I was taking out my clothes to dry, they touched the stove and the whole tent went up in flames. Several of us lost some clothes, and I got some minor burns on my hands and arms. Tents burning down and guys shooting up the area with their 45s were not unusual occurrences.

bath area. It was hard to get hot water for a shower. Our toilet was a wooden building over a slit trench out in a field.

Cecil (Red) McCracken's crew flew a mission to Vienna, Austria, before we flew any missions. When he returned from that mission Red had really "got religion". Red was normally a charged up person but for a few hours there was no cussing or drinking around him. Those six hundred or more flak guns had really made an impression on Red. Of course, Red didn't let it last very long.

Our new tent had limestone walls part way up and a brick floor. We had gotten a bad mark for our dirty dirt floor in our previous tent. We had an Italian man who was a veteran of the Ethiopia war, whom we paid very little, come by and clean our tent and made our beds every day. (This Italian man had been a soldier in the Italy's war with Ethiopia and had been wounded. He was very proud of his service in the war.) We were moving up - in the world. All our letters had to be censored by an officer.

The town we visited when we went off base was Cerignola. It was a small dirty town with narrow cobble stone streets. Some of the town-women would get in big vats of grapes and stomp the grapes into liquid. The kids were running in the streets begging for chocolates, cigarettes, or anything else you might have to give them. They would offer to sell you good meals at their homes or sex with a pretty señorita. It was very depressing. They did have a good Red Cross Center in the town where you could get something to eat and a dish of ice cream.

Some of the guys would get drunk and shoot up the squadron area. There were holes in most tents. Sometimes we would load our 45s with buckshot and go in the woods close to camp and shoot lizards. O.C. Craig was a good guitar player and singer. He would sometimes serenade the crew. Mattingly and Craig played lots of cards. Mattingly and Thomas got into a stupid fight out back of the tent one night over nothing. Once our crew was assigned to guard the squadron at the main entrance. Our shower baths were several large metal barrels suspended on 4 by 4's above the outdoor

Most bombing missions started the night before, when the list of the crews to go on the mission was posted on the bulletin board at the squadron office. Many trips were made up to operation each evening, until the list was posted or we were told there would be no mission.

If your crew was scheduled for a mission, you usually went to bed early, because someone would come to your tent and wake you up sometime between three and four in the morning. After awaking we would clean up as best we could in the morning and headed to the mess hall for breakfast. Breakfast before a mission was the best meal they could give you. Sometimes we even got real eggs.

We dressed as warm as possible, even in long johns, and went to operations in a group. In the front of the room was a large map covered by a cloth. When everyone was there, an officer would remove the cloth and there would be a string leading from the 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group to the target for that day. If it was a target the guys knew was dangerous, there would be lots of comments. The Fifteenth Air Force, which we were attached to, was mostly bombing factories and oil supplies. We were given information on secondary targets, the number of guns at the target, how many and what fighter groups were to be our escort and information on how to escape if we were shot down. If the Black Squadron to and from the target escorted us the guys were glad. The Black Squadron flew P-51 Mustangs and provided good protection. Their squadron never lost a bomber to enemy fighters during the war.

After the briefing we were loaded in trucks and tak-

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en to the flight line. There we picked up our flying gear: parachute, flak suit, and flying wear. Then you grabbed another truck that took you out to your assigned plane.

On each mission you were usually assigned a different airplane but all airplanes we flew were B-24J bombers.

Each gunner on our crew had a secondary job that he had been trained to do on the plane in case another person was injured. My extra job was to help Garland Mattingly, the flight engineer, to preflight the plane. I also had to check out the tail turret to see if the turret and guns were operating correctly other than firing of the guns.

Normally we had everything checked, loaded and ready to go by 700 AM. We had heard they wanted to hit targets at the noon hour to cut down on killing of workers. We never knew if this was true or not.

The airplanes were loaded as heavily as possible. The amount of weight in bombs was determined by the gallons of 100 octane gas needed to reach your bombing height, reach and return from target. The total weight was always the same. On low-level missions the airplanes used 90-octane gas.

Operations would shoot a green flare in the air to signal for the pilots to start the engines and taxi to assigned take off positions. A red flare was the signal that the mission was canceled. Any error on takeoff could be fatal. On takeoff the pilot was to have the plane to a certain speed by the time he reached a certain runway marker. If the plane wasn't up to the required speed, the pilot was to abort the takeoff and return the airplane to its ground area to have it checked for the problem.

On take-off according to Air Corps regulations, men riding in the rear of the airplane were to sit on the floor with their backs against the bomb bays. It didn't make much sense, when the bomb bay was filled with bombs and you were worrying about your back. On takeoff I always said the Lord's Prayer and we were always in the air by the time I had finished the prayer.

Everyone kept their eyes open for problems as we

gained altitude to get into formation. Many accidents happened during this phase of the mission. Then we would get our equipment organized and get in our turrets. At 10,000 feet the pilot would inform us to put on our oxygen mask. Sometimes going to the target the airplanes would drop tin foil strips to foul up German radar. The B-17 was capable bombing from 30,000 feet or higher but the B-24 on a good day bombed at 26,000 feet or less. It was sometimes forty degrees below zero or colder at the altitudes we were flying and that didn't take in account the wind chill. We had a plane check thru our intercom often to be sure everyone was all right. Sometimes the oxygen system would fail and a person would pass out. When we reached a certain location the pilot would give the gunners permission to test fire their guns.

Hopefully they would work. If any of the guns failed to fire, we had to try to repair them. When you touched any metal at those temperatures you had to wear nylon gloves because bare skin would attach itself to the metal. It was the pilot's decision whether to continue or return to base when any guns failed to fire.

There were normally seven planes to a squadron and three or four squadrons to a group. The twenty-one or twenty-eight planes tried to fly as close together as possible for protection from enemy fighters. We were told enemy fighters went after formations of planes that were flying the poorest formations.

When we reached our bombing altitude and target area the lead pilot would start the formation on the bomb run. Then each pilot would give control of the plane to the bombardier. The Germans would begin shooting at us with 88mm or 105mm shells. The white puffs of smoke were 105s and the black puffs were 88s. The Germans would shoot the 105s at the higher B-17s. Each shell was set to explode at a certain altitude or on contact. This was when the flak got the worst. We had to fly straight and level. The shells would get so close that when they exploded into flak, they caused such a turbulence that the plane would bounce around. You had a feeling that you were just a setting duck during this time. Some targets had as many as 600 or more flak guns shooting at us. Sometimes they would

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shoot flak up in a block over the target area and the plane would have to fly through it. Other times the flak guns would be shooting at the airplanes from the beginning of the bomb run until the airplanes were out of range. When we were on a bomb run I was praying as hard as possible. The only day I wasn't praying was on the day I was wounded.

The Bombardier would sometimes drop the bombs on the target by sighting through the bombsight and other times he would drop the bombs when the lead airplane dropped theirs. A percentage of the bombs dropped were timed as delayed exploding bombs.

As soon as the bombardier dropped the bombs he would call "bombs away" and the airplane without the bombs would rise in the air. The pilot would again take control of the airplane and the formation would bank either right or left to get us out of the flak area. Going to the target we were flying for Uncle Sam, but after the bombs were dropped we were flying for ourselves and eager to get to the safety of our base.

They issued us canned K-Rations to eat on the mission for lunch but by noon they were so frozen that it was better to throw the cans at the Germans. The electrical suits we wore were usually defective. You had to keep turning them off and on to keep them from burning up. When the waist gunners opened the waist windows to put their guns out, it really got cold back in the tail turret. I was so large with my flak suit on that the tail turret door couldn't be closed. After the first guy used the relief tube in the back of the airplane, it would freeze up and the next guy who used it would get all wet. All crew-members were issued 45 automatics to carry on missions in case they were shot down.

After a mission we usually arrived back at our air base around three in the afternoon. The first thing we would do was to go over to the Red Cross trailer and get coffee and donuts. We then would return to our airplane and clean our guns and turrets. Then we went to operations to turn in our flying gear, sometimes a de-briefing, get a shot of whiskey and head back to our squadron area. This made a real long day and we were very hungry. Sometimes dinner was nearly over by the time we arrived back to our squadron. Crews were never supposed to fly more than three days in a row.

On one of our missions an 88mm German shell went through the main spar on our left wing and did not explode. We were scared that at any moment the wing would collapse and we would crash. We were lucky the shell didn't hit anything that would stop us from flying back to base. When we got back over the airfield, the pilot offered a choice of bailing out or landing with the plane. We all stayed with the plane and after we were down to nothing in the fuel tanks we landed with no problems. The pilot, Charles Saur, never made a better landing. Ground crews took one look at the plane and towed it away to be used for spare parts and then scraped.

When you had to move around the plane at high altitude, you attached a small oxygen bottle to your oxygen mask. If you didn't, you could pass out from lack of oxygen. On one mission our engineer, Garland Mattingly, had gone from his waist position to the front to transfer gas between tanks before the bomb run. The transfer completed, he started back to his gun position in the waist. After several minutes O.C. Craig, the other waist gunner, called up front to inquire where was Mattingly. About this time the bombardier, Frank Rosenau, open the bomb bay doors to drop the bombs. Someone on the flight deck told Craig that Mattingly had left for the waist several minutes ago. Craig looked in the bomb bay and there was Mattingly lying spread eagle face down on the foot-wide catwalk 25,000 feet up in the air, with no parachute. Before Craig could tell anyone, the bombs were dropped. By some miracle none of the bombs hit Mattingly. Rosenau unknowingly closed the bomb bay doors catching Mattingly's leg in the door. Craig and Rosenau attached oxygen bottles to their oxygen masks and went into the bomb bay to get Mattingly. Rosenau signaled the Pilot Saur to open and then close the bomb bay door while Craig held Mattingly and pulled his leg inside.

Rosenau and Craig got Mattingly to the waist and gave him oxygen to revive him. Mattingly's walk-around bottle had run out of oxygen. Mattingly said he knew what was happening but couldn't do anything about it. He was one lucky guy.

I only saw two German fighter planes that I knew for sure were enemy during all my missions. These two came from a lower level past my tail turret, followed by two Mustang P-51 American fighters. They went by so fast I had no chance to fire at

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them. I believe the P-51s shot the German planes down to the north of our formation. A long distance from the formation we saw fighter planes, but they were so far away we couldn't tell if they were German or our own.

One of the reasons I was so scared on most missions I was on was because of our nose gunner, George Zobal. When we were on the bomb run George would call out "Flak dead ahead, it's so thick I don't think we can get through it". In the tail turret you are facing the back and have no idea what your plane is going to be flying through. A statement like this give you the thought that you had best prepare to meet your maker.

Sometime overseas I was promoted to Staff Sergeant. Rank meant very little in the Air Corps except for money. Flying personnel received their grade pay plus one half-grade pay and five percent overseas pay.

At the time I was in Italy, I believe, we were told that we had to fly 35 regular missions or 50 missions when counting those over the 50<sup>th</sup> parallel as two. Because of distance, missions over the 50<sup>th</sup> parallel counted as two missions. According to Charles Saur, our pilot, these are the missions I flew before being wounded:

October 17, 1944 1<sup>st</sup> Mission Linz, Austria  
October 18, 1944 2<sup>nd</sup> Mission Vosen, Austria  
October 20, 1944 3<sup>rd</sup> Mission Milan, Italy  
No Credit Turned back by weather, Yugoslavia  
November 1, 1944 4<sup>th</sup> Mission Augsburg, Austria  
November 5, 1944 5<sup>th</sup> Mission Vienna, Austria  
November 6, 1944 6<sup>th</sup> Mission Vienna, Austria  
November 11, 1944 7<sup>th</sup> Mission Linz, Austria  
November 17, 1944 8<sup>th</sup> Mission Vienna, Austria  
November 18, 1944 9<sup>th</sup> Mission Villafranca, Italy

On November 18, 1944, we went on a bombing mission to Villafranca Airdrome in northern Italy. It was supposed to be a milk run (easy target). Before our bomb run fighter planes were to strafe the field and knock out all the flak guns. We were then to drop regular and anti-personnel bombs. And then the fighters would strafe whatever was left on the field that we missed. We had been told the enemy had only three 88mm anti-aircraft guns at the field. The day was clear, sunny and a beautiful winter day for that time of the year.

Everything that morning had gone well. We had our normal pre-mission procedures working like a clock. We took off and joined our formation and reached 10,000 feet. I put on my flak suit, hooked up my electric flying suit, started my oxygen and made sure the tail turret was working properly. The pilot gave us permission to test fire our guns, and everything was going great. We watched out for enemy fighters and enjoyed the scenery. We arrived at the start of the bomb run and the Pilot Saur gave the control of the plane to Frank Rosenau, our bombardier. The bomb run was smooth and I heard no reports of flak, so I wasn't praying like I normally did on the bomb run. I was looking around and enjoying the view when all of a sudden an 88mm shell exploded just off to the right side of the plane by my tail turret. I was hit by pieces of flak coming thru the side of the turret and passed out for I don't know how long. When I came to, I had lots of blood on me, so the first thing I thought of was getting help. We had heard stories of gunners bleeding to death after being hit in their turrets and no one else knowing it until too late. The door of my turret was open so I tried to drop backwards out of the turret into the main fuselage, but my flying boot caught on a bar that ran across the lower part of the turret. I finally got my foot out of the boot and disconnected myself from the intercom and oxygen. I stood up, and Mattingly waved for me to get back into the turret. Just before I passed out, Mattingly saw all the blood and rushed back to help me to the waist and laid me down.

The next thing I realized my mask was hooked up to the oxygen and the intercom. Rosenau, the medical person on the crew, was giving me a shot on

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morphine. They put a tourniquet on my left arm that they loosened often. The pilot called the group leader that we were breaking from formation and heading for home with wounded. Another plane joined us as we broke formation and we took off at higher than normal speed for home. I remember waking and taking to the crew at times on the way back. Ken Kase came back to see how I was doing and leaned on my chest to get a better look at my arm. This really hurt and I yelled for him to get off me! They started looking and found a hole in my flying suit over my left chest. I had a compound fracture of my left arm just below the elbow, two wounds in my left arm, one about six inches long with muscle missing, and another gash four inches long. Another piece of flak missed my flak suit and entered my left chest, lodging in my left lung.

I came to when we landed at the airport at Foggia, Italy. Medics came on the plane and cut part of my flying suit away on my left side to examine my chest wound. They then removed me from the plane on a stretcher by way of the right waist window. I remember being loaded in the ambulance but remember nothing else until I woke up briefly in the operating room where a cast was being put on my left arm. The next thing I remember was the next afternoon when all my crew and Red McCracken were in the room to see me. I sure appreciated the visit but probably wasn't much into conversation. I was in a ward with several guys.

Later (I don't know if it was hours or days) when I woke up and couldn't breath. From what happen later I would guess I was bleeding inside and the blood collapsed my lung. I let out a scream and people came from everywhere. One guy arrived with a large oxygen tank on his back and put an oxygen mask on me. The next time I woke up I was in a room by myself. (Later I found out they put you in a room by yourself if they thought you were going to die). Whenever I woke up, there was always someone sitting beside my bed. I always had IV tubes in my right arm. A nurse told me before I left Foggia Hospital that I had received eight pints of blood and over three hundred penicillin shots. I had so many shots I couldn't sit down later without a pillow under me, and the Novocain, I was told, in the penicillin gave me the hives.

There were many doctors that came in the room to examine me, but they used medical words I didn't understand, so I had no idea of what was happening. They started coming in every afternoon to put a 5-inch needle in my chest and another needle in-

side the first needle to draw out blood. Putting that first needle in my chest not only hurt my chest but they sometimes would hit a nerve and then it would also hurt in my leg or groin. It certainly wasn't a pleasant experience.

After a few days a doctor came in and told me they were going to operate on me and take the flak out of my chest the next day. This really upset me because I had no reason to believe they hadn't taken the flak out the night I came into the hospital. We talked a while and everything was all right when he left. The doctor, Lt. Col. Ristine, had been the head of the Harvard School of Medicine at Harvard University, so he surely knew what he was doing.

I don't recall much about the next few days but was told the operation went well. I supposed they would go in the hole the flak made but they cut me from left shoulder blade all the way around to the front of my chest. I still had the cast on my broken left arm and had lost lots of weight. Sometime in the early part of December they started getting me up in a wheel chair. I had to sit on pillows because I was so thin and my rear was so sore from all the penicillin shots. I seemed to be getting a long good and asked them to please let me go to a ward where there were other people. I was tired of only seeing four walls in the room by myself.

While I was in the private room in Foggia in December 1944 an officer came in and asked me if I was me and I told him "Yes sir". He started reading aloud something from a piece of paper. I figured I was going to have to pay for the tent I had burned down. Finally he stopped reading and said, "You are awarded the Purple Heart". I wish I knew what he had read.

They finally put me a ward with several other guys. They would not let me smoke until I had cleaned up all my meal trays for one whole day. That wasn't hard with the other guys in the room helping me.

Soon after moving into the larger ward I started having a high temperature and feeling real sick. They had continued giving me penicillin shots and I developed a bad case of hives. They put me on sulfa drugs for a few days to cure the hives. They knew I had an infection in the chest, so they took me to the operating room and put a tube in my back

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just under the skin. The tube was attached to another rubber tube that then was attached to a bottle on the floor. Every time I moved the tube in my back would move and cause me pain. I had to lie either on my right or left side. They hoped this tube would drain some infection out of my chest, but I don't think it got anything out. By this time bedsores were developing.

The guys in my crew and Red McCracken visited me as often as they could. Several wrote very nice letters to my parents, especially Red McCracken and Garland Mattingly. The Red Cross volunteer girls would read my mail to me and write letters for me. The nurses were very good to me. There was an older nurse, Miss Walsey, whom we called "Mom", who was exceptionally nice to me. We corresponded later when I was out of the service. On New Year's Eve before their dance, the nurses came up to our ward and showed us their pretty dresses. There were earphones on the beds that we could put on to listen to the news, especially the war, the Battle of the Bulge, and music. The song "I Walk Alone" was played over and over again. That didn't help me to feel any better.

There were lots of serious cases in the hospital. Several times they brought in badly burned men who just lived a short time. After a while pain killers just would not ease the pain for some wounded men. It was easy to get hooked on painkillers and sleeping pills. There was a guy who screamed at night for someone to kill him and if no one had the nerve, give him the gun and he would kill himself. Nights in the hospital were the worst times.

After about six weeks, near the beginning of January 1945, they came in one morning and took me down to an operating room and removed the cast from my arm. The cast had gotten so loose from the weight I had lost that it could be taken off without cutting the cast. I then found that they hadn't even sewn up the wounds on my arm before they put the cast on the night I came into the hospital. I guess they didn't think I would live, so why waste time. The arm sure looked like a terrible bloody mess. The doctor gave me a shot in the arm and with me lying there watching, sewed up the wounds.

In a day or so they came to me and told me they

would be flying me to the hospital in Bari, Italy the next day. Early the morning of January 8, 1945, they came and disconnected me from all the bottles and loaded me on a cart. I told everyone goodbye and thanked them for their care and was taken downstairs. They put me on a stretcher and put me in an ambulance. We went to the Foggia, Italy airport and I was loaded into a C-47 that was especially equipped to hold stretchers.

After a very short flight we landed at the Bari, Italy airport. They unloaded me, put me in an ambulance, drove to the hospital and took me to a ward with other patients. They must have drugged me, because I had a hard time staying awake the rest of the day. Early the next morning they started giving me all kinds of test. They punched, poked, did x-rays and asked me all kinds of questions. I was really tired and feeling terrible. They continued this process for a couple days.

Early the evening of January 12, 1945, a doctor came to my bed and told me he had "some good news and some bad news". The bad news was my arm had not healed right and would have to be broken and reset at a later date. The other bad news was that I had a bad infection in my left lung and they were going to have to, operate on my chest the next morning to remove part of a rib and put a tube in, so the infection could drain out. I guess by this time, not feeling good to begin with, I was ready to call it quits. Then he said he had some good news. If I allowed the operation and did as they asked, he would promise to have me on my way to the states within ten days. At this point and with the good news I didn't care what they did, as long as I was headed home.

Early the next morning of January 13, 1945, they came and took me directly to the operating room. The doctor I had talked to the night before assured me everything was going to be fine. They put me under with sodium pentothal, but during the operation switched me to ether. When I awoke in the afternoon I was really thirsty and asked for water. They asked if I had had ether and I told them no. They gave me water and I got very sick. The next day they let me walk down the hall to the bathroom, first time in couple months without using a bedpan. I got to the bathroom but had to sit on the bathroom floor until someone came and got me back to my bed.

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As the doctors had told me, they removed part of a rib on the left side of my back and inserted a rubber tube into the lung. They had fixed adhesive on my back so a pad could be put over the tube and the pad changed at least twice a day without changing the adhesive tape. The adhesive tape had strings in it that were tied over the pad. The idea was for the infection to drain and the hole to heal from the inside out. It was a slow process and I didn't get rid of the tube until March 1945.

Every day I tried to move around and do more than the previous day, but I still wasn't feeling good. I weighed over just couldn't get my appetite back. I weighed over 150 pounds before I had been wounded but now weighed less than 120 pounds and wasn't eating. On January 19, 1945, the doctor came in and told me I would be on my first leg home tomorrow when they would fly me to the hospital at Naples, Italy. He had kept his promise. Early the next morning January 20, 1945 they came to the ward, put me on a cart, took me downstairs. They put me on a stretcher, put me in the ambulance and we went back to the Bari, Italy airport, where I was loaded into a C-47 and off to Naples, Italy we went.

When we landed at Naples, Italy airport, I was taken to the Naples hospital and put in a ward. A nurse in the ward told me I would be on a ship and headed for the United States in a couple days. That was great news! I still continued to try to get up and move around a little bit each day. I hadn't been paid since November 1944, and the money I had was from selling my cokes and beers to other guys in the ward. I believe we got five cans of whichever we wanted each week. I usually took the beer, because I could get more money for the beer.

I still wasn't feeling too good at only 117 pounds. I had lost over 30 pounds and seemed to always have a temperature. I was still taking pain and sleeping pills. They changed the pad on my back at least twice a day. It was unbelievable how much yellowish green black smelling goop had drained from the tube onto the pad every time it was changed. I was still weak and made the mistake of trying to walk down to the P.X. I made it down to the P.X. They had to send a wheel chair down from the

ward to get me. That was the last trip out of the ward at Naples. They grounded me.

On January 27, 1945, a doctor came in and told me they would be loading me on a ship tomorrow morning for the trip back to the good old U.S.A. We again went through the procedure of the cart, downstairs, stretcher and ambulance. When we got to the ship, they took me up to the top area of the ship. I believe the ship's name was the U.S.S. General Richardson. It must have been some type of transport, and I was in a small hospital area. There were no more than twenty patients. They told us that the ship would be returning to the states with no other ships. We asked about the German U-boats and were told the ship was capable of out running the U-boats. We asked what would happen if the U-boats were already out there waiting on us. We got no answer to that question.

We left the harbor at Naples, Italy January 28, 1945 in the evening, entered the Mediterranean Sea and headed for the Rock of Gibraltar. At Gibraltar we turned south for a while and then started our run across the Atlantic Ocean. It took us about 12 days to make the crossing.

When I got on the ship I still wasn't feeling very well. After a couple days all of a sudden I started to feel the best I had felt for a long time. The doctors said it was because the infection was beginning to clear up in my chest. We couldn't get seconds on any one item on our meals; we had to take another complete meal. At times I was able to eat three complete meals. I seemed to be hungry all the time. We had little to do on the ship. I tried to read and a guy tried to teach a couple of us how to play pinochle but I had little interest in either.

On February 9, 1945, we arrived outside of the harbor at Norfolk, Virginia, in the early morning. They sent out a harbor pilot who was either drunk (which was rumored) or he didn't know how to handle a ship of this size. After lunch they sent out another harbor pilot and we got right in to the dock. They came on the ship and loaded me on to a stretcher, and as they were taking me down the gangplank, a navy guy offered me five dollars for my shoes that were hanging from the stretcher. I was all right but couldn't make it back to the ward.

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told him, "It's a deal!" and I was five dollars richer. At that time I had no use for the shoes and the five dollars looked pretty good since I hadn't been paid since November of 1944.

We arrived at the Patrick Henry Hospital at Norfolk, Virginia where I was wheeled into a ward with about eight other guys from the ship. The first thing they asked us was, "What do you want for supper tonight?" I ordered hamburgers and a quart of cold milk. Man, did that taste good. I think I called home that night and it was great to talk to my folks in Cambridge City, Indiana. It had been a long lonesome journey for a nineteen-year-old.

The next day an officer came into our ward and asked each of us to fill out a form, as they would send us to whatever hospital we requested. I requested, to be sent to the military hospital at Indianapolis, Indiana. I called mother and told her I would soon be transferred to a hospital at Indianapolis, Indiana near home.

That same day they paid me all my back pay, \$344.40, which still included flying and combat pay. I was really rich! I sent some of the money home and again made a trip to the P.X. I made it both ways this time but must have overdone it because I was running a slight fever again. I was told I couldn't leave the ward unless I used a wheel chair. That evening Red Skelton, who was station at that time at Norfolk, came into our ward and put on the guzzler gin act that I saw years later on his TV show. He really gave the officers who were standing around the ward a bad time. He was good entertainment.

The next morning the officer that had come in the day before and offered to send us to any hospital we wanted came into the ward. He told me he was sorry, but because of the nature of my wound I was being sent to Fitzsimmons General Hospital in Denver Colorado, where there were specialists in chest wounds. I was very upset and told him to go to some not so nice places. He could only say he was sorry, but for my own good I had to go to Denver. I would guess that wasn't one of his or my better days. I was broken hearted. I had been in the hospital for nearly three months. I called mother and gave her the news and asked her if she could

come out to Denver. Mother worked in a bomb box factory while I was in the service.

On February 13, 1945 I again left the hospital on a litter to board a hospital train for Denver, but this time we were traveling in deluxe accommodations. It seemed that anytime we stopped in a railroad station, people would give us cookies and talk to us. They made us real proud by what they would say and how they treated us. It was great to be back in the good old U.S.A!

We arrived at Denver, Colorado Fitzsimmons General Hospital and went through the same procedures of unloading and loading again. The next few days they did lots of x-raying and other testing to see how we were healing. The tube in my back was partly clogged, slowing down the drainage, so they took the tube out, cleaned it and put it back in my back again. They said they didn't believe breaking my arm and resetting it would improve its use. A schedule was set up to begin physical therapy that next day. Since I had left Italy I had gained eighteen pounds.

Mother came out to Denver on a Greyhound bus and spent a week with me. The Red Cross helped her to get to Denver and let her stay in the Red Cross house on base. They were always very good to mother and myself. Mother could visit me five or six hours a day. It was sure good to see her and for her to know I was going to be all right.

I spent lots of time in therapy. They put my arm in a whirlpool and after some time would take it out and exercise and massage it. They did this twice a day. They put us in a room and gave us artificial sunlight to get rid of the hospital white. They still changed the bandage on the tube in my back twice a day. As the hole in my back healed from the inside they would cut off a piece of the tube to make it shorter.

About the last of March the tube was permanently removed from my back and I was transferred to an area called the Reconditioning Center. This was an area where you followed their therapy suggestions and you could do some of your own. They had golf, bowling, softball and all kinds of things we

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could do with supervision. I was on the field playing softball when the death of President Franklin Roosevelt was announced. No one knew anything about Harry Truman who was now the new president. It was quite a shock, because lots of us knew of no other President than Roosevelt. That was April 12, 1945.

About the fifteen of April I was given a thirty day convalescent leave to return to Indiana. There were three of us from Reconditioning Center headed out on leave in the same general direction at the same time. We decided to go to Lowery Field in Denver to see if we could hitch a free ride home.

A military plane was going to Dayton, Ohio and we could get a free ride to there. Two of us were in the Air Corps and the other guy was in the Army. We boarded the plane and had some real rough weather. By the time we reached our first stop in Topeka, Kansas the Army guy was so sick he was turning green. We decided the Army guy couldn't stand to fly any further, so we got off the plane and rode a bus home. One guy was from Ohio and the other was from West Virginia. We made an agreement that we would all ride the bus together back to Denver at the end of our leaves.

It was good to be back in Cambridge City, Indiana where I enjoyed all my friends, family and girl friend. We all had a great time together. My folks had a small flag with a blue star in the window. Downtown all service men names were listed on a large board called The Roll of Honor which stood near the library. Germany surrendered on May 7, 1945, while I was home and I made a speech at Lincoln High School and rode the fire truck in the parade. I also gave a speech at the local American Legion. It was nice to be honored in that way.

After our thirty-day leave was about up, the three of us caught a Greyhound Bus going back to Denver. We got off at several towns on the way to see the sights and rest. It took us four full days to travel the 1,100 miles from Cambridge City, Indiana to Denver, Colorado. That was a lot of sitting partly because of the thirty-five mile an hour speed limit.

When we got back to the Reconditioning Center, I was sent up to the hospital to be checked over. Most of the guys spent no more than seven days in

the Reconditioning Center and were shipped out. I got back in May and didn't leave till the last week of June or first week of July. I had to go up to the hospital once a week to get checked over, but other than that, I only had to make out the duty roster for the barracks every day. I was free to do anything I wanted to do but was encouraged to get plenty of exercise.

I spent my time doing lots of different things. I started playing golf and bowled almost every day. They had Italian prisoners setting pins, and we would throw a bowling ball at them if they were to slow. They would really get mad.

My transfer to Fort Thomas, Kentucky finally came. I left Denver on the Denver Zephyr, a very fast, streamline train. We traveled about 1,022 miles in fourteen hours. That's moving right along! I had a lower berth on the train and some guys going to training camp to be officers had uppers. They were really upset that a lowly Staff Sergeant got a better berth than future officers. At Chicago, Illinois, I caught another train to Cincinnati, Ohio and took a bus to Fort Thomas, Kentucky.

At Fort Thomas I was assigned to a barracks and told to report to the hospital the next morning for a complete physical. I got the physical and was interviewed by an officer for quite some time. When I reported back the next morning, I was given a schedule of exercise classes. In addition I chose ballroom dancing, drafting and a couple other classes. They planned to keep us busy during the day.

Nearly every night some of the guys and I went into Cincinnati. There was a special deal for service persons to attend Cincinnati Reds baseball games, so we went often. Every weekend on Friday I rode a bus to Cincinnati, boarded a bus or train to Richmond, Indiana and then hitchhike to Cambridge City. I did the opposite on Sunday afternoon to get back to Fort Thomas.

One day I was called into an office at the hospital and was talked to by the doctor. He said I had a very serious wound that had healed well but that I should be careful how I lived. He then shocked me by telling me I would be discharged from the ser-

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vice in a few days. I had always figured that when I was well I would rejoin my old crew again and we would go fight the Japs. We talked quite a while about my discharge and the future. When you are nineteen years old, you think you're going to live forever.

During the next few days I was given a complete physical again, checked by the dentist and signed a lot of papers. During the time I was in the discharge area the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Japan surrendered. WWII was over and there was a great celebration!!! I got my medical discharge as a Staff Sergeant on August 23, 1945 at Fort Thomas, Kentucky. I had spent about ten months on active duty and ten months in the hospital and reconditioning.

In all the places I was hospitalized I could not have had better care. The Red Cross volunteers, doctors, nurses, ward personnel, and everyone else were just wonderful to me. I owe lots of them my life.

While I was at Fort Thomas, Kentucky, in May of 1945 my old crew flew a B-24 liberator to the United States by way of South America. As soon as they arrived back in the states each of them was sent in a different direction. What a sad ending to a great crew.

After I was wounded George Zobal replaced me in the tail turret. O. C. Craig and myself were the only ones wounded in our crew. O.C. was hit with flak on a mission February 13, 1945 to the Vienna, Austria Central Repair Shops. O.C. had his right arm blown off just above the elbow. The B 24 they were flying that day had the radio room above the bomb bays rather than behind the pilot as most B-24s did. In a regular B-24 he wouldn't have gotten a scratch. They flew him directly back to the hospital at Foggia, Italy. He asked for the private room I had occupied when I was at that hospital but they said they only put persons who were expected to die in private room. O.C. told them to forget about the private room. They flew him back to the States within two weeks of his being wounded. His biggest worry was how he was going to dance with the girls with only one arm.

Cecil (Red) McCracken returned to the States in

May 1945, and had not received a scratch on any mission he had flown. On his first furlough home he was riding a motor scooter and a woman hit him with a car and broke his collarbone. He had just healed from his broken collarbone when he was home lying on the bed watching his brother clean a gun. The gun went off and shot Red on the mouth. It sure messed up his mouth but didn't kill him. Red has never been to a 461<sup>st</sup> reunion, partly because most of his crewmembers have died.

I know that the war, delivery of the telegram December 3, 1944 that I was wounded and the not being able to visit or call me in the hospital in Italy was a very stressful time for my family. My dad, brother, Jerry, and especially my mother suffered more than I did. As you get older and have children and grandchildren of your own you realize what that time must have been for them.

Mark Froot, the ball turret gunner died in New York in 1975. Garland Mattingly died in Indianapolis, Indiana April 29, 1993. Frank Rosenau died in Connecticut September 8, 1997. Kenneth Kase died in New York November 4, 2003. Oral C. Craig died in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma May 15, 2005. Our Pilot Charles Saur still lives in Sparta, Michigan. Herbert Frank, Co-Pilot, lives in Fort Worth, Texas. George Zobal, nose gunner, lives in Boynton Beach, Florida. Wallace Thomas, top turret gunner, lives in Ben Brook, Texas. Cecil McCracken lives in Goliad, Texas.

Over the years our crew has always stayed in contact with one another. Thru Christmas cards, visits on vacation, phone calls and our own crew reunions we continue to communicate. In 1989 the 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group had a reunion in St. Louis, Missouri. Eight of our crewmembers and six wives attended that reunion. Mark Froot who passed away in 1975 and Frank Rosenau who was too crippled to attend were the only members of our crew missing. Since the 1989 reunion, I believe, at least one of our crewmembers has made it to nearly every 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group reunion. Age is catching up to us and membership to the reunions has gone down in number of veterans attending. The Group is attempting to continue the 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group by getting the young generation of sons, daughters, and grandchildren of the group involved in our organization.

## President's Corner

Holding several positions in the 461st Association gives me the ability to see things from several different angles. As the Editor of the Liberaider, for instance, I get to see what is in each of the issues before anyone else does. In this issue, I noticed the number of names that appear in the TAPS section on page 2. In the past few issues, I have had to be inventive to fill the page as there just weren't very many names to add to the list of passing veterans. This issue went the other way and I felt saddened by the names that appear on the list this year. If you haven't already done so, take a moment to read through the TAPS section.

As President, the Reunion Committee has kept me informed on developments for the reunion later this year. I thank Dave Blake and the rest of his committee for their hard work on what promises to be another fantastic reunion. We're going to Omaha, NE this year and will be able to tour Offutt Air Force Base. This is the home of SAC and although security will be very tight, I'm sure the visit there will be well worth our time. Be sure to send in proper identification as stated on the bottom of page 18. You don't want to miss this exciting tour.

Again as the Editor of the Liberaider, let me point out that there are only two articles by veterans in this issue. This isn't for the lack of material. I assure you that I have a lot of material at this point and one of the articles is a continuation from the December issue and I still haven't finished. There will be more of this article coming in the December issue later this year. I am thrilled to receive material such as this. It means the stories of our veterans will continue to be told for a while yet. For those who have not yet submitted a story, let me encourage you to do so. After all, your story is unique and not like anyone else's story. If you don't write it, it will never be told and it would be a shame for your bit of personal history to pass away.

As the Historian for the 461st, I have the privilege of getting E-Mail from people looking for information about their father or grandfather who served with the 461st. I'm always thrilled when I can supply a little bit of family history. There's a lot of information about the 461st on the website, but it isn't always easy to find what you're looking for. Take a look at

the Webmaster Comments on the back cover for some hints on how to navigate through the website. I have also expanded my Historian responsibilities a bit. Although I'd like to think the 461st won the war in Europe all by itself, I know this was not the case. There were other bomb groups involved. In searching for information on other organizations that made up the Fifteenth Air Force, I found that only a very few of them actually had information online. This became a passion for me. I don't have nearly as much information about other organization as I do for the 461st, but the information I have is growing and it's rewarding when I can answer questions about men who served in other organizations.

Typically, the 461st has held an election for officers in the organization every two years or so. I would like to have some feedback from our members on this. Do you feel we should name a nominating committee to come up with a slate of officers to be voted on at the reunion. Please take a few minutes to drop me a line and let me know how you feel. Obviously I enjoy being the President, but I am also willing to give up this position in favor of someone else if that's the desire of the members.



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We're on the web!  
Visit  
**[www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org)**

## **Webmaster Comments**

More and more material is added to the 461st website almost on a daily basis. How do you find what you're looking for? It isn't easy, is it? Or perhaps you just need a little hint at how to find something in all that massive amount of material. Here's a little trick I learned.

Go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). This is the main search page for Google. In the search box, type 'site:461st.org' followed by the word you want to search for. For example, if you type 'site:461st.org lomax', Google will show you a list of six pages on the 461st website that contain the word 'lomax'. It's a whole lot easier to go through six pages than it is to try and find Lomax on the website.

In this particular case, the first two might very well be what you're looking for—the crew page or a diary. How long might it have taken to find these without this little trick? Probably quite a bit of time.

This is a free tool that Google makes available. Obviously you need to search for something that might get results that are too lengthy to be worth while. For example, if I enter 'site:461st.org glantzberg', I get 160 hits. I don't know about you, but I don't want to go through that many. You might try a short phrase such as 'site:461st.org frederic glantzberg'. This results in only 63 hits which is much better than 160.

This powerful tool can be used on any website. For example, if I enter 'site:15thaf.org twining', I get 90 hits on places General Twining is mentioned on the Fifteenth Air Force website. Some of these are for the 461st website that was part of the Fifteenth and some are for the 484th website that shared Torretta Field with the 461st.

Armed with this little trick, have fun finding things you didn't even know existed before. You might just be surprised at what you can come up with.