

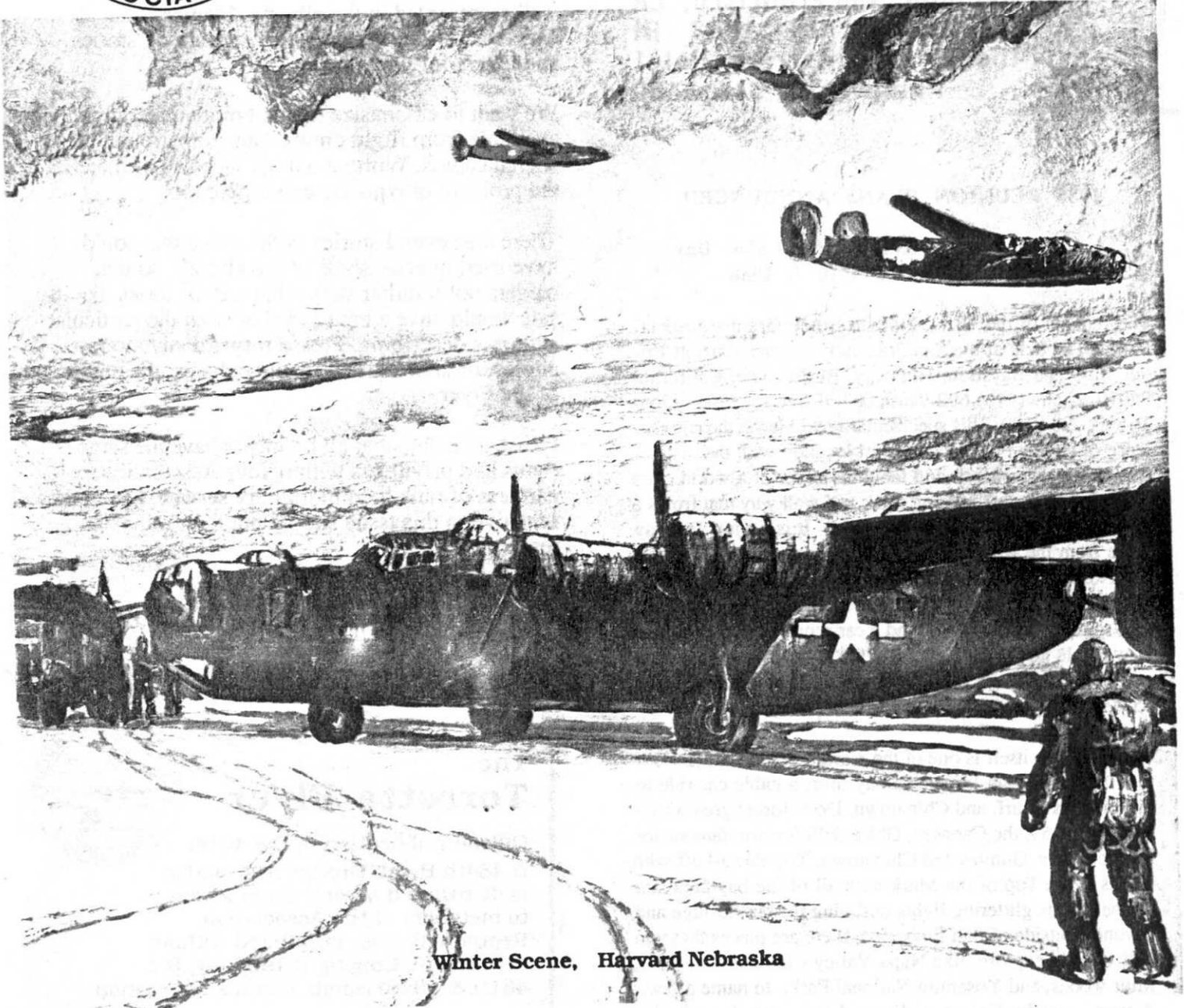


THE TORRETTA FLYER

Torretta Flyer No 15

Redondo Beach, California

Winter 1987/1988



Winter Scene, Harvard Nebraska

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SAN FRANCISCO, SITE OF THE 1988 REUNION

GOLDEN GATE IN "88"



GOLDEN GATE IN "88"



461st & 484th Bomb Groups
Reunion San Francisco, CA
September 1 to 4, 1988 At
the Airport Marriott Hotel
Phone (213) 316-3330

1988 REUNION PLANS ANNOUNCED

A four day conclave is set for Labor Day
weekend September 1 to 4, 1988.

The reunion of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association will be held at the San Francisco Airport Marriott Hotel, 1800 Old Bayshore Highway, Burlingame, California 94010. Phone (415) 692-9100, or toll free for reservations 1-(800) 228-9290. This spectacular hotel blends the convenience of its San Francisco Airport location with the distinctive elegance, comfort and fabulous decor of a world class hotel. It has its own jogging track and walkway that fronts a private section of San Francisco Bay. It is a short freeway drive from the world famous attractions of San Francisco, and Northern California just over the world renown Golden Gate Bridge. The Hotel also features, free parking, free airport shuttle, travel agency, and a car rental desk. A city bus is available just outside the hotel for travel to San Francisco at a nominal charge. The room rate for our guests will be \$57.00 per night single or double occupancy.

San Francisco itself is one of the world's greatest attractions that includes a San Francisco bay tour, a cable car ride to Fisherman's wharf, and Chinatown. Don't forget great shopping at Pier 59, the Cannery, Ghirardelli Square, famous for its chocolates, Gump's and Chinatown. Top this all off with drinks at the Top of the Mark with all of the bay area laid out below, its glittering lights outlining the Bay Bridge and beyond. Outside of San Francisco, there are places that you will want to explore, like Napa Valley's famous vineyards, Muir woods, and Yosemite National Park, to name a few. A tour to nearby United Airlines Maintenance base is also in the works as well as tours to some of the places mentioned above. With a great room rate, at a first class hotel, and the attractions of the San Francisco Bay Area, you are bound to enjoy a mini vacation in addition to the fun and excitement of the reunion. A post reunion tour to Hawaii is being planned also. All members, their family, and guests, are cordially invited to attend this once in a lifetime "GOLDEN GATE IN 88" reunion.

About this issue

You will note that the squadrons and units are not evenly represented in the stories and letters to the editor in this issue. This is because we print from material our members send to us. In the picture pages, we have been able to do a better job as we can draw from the Association's collection. This too becomes difficult when certain units are not well represented in the albums. Members can always rectify this imbalance by submitting stories and letters for publication.

We want to emphasize too that more material is available from flight crews than from ground eschelon cadres. Without a huge sack full of material the problem of equality exists here too.

There are several stories in this issue that could have used interior shots of the aircraft, so that readers not familiar with what a B-24 looks like inside would have a better idea of what the particular author is describing. Please forward any aircraft photos, or artwork that would enhance the quality of the Flyer.

Please take note that all members have the same rights and privileges within your Association, regardless of rank held in military service. Members sensitive to this issue should put their minds at rest.

The Torretta Flyer



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to members of the Association.
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Associate Editor: Beatrice Markel

The Association welcomes stories,
and photographs dealing with the Air
War over Europe during WWII. Direct all
inquiries to the Editor, Torretta Flyer,
1122 Ysabel St. Redondo Beach, CA 90277
Phone (213)-316-3330

Scholarship Donations for 1987

The following is a complete list of all members who contributed to the Memorial Scholarship fund for the calendar year 1987. Please notify the Association office if your name has been inadvertently left off.

Contributions to the Scholarship Fund are always in order.

1988 Award Ceremony

The presentation of the 1988 awards will take place Friday October 7, 1988 in Cerignola Italy. Members planning a trip or who may be travelling in Europe at that time are invited to attend.

Alex Azary	765
Stan B Bennett	824
John M Billings	825
Joseph C Bott	825
Armand Bottiglia	767
Richard E Brown	824
William Burke	766
Wyatt L Busbee	767
Kelton G Bush	767
Clarence L Bush	824
Ralph W Carr	825
James T Chafin Jr	825
George Christie	765
Jules A Correale	825
William O Cunningham Jr	765
Fred Dierksmeier	826
Chris Donaldson	765
Joseph Dondero	826
Peter Drill	484
Leroy B Duke	766
Colin E Dye	826
Clark W Ecton	825
Edward H Eibs Jr	827
Skipper Ellis	827
Joseph J Ercole	824
Gordon Ferguson	765
George S Flamand	825
Vernon W Garrison	765

Ellsworth Goodell	826
Edwin T Goree	764
Grant V Hansen	824
William L Harned Jr	824
Joe Hebert	826
Howard U Heller	827
Mike Karwoski	824
Robert M Kelliher	765
Mark E Kennedy	766
Paul W Kerr	826
William T Kesey	766
Stanley A Kosierowski	764
Fred Kuhn	826
Bert J Lange	824
Paul Lawrence	766
Patrick W Layne Jr	827
Jacob R Lebsack	767
Samuel Lodato	767
James Love	767
James D Mackin	767
Joseph F Malloy	827
Adolph Marcus	824
Leo V Matranga	825
Gregory E Mazza	766
Charles A McKew	824
Bud McRorie	765
Harold L Meshel	824
George H Miller	764
Dave Mitchell	824
Judson W Moore	766
Barrow Neale	826
Joe Nedela	*
Roy A Nichols	825
Sidney Ostrovsky	827
Carl H Peter	767
James D Pool	825
Robert C Quinlan	825
Harold I Reeve	766
Glen L Sandberg	825
Ed Schrader	767
Claude F Schroeder	827
Jack L Schwartz	766
Edward Schwartz	826
Jack R Severns	764
Robert S Simkins	826
Richard A Sites	824
Earl Slutz	825
Alfred J Solomon	826
Howard R Sossamon	767
Warren Spray	764
Reed Sprinkel	825
Charles J St Onge	825
T V Stradley	764
Raymond M Strand	827
Robert W Tissing	824
John L Underwood	764
John A Wagener	461
Harry R Watkins	825
Norbert Wholeben	824
William F Wilson	826
Thomas R Woolcott	824

NEWS OF OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

RESTORATION OF A B-24 STARTED

The Collings Foundation reports that they are restoring a B-24J S/N 44-44052 to full flight status. This aircraft was delivered to the AAF in August of 1944 and was flown by the RAF during the war. It was left in India when the war ended. It is interesting to note that India assembled 36 Liberators from a disposal yard and flew them for the next twenty years without an accident. Some of these aircraft accumulated up to 40,000 hour of service. This compares with the service life of aircraft used by the scheduled airlines. This indicates that the Libs were sturdy and dependable aircraft after all, something that our crews knew all along. It had some good things going for it, the Davis wing making for long range flight, Hamilton-Standard propellers, and the R-1830 Pratt & Whitney engine, the same as on many DC-3's

The B-24J in question was purchased from an English collector, dismantled and shipped by boat and stored in a hanger in Stowe, Massachusetts. It was acquired by the Collings Foundation in June, 1985. When the work is completed this will be only the third B-24 type to fly. The other two are: The B-24J stored at the museum in Liberal Kansas, that flies occasionally, and the LB-30 flown by the Confederate Air Force.

The scope of the project is a total Zero time restoration. The work is about 1/3 complete, but much work needs to be done. The major work still to be accomplished and the most costly is the rework of the center wing section and overhaul of the propellers and engines. The cost for this project is estimated at \$600,000. Every B-24 mechanic, lineman, and air-crew-man is urged to send in a donation. Send your tax deductible check to the Collings Foundation, River Hill Farm, Stowe, MA 01775, Phone (617) 568-8924.

Caterpillar Club Membership

Aircrew members who had to hit the silk to save their lives are eligible for membership in the Caterpillar Club. Official membership pins are available from Mrs. Eva Wagner, Irvin Industries, Canada, Ltd. PO Box 280, Ft Erie, Ontario, L2A - 5M9. Phone (416) 871-6510. Some evidence must be sent with your order. The pins cost \$38.00 each.

Campaign Ribbons

You are entitled to medals for all campaign ribbons you have earned. To obtain them free of charge, write to: Veterans Administration, N.P.R.C.-GSA (State branch of service), Military Personnel Records, 9700 Page Blvd. St. Louis, MO 63132. Include social security number and copies of both sides of your discharge papers. Allow six months for delivery.

Report on the 1987 Reunion in Colorado Springs

A Special Report by the President and Founder Bud Markel



President Bud Markel and Association Secretary Beatrice Markel at the Bar-B-Q and Western show at Flying W Ranch

The beautiful fall weather of Colorado Springs set the stage for a most enjoyable multi group reunion. The restful Indian Summer warmth made the outdoor events especially enjoyable. The spectacular happenings such as the Flying "W" Ranch dinner and show, Air Force Academy tour, the tailgate lunch, Air Force/Notre Dame football game, golf tournament, and the many other local tours, including Pike's Peak, gave a happy variety of events to choose from. There was something for everyone, with much of it provided by nature itself, and all of this organized by the 15th Air Force Association. A total of 1200 people came to Colorado Springs, mostly by air, but some drove so as not to miss the wonderful scenery of Colorado.

One of these sites was The Garden of the Gods with its sienna hued rock-like formations convoluted to add contrast and varying intensities of the reddish colors that predominate this awesome natural display. These towering natural monuments with both curved and sharp uneven peaks, stood silent and proud in the warm October sun, while the sound of cameras clicking was heard adding a note of human approval.

Of all of the many groups participating in the reunion, only the Flags of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups were displayed proudly left stage, next to the speaker podium during the grand banquet held in the convention center of the Broadmoor Hotel. We had hoped to have the flags in the presentation of the colors procession, but because it would have been unfair to the other groups who did not have flags, we agreed to place them on the podium where they could be viewed during the entire program. The flags are featured prominently in one of the video productions made of the reunion. The last event of the 15th's part of the reunion was the Sunday morning memorial brunch at the Broadmoor. After the meal, a very moving memorial service was given by Ben Franklin, executive director of the 15th Air Force Association. The singing of traditional hymns during, and at the end of the service, added the right touch confirming the deep feeling of all of the attendees. Many members lingered long after the dying strains of music to stretch out the last goodbyes, made

to new friends and old. It was an emotional high point of the reunion.

With the exception of a few glitches that could not have been readily foreseen beforehand, the logistics of staging this multi group military reunion covering many sites and hundreds of square miles of territory, went quite smoothly.

More than 300 members, families, and guests of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association gathered at the Clarion Hotel for our part of the grand reunion. The Association once again showed its historic collection of photographs, documents, and memorabilia in a large public room. We invited members of the other participating bomb groups to visit the displays. Many of the visitors who did, were quite impressed with what we had done, and some expressed that they might use a similar format at their own reunions.

Grant (Fang) Hansen, 824 Squadron, arranged with the Adolph Coors Brewery to provide tap beer for everyone during the last three days of the reunion. The kegs held the most premium of brews that Coors can produce, and was served at an absolutely ideal temperature. Some non beer drinkers reported that if suds of equal quality were available at their home base, they would become beer affectionados.

In the business meeting, preceding the Association dinner after the reading of the minutes of the last meeting, the financial report and the Scholarship Committee's report, the members voted to direct the board of directors to eliminate the California residence requirement for board members. They voted also to direct the Association to increase the number of directors to five from the present three, with the requirement that a minimum of two members from each bomb group should be represented. The present board members, all present at the meeting approved the members' actions. Two new directors, representing the 461st, were elected to the board: they being Tom Javaruski 764 squadron, 461st bomb Group, and Tom Moss 765, 461st Bomb Group. A motion was made expressing the wishes of the members that the two organizations which represent the members from the 461st Bomb Groups should be merged. It was agreed that the president of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association should advise the president of the 461st Bomb Group, (H) of our members' wishes. With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

At the Association dinner following the business meeting Chris Donaldson gave the toast to our departed comrades which was so moving, it is repeated here in full.

Text of the Toast to our Departed Comrades, Reunion Banquet

Clarion Hotel, Colorado Springs, October 17, 1987 as presented by Chris Donaldson, 765th Squadron.

As the Presidential campaign heats up, it has become popular to question the origins of one's public statements. So let me quickly and gratefully attribute these few thoughts and words to a variety of authors, including the biblical prophet Amos, Pope Gregory the XIV, the contemporary greeting card writer, known as Flavia, author James Jones, and very likely others whose words and ideas I unwittingly utter.

From all of these are derived thoughts for an occasion like this...When we reflect on those no longer among us. Just as some come into our own lives and quickly go, others stay on awhile and leave footprints on our hearts that remain as long as we live. It is these that we honor tonight.

The phenomenon of military service and its effect on those who have experienced its extreme moments is both indelible and profound. It calls to mind: leadership through service, the nobleness of causes, love of justice, devotion to others and to the corporate ideal we call country. There are indeed such things as nobility of purpose, sense of mission, unselfish devotion to duty and love and care for those with whom we serve. We know this is so...For we have experienced these things long ago in faraway places, in events that remain central to our lives.

Author James Jones spoke of the generation of men who would walk into history, looking backward, peering over their shoulders behind them at their own long towering shadows trailing across the earth. None of them, he said, would every really get over it. So as we go onward, even while looking back into the shadows of time, let us honor and rededicate our memory of those missing from our presence... whether from the war years of 1944 and 1945, or this year or last year, or all the years in between.

Let us be grateful for their lives and their contribution of love and service in the noble cause that united us all so many years ago, and as it does today.

It is to them that we raise this toast....

The End

After the roll call of the squadrons, an engraved drawing of a B-24 in flight that was donated by Merle P Yanney of the 824 Squadron, was awarded to the wife of a lucky member from the 825 Squadron. Plans for next year's reunion were announced. The 1988 reunion of the 461st & 484th Bomb

Groups Association will take place Labor day weekend September 1 to 4, 1988 at the San Francisco Airport Marriott Hotel.

It was also announced at the reunion that the Association has started to collect a special fund to help some of our members with moderate incomes to attend the next reunion. This fund is financed by contributions from members with the first contribution coming from Bob Quinlan, 825 Squadron. The fund would be used to defray transportation and incidental costs. Sleeping rooms, reunion functions, and the attendant meals within the Marriott hotel will be provided at no cost to members by the Association. Payment of other reunion expenses will depend on the size of the fund at the time of the reunion. Friends of these members, who have expressed a desire to attend the 1988 reunion, should submit the names to the Association office. While this arrangement is restricted to the 1988 reunion only, if the membership wishes they may, at the next business meeting vote to re-establish the fund for forthcoming reunions.

End of Report.



Western Entertainers performing at the Flying W ranch party, and dinner



The tailgate party held just prior to the Football game at the Air Force Academy Stadium. Reading from L to R are: Ed Nesheim, Frances Hansen, and Grant (Fang) Hansen. Seated L to R Gloria Meshel, and Stan Bennett, all from the 824 Squadron.

Three Scholarships Given

Two Girls and One boy Qualify for Memorial Scholarship Awards for 1987
By Bud Markel



Photograph taken October 30 , 1987, at the Istituto Tecnico Commerciale, Cerignola, Italy at the annual presentation of scholarship awards presentation. Standing L to R are: Umberto Albanese, Rosaria Conversano, Beatrice Markel, Antonietta Lotito, Dario Grassi, and Bud Markel

Beatrice and I went to Italy after the Colorado Springs reunion last October. The purpose of the trip was twofold, (1) a much needed and long overdue vacation, and (2) to be present, as representatives of the Association,* at the Scholarship Awards presentation ceremony for the three successful candidates for the year 1987. (*In keeping with policy set by the Scholarship Committee, none of the Scholarship Funds or Association Funds were used for this trip, which was made at our own expense) We had previously invited members of the Association to join us as representatives of the Association at the awards ceremony, however, the names of the candidates, and the time and place of the ceremony were not known in time for our members to make travel plans.

The award ceremony for next year will take place on Friday, October 7, 1988, in Cerignola, Italy. Place: Istituto Tecnico Statale Commerciale, Via Tiro A Segno, Cerignola. The school is located about 15 blocks southeast of the large Catholic Church, (Piazza del Duomo) which fronts Cerignola's main street, Via Garibaldi/Via Roma. Time: 5:00 PM . This should give members desiring to attend, time enough to make travel plans. There are good accommodations and restaurants in Foggia and Bari, and at least one motel in Cerignola. Trains between major cities in Italy maintain daily schedules and are not too expensive. Rental cars are available too. See your travel agent for details.

The awards presentation ceremony had already started when we arrived at the Istituto Tecnico, where it took place, as it took more time than we had anticipated finding Professor Umberto Albanese's apartment, (it overlooks the ancient Roman granary, and opera house opposite). We had been delayed en route because of a traffic jam on the autostrada, (toll freeway, some routes in the south are free). It was dark when we drove into Cerignola from Foggia where we were staying, and with Italian street signs posted on the sides of buildings, if at all, the Albanese apartment was almost impossible to locate. Ironically, the next day when we returned to Cerignola, we found the house quite easily, but in the dark of night, and a bit rushed, and having to stop every two blocks to ask for directions, it was a different matter. Umberto's son Roberto,

Beatrice and I were introduced to the gathering of about 200 friends and relatives of the three recipients in a large meeting room in the school. We both (in our limited Italian) made short speeches. They overlooked our fractured grammar, as the enthusiastic applause said it all. Just reading their faces told us how important the scholarship program is to the community. Each student was presented with an off-white scroll bound by blue ribbon that contained an enlargement of the Association's insignia. The scholarship money that had been telexed to Italy before our arrival had been distributed to the students just prior to this. The headmaster of the school in his speech to the crowd said that the availability of the new scholarships each year serves as incentive for more students to keep their grades up. One of the recipients, Rosaria Conversano, the daughter of Francisco and Giannina Conversano, made a beautiful speech in English expressing her heartfelt thanks for the Association's scholarship program. Her father Francisco, we later learned, was the barber who cut hair for some of the 484th HQ staff. He remembered barbering Col. Keese as well as Col Bush and others. This is the first direct connection where an offspring of a 1944-45 Torretta/Cerignola resident was awarded a *borse di studio* (scholarship).

One of last year's recipients, Lucia Nigro was also present, and we were able to talk with her as well as this year's recipients, Dario Grassi, Rosaria Conversano and Antonietta Lotito. They all expressed genuine appreciation for their awards and of the Association members.

We were quite impressed with all of the students, They seem to share a sense of presence unusually high for students of that age. You get a feel of this from the tone of their conversation with others, and while reserved a bit from the inexperience of youth, they are not reluctant to speak. We are convinced that Umberto is finding the best students from those available from/ the Torretta/Cerignola area.

While we were busy trying to get some photographs at the end of the meeting, what with stopping to shake hands and greet people who came up to us at the end of the presenta

tions, we did not get a chance to visit with everyone present. The grandfather of Antonietta Lotito, had suffered a stroke some days before the ceremony so we could only exchange a few words with the girl and her family as they were rushing back to the hospital. Members of the Association who were on the Italian tour in 1982, will remember the hospitality of this family when the tour bus stopped in front of the building formerly occupied by the 767 squadron's infirmary. The Lotito family grandparents, who were then living in this building, hosted the entire busload with refreshments in the family living room. Just before the bus departed, the grandmother, who is rather small and frail, rushed out of the house with cold drinks and proceeded to serve them in the aisle. "It was the least I could do", she said later, "It was a rather warm day." In a subsequent phone conversation with the family, we learned that the grandfather had passed away.

After the completion of the ceremony, Bea was presented with a lovely flower bouquet, and I was presented with an engraved folding plaque, identical with one prepared for Chris Donaldson and Ed Goree, the two scholarship committeemen. As a gift from the Association, I presented Umberto with a engraved gold Cross pen and pencil set, and an honorary membership in the Association. Umberto was obviously surprised and pleased, as he seemingly forgot his discomfort due to a recent attack of sciatica, and was grinning from ear to ear when I presented him with the certificate of Honorary Membership, complete with the Association seal and red ribbon.

After the meeting, the headmaster of the school took us into his office for a short visit, and repeated what he had said earlier about the importance of the scholarship program, and that it was unusual in his experience for a military organization such as our Association to award scholarships. I think he wanted to know what the motivation was that prompted the scholarship program. At this point several conversations were going on at once and I didn't get a chance to make a proper reply. I believe that memorializing fallen comrades with a living memorial, which is what our scholarship program is all about, is not within the realm of Italian experience, because in all probability this is the first time in recent history when this has been done in southern Italy, hence the question of motivation. Per

haps it is the uniqueness of these bequests rewarding others that is most appealing to them. We will find the answer to this question later in future correspondence.

Later on, at Professor Albanese's house, where we were so graciously invited to partake of one of those truly unforgettable meals prepared by Umberto's wife, Antonietta, we presented Umberto and Antonietta with a house gift from Bea and I personally, as well as Association caps.

We met their very close friends, Gino and his wife Fernanda Bonita, who hosted another marvelous meal on the second day. Their apartment is right next to the Piazza del Duomo, and overlooks both the church and the via Roma. We understand that both of them have helped Umberto with the scholarship program. They are both very intelligent and knowledgeable. We found that we could carry on conversations, express ideas, and discuss complicated issues with complete understanding, even with our very limited Italian vocabulary, and the many times we reverted to English. We noticed a subtle warmth in Italian hospitality that makes you feel you have known them all your lives.

To sum up, we felt after meeting Umberto, and observing him, and talking to him over a period of two days that he is very professional in his methods of choosing the candidates, uses the media to full advantage to announce the availability of the scholarships, and accomplishes his task in a discrete and businesslike manner. Umberto no longer uses a translator to convert our letters and documents into Italian, preferring to do this himself using an Italian-English dictionary and lots of midnight oil. He is very modest about his own contribution of time and energy to the program, and wants full recognition solely for the Association. He said that the scholarship program is very important to him, and that being a part of an organization that helps give these students aid with their academic careers is his only reward. He is our second honorary member carrying the number HM-2. As we were about to depart, Umberto expressed a desire to attend the 1988 San Francisco reunion. I, on the behalf of the Association, dispatched a letter of invitation to him and his wife upon our return from Italy.

The end



The three students stand with their parents on either side after the awards ceremony. From L to R: Antonietta Lotito, Darlo Grassi, and Rosaria Conversano

Good Luck Charms

By
Herbert S Weber 767 Sq

WANTED ONE LOST BASEBALL CAP

WHEN ONE OF THE CREW, A PHILADELPHIA ATHLETICS FAN, DECIDED TO ASK CONNIE MACK FOR BASEBALL CAPS, A NEW IDEA IN GOOD LUCK CHARMS WAS BORN.

With the 15th Air Force in Italy 1944

(Copied from a Press Release issued in 1944-
Prepared by Association Member, Charles E. Dynes 461st
BG)

Wanted one baseball cap, and please hurry, Connie Mack, because it's very important to a Liberator crew who are doing their best to cripple Nazi manufacturing and communications throughout Europe.

With 21 Missions to their credit, the crew has miraculously come back every time without a man wounded and only minor damage to their plane. Maybe it's pure luck or maybe just the breaks of the game, but the crew is sure that it is the blue caps with the white letter A on the front, sent to them by Connie Mack and his Philadelphia Athletics baseball club, while they were still training in the States. The nose gunner lost his during a fracas at Linz, Austria and with the missions not getting any easier, he'd feel better if he could get another cap.

At first it just was a good trick to get some flashy caps, and one of the boys, a Athletic fan from way back, insisted that they write Connie Mack. But during training at Tucson, Arizona, the crew realized that they had a better talisman than any rabbit's foot. It was a training flight and the pilot gave the gunners permission to stay in the sack that day after a big celebration the night before. The flight was routine until the B-24 came in for a landing. It was

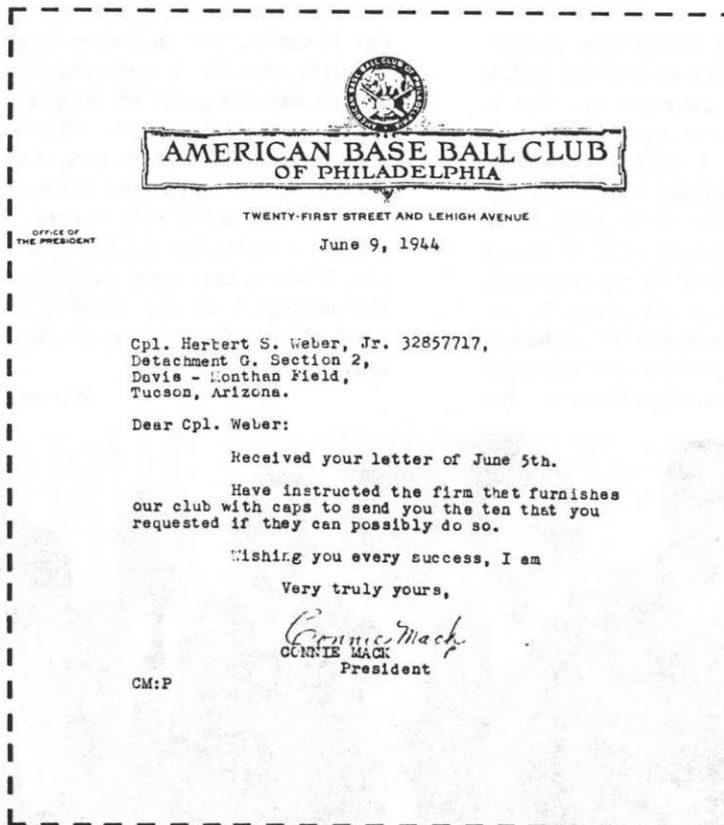
the field when another ship signalled an emergency and also headed in. A warning from the control tower came too late and the crippled ship plowed into the other, cutting it in two, directly behind the wing. None of the officers in the fore part of the ship were injured, but if the gunners had been flying there surely would have been casualties.

In July, the crew joined a veteran combat group commanded by Col Frederick E Glantzberg, Fresno, California, and every day since then has added to their string of luck. On July 25, came the mission to bomb the Herman Goering tank works at Linz, Austria. As they started the bomb run the whole Luftwaffe, spearheaded by Goering's crack Yellow Nose squadron, hit the group. The escorting P-38's were high to avoid the flak and the Germans came in from below doing most of the damage before the escort tangled with them. Less than half the group returned to the base and the boys with the caps were the only ones of their squadron to make it. Of course, they

gave the pilot full credit for jumping into a vacant place in the formation ahead as their own flight went down in flames all around, but they were wearing their caps. Their liberator was unscratched.

Every mission has been a minor league Linz. As the borders of Naziland shrink, the flak becomes more concentrated and the fighters more reckless. On two successive days, August 22 and 23, the group hit Markersdorf airfield and the Lobau underground storage tanks, both targets near Linz, the scene of their first encounter with the Luftwaffe. Every Liberator that came back was scarred by flak and fighters, the only close one for the boys with the caps being a hit on the nose turret by a stray bullet at Lobau, which came in one side and went out the other,

smashing the plexiglass and missing the gunner by inches. The nose gunner is the boy who had his cap blown off his head and out the window after the Linz scrape. At the time a couple of the boys wanted to jump after it and land via parachute, but the slipstream carried it up and away beyond reach.





15th AAF IN ITALY - - Shown at left is the lucky B-24 Liberator crew wearing their good luck talismans, blue and white Philadelphia Athletic caps given to them by Connie Mack. Standing from L to R are: 2nd Lt John W McCauley, co-pilot, Mercersburg, Pa.; 1st Lt Robert J Leubke, pilot, Fort Atkinson, Wis.; and 2nd Lt Miles E Amos, Orange, Calif. L to R kneeling are: Sgt Donald R Hilgart, engineer gunner, Park Falls, Wis.; Sgt George A Iubelt, radio operator, Orient, Ill.; Sgt Herbert S Weber, tail gunner, Center Village, N.Y.; Cpl Lee J Fitzpatrick, ball gunner, Chicago, Ill.; Cpl George H Hart, nose gunner, Lawndale, N.C.; and Cpl Grayton E Dahlen, upper gunner, Bismark, N.D.

Although the Navigator 2nd Lt Armand D Bottiglia, Bernardsville, Pa., was unable to be present for the picture, his cap is worn by Hart, who had lost his cap over Linz, Austria.

Now he is sweating out a replacement and he figures on a lot of close ones until the cap comes through. In the meantime, he counts on the aura of luck cast by the others.

An attack on the bridge at Ferrara, Italy designed to cut supply lines to Florence, came August 24, while no fighters appeared, the flak more than made up for it. Their ship picked up 50 holes and one vertical stabilizer was only a memory, with two holes the size of watermelons, big melons, but the caps brought them home. Other targets included Ploesti Oil Refineries in Roumania, marshalling yards and airdromes in Hungary, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, gun emplacements in Greece, and troop concentrations in Southern France.

There's a lot more rough ones coming up, Connie Mack, and everyone will add to the proof that the most important thing right now is to get that cap over and give the boys their full quota of luck.

A roster of the boys with the caps should be headed with the Pilot 1st/Lt Robert J Leubke 23, whose wife Mrs Evelyn V Leubke, lives at Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin. A 1938 graduate of Fort Atkinson High School, he attended Milton College before going to work for the Jamesway Mfg. Co. On January 19, 1942 he joined the AAF, receiving his wings at Perrin Field, Texas, where he picked up his crew, trained and came overseas in July 1944.

Co pilot 2nd/Lt John W McCauley Jr. 21, whose wife, Mrs Mary McCauley, lives at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, and his parents at Alexandria, Virginia, is a 1941 graduate Mercersburg Academy. After attending Penn State, he joined the AAF February 3, 1942.

The Navigator 2nd/Lt Armand D Bottiglia, 26, who attended Rutgers University, before joining the Army February 18, 1942. After receiving a commission in the Infantry, he trans

ferred to the AAF. He is the son of Mr and Mrs Vincent R Bottiglia, Bernardsville, Pennsylvania.

Miles E Amos, Bombardier, 21, son of Mr and Mrs Emmons G Amos, Orange, California, attended Santa Ana Junior Collage before joining the AAF on February 15, 1943.

The Nose Gunner, the boy who feels naked without his cap, and hopes Connie Mack will get another in the mail right away, is Cpl George H Hart from Lawndale, North Carolina.

Radio Operator/Gunner, Sgt George A Iubelt, 20, is from Orient, Illinois. He attended Southern Illinois Normal University at Carbondale, Illinois before joining the AAF December 13, 1942.

Sgt Donald R Hilgart, 20, Engineer/Gunner is from Shady Knoll Route, Park Falls, Wisconsin, and attended Antigo Aviation School before joining the AAF February 12, 1943.

Tail Gunner, Sgt Herbert S Weber, whose wife Mrs Elizabeth A Weber lives in Center Village, New York, is from Scranton, Pennsylvania. He attended Oneonta, New York Teachers College, joining the AAF March 24, 1943. He is the baseball fan that suggested the caps. At Linz he accounted for an ME-109.

Cpl Lee J Fitzpatrick Ball Turret Gunner, 25, whose wife Ottilie is from Chicago, Illinois, lived in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania before moving to Chicago, Illinois, subsequently signing up with the AAF on November 3, 1943.

Top Turret Gunner Cpl Grayton E Dahlen, 21, hails from Bismark, North Dakota, where he graduated from Bismark High School before joining the Army Air Forces in March 22, 1943.

Each member of the crew has won the Air Medal with one **9** Oak Leaf Cluster.

MAC NAMARA'S STORY

By
Joe Mac Namara, 827 Squadron

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER

The lives of an air crew team depended on the skills of the 10 men that made up a B-24 crew. We have several stories in this edition that tell of the valor and sacrifice of individuals who put their duty before their own personal safety. Much has been written on what makes a hero act as he does. We can't answer to what qualities or what psychological make-up heroes come from. All we know for certain is that heroes pop up at the very time and moment when they are most needed. The members of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups were well represented in this category.



Wedding photograph of Major Don Haldeman and his wife Lois
July 27, 1940.



Joe and Doris Mac Namara,
December 1943. He was the
crew's bombardier

Oak Leaf Cluster.

The end

The letter that follows was received by Lois Haldeman, wife of Don Haldeman, Commander, 827 Sq. The letter was written by Joe MacNamara, the crew Bombardier. This letter is now housed in the Special Collections Branch, United States Air Force Academy Library for use by cadets studying the air war in Europe during World War Two. 10

January 31, 1945
Wednesday afternoon

Dear Mrs Haldeman:

I don't know how to begin this and would give anything if I didn't have to write it. It is one of the toughest job I have ever had, and so it will probably be all bawled up and hard to understand, but I'll do my best to give you all the facts as I know them.

Before I go on, I want to ask you a favor. The story I am about to tell you is the same one I told to the officials in Washington, and they told me there that it was classified as



484th Bomb Group aircraft in distress. Fuel pours out behind number one engine .

secret and was not to be repeated. If it falls into the hands of the wrong people, it can be of some aid to the enemy and can help them in their future attempt to get our boys. I can't see how myself, but they should know, so I figure it isn't worth the chance. I do ask you to destroy this letter and never to refer to it in any conversation. OK? Thanks.

As I think you know, our target was Weiner-Neustadt, Austria, and it was one of the toughest targets we had at the time. Our group had been there twice before and our squadron had lost planes in each attempt. In fact it was the only place we had lost any planes up until that time. In the other two missions to this target we were not allowed to go, being the staff

A terrific burst of flak hit us somewhere near the co-pilot's seat.

crew, we only flew when our group or wing was leading, instead of being able to fly when we wanted to. We only flew when group HQ told us we could. It worked out that it was about one mission in five that we were allowed to fly. When this same target came up for the third time, the Major (Haldeman) just wouldn't let them go without us, although we were ordered to stay on the ground.

The Major, Ray, and myself, were afraid the other crews were using our position to keep from going to that target. In other words we were afraid they would think that we were yellow, and that would never do. So the Major demanded of the Colonel, for us to be allowed to go. He finally gave us permission, but because the lead crew had already been chosen and prepared, we merely lead an element, not the group. But we were there and we showed them the kind of stuff their CO was made of. I think you know that if the Major had said to Ray and myself

that we were going to the moon, we would have said, "Yes, Sir," and climbed in behind him and never doubted for a minute but what we were indeed going to the moon.

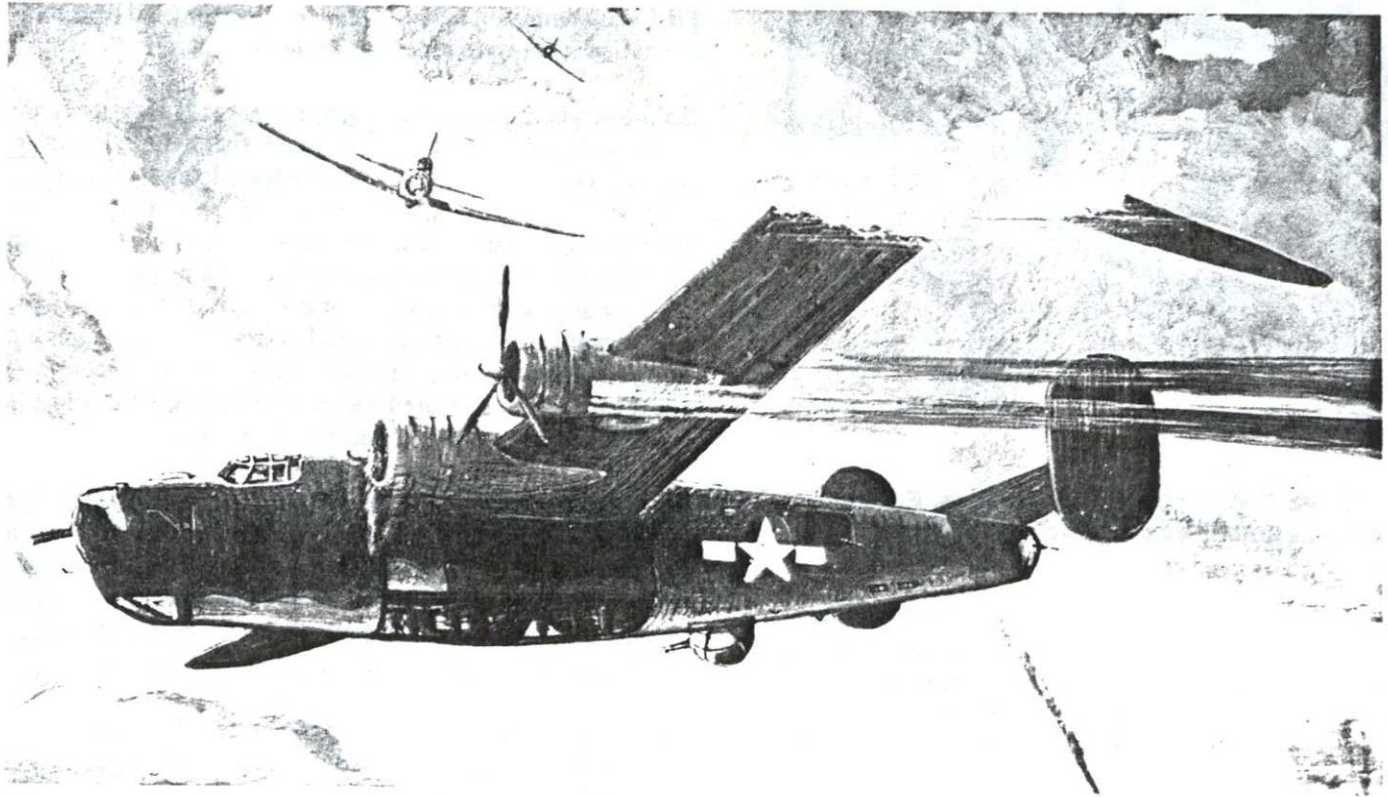
Anyhow, when we saw the target, it was everything we heard it was and more. We had seen enemy flak before, lots of it, and we had seen enemy fighters before, lots of them too, I have never seen so much of both in any one spot, and I hope never to see it again. I just don't have words at my disposal to describe the scene, but I can remember thinking that I couldn't see how any of us were going to come out of it alive. However regardless of what was ahead of us, there was no turning back, we had a job to do, a target to destroy, so in we went. I guess I was never so scared and never prayed so hard before in my life, and I guess too, it was not all in vain.

We completed our bomb run and saw the bombs hit the target and had just started our turn to the right off of the target, when our troubles began. A terrific burst of flak hit us somewhere near the co-pilot's seat. I don't know just where. I do know it killed Deak, our co-pilot and our top turret gunner, Marchi. It also hit the Major in his arm and got me in both legs.

As I said, we had just become committed to a right turn as planned, but this burst dropped us about 5000 feet and put us into a left turn. With the co-pilot gone, the recovery of the plane was up to the Major, and he had only one arm in good shape, but somehow he was able to get the ship organized and straightened out. But the trouble being that we were turning left at about 18,000 feet, and the group was turning right about a mile above us. It would have been impossible to attempt to turn right and rejoin the group because we were miles away from them at this time. The Major decided to keep going to the left turn and rejoin them at the end of the turn. To clear this up, it sounds confusing to me, I'll draw a diagram on the top of the next page and attempt to show you what was up.



Major Haldeman, taken during flight training at Randolph Field, Texas. March 1940



I hope the above helps you picture our plight. Before I go on I guess I had better tell you, because we were not leading, and Hickey's navigation was not too important (we merely followed the planes ahead of us), he was not in the nose with me but up in the radio compartment behind the Major and Deak. He had two good reasons for being there, it was warmer and the armour plate was up there. I can assure you I would have been up there too, if I could have been, but my job kept me in the nose. The only reason I tell you this is so you can locate Hickey in future references to him.

To get back to our condition, we were well organized and on our way to rejoining the group when our troubles really began. But I am getting ahead of myself. When I found out I was hit, I called the Major to tell him according to the rules and then asked Hickey who had the first aid kit to come down to help me out. I was bleeding like a stuffed pig from both legs, but couldn't put pressure on all the points to stop it. Hickey said he would be right down, but then the Major found he had been hit and naturally it was more important that he get fixed up, because he was the only one who could fly the plane back. The result was that Hickey stayed up there to move Deak and help the Major who had to use both his hands and feet to keep us in the air.

Then the waist gunner called and told us the bomb bays were on fire and just about the same time someone else called to tell us that enemy fighters were after us. Being all alone, on fire, and with our top guns out, it looked bad, and it was.. We called our own fighters on the radio to help us, but they

either didn't hear us or didn't have time to get there, but at any rate no help came. The first time they came in they swept us from nose to tail and the left waist, Gernasio called and said he was hit and the way he yelled and ended in a gasp, I figured it had killed him. That left our nose and tail turrets for protection, although I had no idea of what happened to the ball turret gunner in the bottom. We think the tail turret gunner got one of the fighters, but they were either not discouraged for two more came in and hit us in the same place and this time set fire to the nose, and as I found out later, the tail. I tried to call the Major to tell him the nose was on fire, but the same shells that set us on fire must have knocked out the interphone, and I couldn't get him or anyone. I then tried to signal him from the astrodome, the glass bubble on top, but when I looked up to his seat, he was slumped over the wheel.

The only way I could get from the nose to the flight deck where the Major and Hickey were, was through the tunnel by the nose wheel, but this was a blazing inferno by this time, and it was impossible to get into it. There was only one thing to do, and that was to get the nose gunner out of his turret (he is more or less isolated and doesn't know what is going on), and prepare to jump. The fire was getting all over the nose and there was no other place to go but out.

Four chutes came out of the plane while it was still in my vision. The best way of escape for the Major and Hickey was out the bomb bay doors, and about the only way of opening them was from the handle in the nose, so I opened them just



Place : Torretta Italy, a crushed gravel hardstand for Ship #81 "Knock out". A flight crew from the 827 squadron dressing prior to a mission. Year 1944

before I jumped. One of the four came out that way, and I thought at the time it was Hickey, but I found out later it was Shell, the radio operator, but he was dead when he hit the ground. One of his legs was shot off and as far as we could figure, he had bled to death. The other chutes were Hogan, the tail gunner, Walsh, the nose gunner, and myself.

I lost all contact with the balance of the crew until about six weeks later. I had been taken to a hospital in Graz, Austria, and while there, an English POW who had been on a farm in the vicinity was admitted to the hospital. He came into the American ward and said he had found a part of a B-24 in his travels and gave us the number and it was our plane. He had located it on a map about 100 miles North East of Graz. I don't recall the name of the town, but as soon as I can get a map, I'll send you the name. I won't hold this letter up for it. I asked him questions about it and he said he had not seen it crash, but only saw the results. He said there were seven graves near it and five of them had names and two were unidentified. Only two of the names could be written down before his guards chased him away, but these two names were Hickey's and the Major's.

In my mind I feel certain that both of them were killed by the fighters and never got out, or tried to.

I have never seen so much suffering and pain and violent death since that day. I am probably crude in my description, but Doris said she would rather have the facts if the story was coming to her, so I am telling you exactly what I know and pulling no punches. Please forgive me.

And that is all I know, and I know if the Major is dead, that he died a hero's death. It is small consolation to know that

those of us who are alive, owe our lives to him and his ability to fly. I say, if he is dead, because I did not see him myself, and I am only taking the Englishman's word, which I have no reason to doubt.

My advise to you is not to give up. Anything can happen, and prayers can do an awful lot. Whether he is in this world or another, your prayers and faith can do him plenty of good. I don't want to give you any false hopes, the only possible way they could get his name is from his dog tags, and they could be found any place. He could be in the underground, waiting to get free. At least we can hope so.

My chances of seeing you are pretty slim for now because they estimate I have about six more months in the hospital, but after that I will do my best to visit the coast. I hope by that time you have better news than I am able to give you.

I know this letter is unsatisfactory, but under the circumstances it is the best I can do. I know you will have questions to ask so be sure to write to me and I'll do the best I can to answer them. Write to me at Doris's address and if I am at a new hospital, she will forward them.

To say I am sorry is entirely useless and inadequate, but empty words will never express what I felt about the whole thing. The Major was my pilot, my CO, and my friend. You can't loose all that and brush it off. I have lost one of the most important things in my life.

If I can be of any help, in any way, at any time, please let me know and I assure you, I will do all in my power to make it up to the family of the man who saved my life, part of what I owe.

So long for now, and remember keep praying.

That lucky guy,

Joe MacNamara

Notes: Lois Haldeman, wife of Major Don Haldeman (now Lois Locke), and Darlene Haldeman, daughter of Major Don Haldeman, (Now Mrs. M Darlene Doppee) are members of the Association. Her son Victor, is applying for admission to the Air Force Academy. His congressman has made the appointment. All attended the 1987 reunion in Colorado Springs. A copy of the original handwritten letter was given to the Association with permission to reprint it given by the Haldeman family. William (Bill) L Hogan, the crew's tail gunner is a member of the Association. See his letter in the Letters to the Editor section of Flyer #14, Page 16. Joe MacNamara, the crew Bombardier, is deceased.

NAZI "ACK ACK" FOUR MILES HIGH

By

Ralph J Hallenbeck, 824 Sq

IT'S ONE THING TO FLY A BOMBER MISSION OVER THE MOST HEAVILY DEFENDED TARGET IN EUROPE, AND THEN TO HAVE YOUR PLANE SHOT UP SO BADLY THAT IT WON'T FLY AND TRY TO JUMP FROM A BURNING AIRCRAFT IN A TIGHT SPIN, TO BE THROWN TO THE FLOOR WITH YOUR CLOTHES ON FIRE, BUT THEN TO FINALLY ESCAPE TO FIND YOUR PARACHUTE HARNESS NOT FASTENED, THAT'S ANOTHER !!



On May 29th, 1944 I was flying in the pilot's position of a B-24, leading the 484th Bomb Group of 40 planes on a raid to Wiener Neustadt, Austria, one of the most heaviest defended target in Austria that employed multiple batteries of anti aircraft cannon. The lead ship I was flying was a radar ship. We were flying at 23,000 feet. Col William H Hendricks was with me riding in the co pilot's seat. We arrived at the target about 1000 o'clock. Just before reaching the target, our A-5 (Autopilot), went out. The PDI (Pilot's directional indicator), would not function.

The Bombardier, Richard Pearce, called for a six degree correction to the left which I put in using manual control of the ship. A flak burst in the nose section killed the bombardier, seconds after bombs away while he was trying to close the bomb bay door. He was caught still bent over the bombsight as we passed over the target into a hail of bursting flak. We immediately received a direct hit in just aft of the number three engine position approximately two feet back of where the nacelle enters the wing. The wing and engine were torn up badly. The shell entered from the underneath side, exploded, carrying pieces of the wing and shrapnel through the topside, leaving the wing and engine with a large gapping hole. The propeller immediately run away despite almost simultaneous efforts to feather it. The fuel selector and ignition were turned

off. The throttle was pulled back to idle cut off and the propeller was toggled into low pitch in an effort to slow it down, but the effort was futile.

An enormous stream of gasoline poured out behind #3 engine, then caught fire leaving a flame 200 feet long. I was flying the ship myself by hand and was busily trimming it up, endeavoring to assume three engine operation, when I noticed the fire behind number three engine, and in the bomb bay. I told the acting co pilot William H Hendricks to hold the controls while I pulled the engine fire extinguisher handles which in this ship were mounted on the floor next to the pilot's position. I exhausted both bottles, each time the fire chocked out only to burst into flame again. The number three propeller was now running away at 4300 RPM and the continual friction among the broken parts must have served to ignite the gasoline as it poured over them. I again took over the controls of the ship. Meanwhile, my top turret gunner S/ Sgt John A Battstone, was busily attempting to put out the fire in the bomb bays. This he did twice but the fire flared up again as the hand extinguisher he was using became exhausted.

Another flak burst that came within micro seconds after the first one in number three engine, caught us in the nose, blow



Ralph J Hallenbeck, 824 Squadron

ing a big hole in the left side of the bombardier's compartment, peppering the back side of the instrument panel and navigator's and bombardier's position, starting fires in the nose compartment. The flame and smoke came up from underneath the instrument panel into my face making it very difficult to read the airspeed, to keep the plane from stalling, and to hold the plane level. I had the plane under control, but of necessity slowing and losing altitude to maintain airspeed. The plane was flying straight and level maintaining a course of 190 degrees, which was our homeward course after leaving the target.

After exhausting the fire extinguishers and finding it impossible to control the fire, which was now filling up the ship. I activated the bail out alarm bell to abandon ship, and looking over to Col Hendricks, I signaled with my right thumb for him to go ahead and bail out too. He left immediately. I then called out over the intercom for the rest of the crew to bail out. I received no response and believing most of them had already jumped or were in the process of doing so, I prepared to leave. With the ship still flying straight and level, there should have been no difficulty for the rest of the crew to bail out. I remained at the controls at least thirty seconds after Col Hendricks bailed out. Some of the crew had already abandoned ship before this time, as I was all alone in the flight deck, the engineer and radio operator having already departed.

When I saw that Col Hendricks had cleared the ship through the bomb bays, I endeavored to bail out myself. The altimeter was now registering 18,000 feet. I found the ship would not

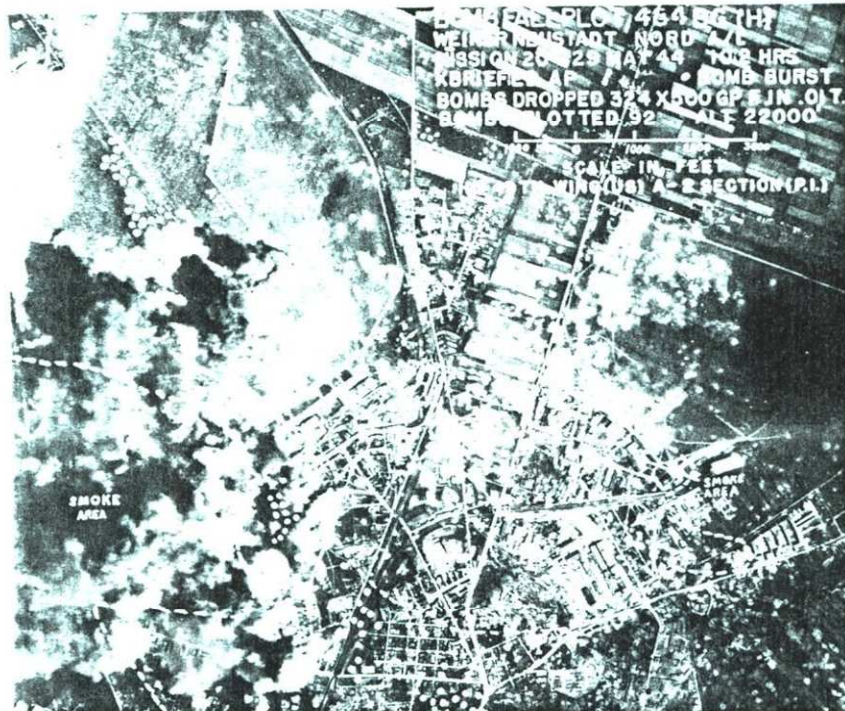
trim up sufficiently to permit me to release the controls without dropping into a spiral spin to the right. After rolling in full trim and throttling back the left engines, I found the ship would not hold steady. The fire was now filling the radio compartment. I left the controls and left for a dash to the bomb bay door opening. The plane immediately went to spiral spin to the right. I was thrown to the floor under the top turret and near the auxiliary power unit and was pinned down unable to rise from the force of the spin. I lay there in an inferno of fire for some thirty or forty seconds, just how long I'm not sure. I was being severely burned. The whole inside of the ship was a roaring mass of flames. Finally I was able to barely raise up enough to tumble out head first through the bomb bay. Right after I left the ship and before I could open my parachute, the ship blew up with a mighty roar.

Tumbling through space, I experienced considerable difficulty in getting my parachute to open. My parachute harness was not fastened, I had been flying with it unhooked, because of a

bad case of sore buttocks from a rough ride in a jeep the day before. When I did get my parachute to open, I just barely managed to catch one strap in the crook of my left elbow and another strap in my right hand, as the whole harness went sliding over my head. I hung this way until I reached the ground. The parachute was badly burned and still burning. Numerous panels and shroud lines gave way as I descended.

I landed on the top of a tall pine tree. My clothes were nearly burned off me and my face and arms

were badly burned. I was picked up almost immediately and led down to a small village about a mile away. My eyes were swollen shut and I was very weak. I was taken to a small police station-like building. Here I was searched and stripped of everything. Col Hendricks, two of my gunners S/Sgt John A Battstone and S/Sgt Ralph L Barnhardt, and the radar operator Lt James Burns were also brought to this same place. Late that evening I was taken to a small first aid station where I stayed for two nights. I was then taken to a large hospital in Vienna for two more weeks. I never saw any of my crew after that.



THE MILK RUN

By
Fred Roessler, 827 Sq

June 27, 1944, the 827th squadron flew to Southern France to knock out a railroad bridge and trestle over the Varr River.

It didn't seem much of a target, just a long skinny trestle apparently unprotected, way out in the countryside. We didn't even have a "Mickey Ship" (*1 Ed Note) for radar for the bomb run, we used our own bomb sight.

I guess we were trying to provide as much support to the Normandy Beach head as possible. (*2)

We were crew #76 John P Roedel, first pilot. The bombardier, Warren W Watts, released out bombs and we turned away rather sharply in hopes the pilot and front end crew could see the bombs hit. It was an almost perfect impact pattern. Half of the bomb just missed all along the left side of the trestle and the rest just missed along the right side. The trestle and bridge remained intact.

The trip should have been a real "Milk Run" but while we were rubber necking, no doubt the only anti aircraft gun in the area got our range and popped a few rounds at us. They were luckier than we were, as a piece of shrapnel from one of their bursts went through the bomb bay shearing off the four lines to the sight (fuel) gages (*3). We immediately had a big white plume of raw gasoline coming out of the bomb bay area. We had seen other planes develop these white plumes, and we knew that if you didn't bail out before the plume turned black, (which happens in a very short time), you just didn't bail out.

There was a routine to follow and we knew the routine. The copilot (me) and the rest of the crew were supposed to jump, while the pilot held the plane steady and level, if possible. He would be the last to leave the ship. John Roedel waved me out and I unbuckled, and headed for the bomb bay with no fear or hesitation about getting out in a mighty short time. As I passed through the radio compartment, Sgt Fischer, the engineer, pushed me out of the way and headed for the bomb bay without a parachute on.

I picked myself up and went through the hatch to the open bomb bay. There was Sgt Fischer standing with one foot on the cat walk and the other up on the side of the fuselage, stopping the fuel flow. The drain cocks on the four main lines were safety wired open, as there were also shut off cocks closed at the lower end of the line, (*4)

As I recall, he smiled at me, proceeded to grab the drain valve

handles, and break the safety wires with his fingers and shut them off one at a time. His fingers were severely cut and bleeding bad. The crew bandaged his hands and we made it back to Torretta, Italy, instead of walking back through Spain. Thanks to Sgt Fischer's quick action we were all saved from a fiery death, injury, or capture.

I offered to work with John Roedel in writing up the combat report, but he said he would rather do it himself. I often wondered what he wrote, because when Sgt Fischer arrived state side at Smyrna, Tennessee, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with three oak leaf clusters on September 1, 1944, by order of General Twining. The medal was presented by Col Umstead, Commander of the base.

The End

Editor's Notes:

(*1) "Mickey Ship" was a popular term used to describe an aircraft equipped with radar or similar devices. In the case of the B-24, radar used for bombing through an overcast, was mounted in the place of the ball turret. They were usually painted a dull grey over all, and carried a black three digit identification number. The use of group insignia painting on the rudder and fin were generally omitted as these aircraft were sometimes used in single ship missions at night.

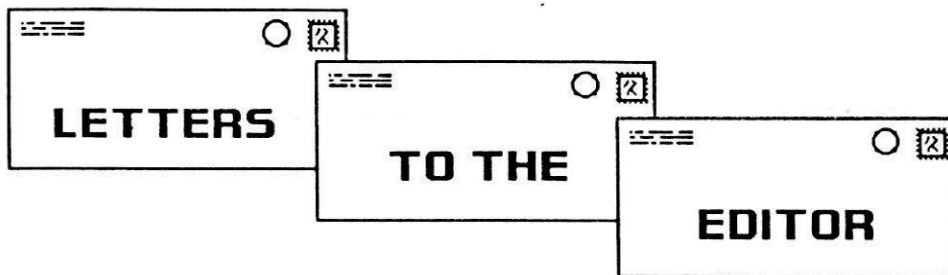
Mickey, or Mickey Mouse, was a slang term to describe a complicated apparatus that had a dubious reputation for reliability, hence "Mickey Ship".

See photo of a "Mickey Ship" on Page 13 Torretta Flyer#14.

(*2): The purpose of the air attacks in Southern France was to soften enemy resistance in preparation for the Invasion of Southern France set for August 1944.

(*3): The fuel quantity gages in the B-24 were glass tubes mounted on the aft bulkhead behind the engineers station. Raw fuel was piped into the cockpit to fill these tubes. They were highly inaccurate and required that the airplane fly straight and level to obtain a decent reading, which was seldom the case as the B-24 flew slightly nose high to obtain maximum lift from the fuselage.

(*4) The sight gages had pet cocks (drain valves) installed above and below so that the glass tubes could be isolated during combat as they were highly susceptible to flak damage. The pet cocks that were on the lower end of the line within the bomb bay, that the author refers to were used to drain the fuel tank sumps of any water contamination prior to flight.



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hello Bud:

Had to do a little dog sitting and housewarming for my daughter down in Plano, Texas, where the temperature hovers around 100 degrees. Now I know what housewarming means.

Let me tell you about Captain Ned Vahldieck. He was from Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and I was from Racine of the same state just 25 miles away, so it was natural for us to be buddies. He was an excellent pilot, and had only a few missions to complete his tour. I was lead bombardier, and he was always after me to fly with him on missions and practice bomb runs. I was eager and always ready to fly.

One day we went up. Now with my own pilot I always had plenty of time to set in the drift settings and and bomb sight adjustments, but this was not to be the case with Vahldieck. When he got up, he was ready to go, so I worked hard all the way up getting things ready. When we got on deck I was all set and I guess we dropped ten sand bombs.

When we got down on the ground and out of the plane, someone said,

"Amos were you flying in 56 today?" I replied in the affirmative.

"Oh! That was some 'Beaut' of a roll through the silos and a 'Buzz Job' on Major Phillips' tent."

"Naugh!!, that was not us, we were dropping practice bombs," I shot back quickly.

Another officer confirmed rather emphatically, "Amos, old buddy, we know you were up in 56 today roaring down the company street".

Then Vahldieck came by and said, "Hey! Lars I guess we are in a bit of trouble, I flew down between the silos and said hello to Major Phillips, but don't worry, you are not involved, it's all my fault."

Shortly afterwards we were called to face Major Phillips in his tent, "Court Martial 1000 hours Monday morning," He said stern faced. We worried all weekend, and appeared in Major Phillips tent at 1000 sharp in our dress uniforms. He and the operations officer, who were dressed in fatigues, inviting us to a game of bridge. Then he said rather calmly without a change in his expression, "Tonight there will be a

meeting in the officers club, and I will talk about needed repairs. So you Capt. Vahldieck will stand up and say loud and clear, yes ! I believe we do need repairs and I will contribute \$500.00. And you, Larsen will get up quickly and say yes, we do need repairs and I will contribute \$200.00."

That night everyone knew the story and kept hollering, "Now! Vahldieck, Now!" even before the meeting started. The meeting went according to plan, just as Major Phillips ordered. I not only pledged \$200.00, I paid it too. Shows you what friendship can do for you. All of the officers got a good laugh over that, and also learned a B two four was not to be used for aerobatics, in our squadron anyway, unless you wanted to go to the poorhouse.

Thanks for listening,
Amos Larsen 766 Sq

Dear Bud:

In answer to your letter, on one of my days off from flying several of us from the squadron rode down to the maintenance area to see repair work that was being done on one of the Pratt & Whitney engines. The mechanics showed us a sleeve with a vertical split in it. He explained that without a serviceable sleeve, the supercharger would not work, resulting in low manifold pressure at altitude. This sleeve was part of the line that fed pressure from the exhaust manifold to the turbo boost control. He further went on to say that this sleeve would deteriorate from heat and normal vibration, and was difficult to detect during an engine inspection, thus explaining why many crews reported loss of supercharger control prior to encountering combat conditions.

In re-reading Torretta Flyer No 12 Spring 86, an article on page 21, "My Last Mission," by Carl Peterson, 767 squadron, I remember the mission well. I was the lead navigator for the 767th, and if I recall, the target was Brux Oil Refinery. Delena, a squadron pilot, and Hower, a co-pilot, bunked with us for several days before the mission. Being

new recruits to the squadron, the bombardier and myself cued the boys on the navigational check points. We strongly emphasized the pitfalls of ditching a B-24. We went over this point many times, but I guess it just didn't sink in.

We were in a flight well north of Yugoslavia, when the pilot from group, who was sitting in the co-pilot's seat, received a message from the aircraft Delena was flying, that they were going to abort, as he couldn't climb and probably split a couple of supercharger sleeves. The flight commander instructed Delena to get over Yugoslavia at 10,000 ft and bail out the crew, including himself. We next heard that he would try to make it to the Island of Vis. Then we next heard that he had enough fuel to make it across the Adriatic. But a subsequent message stated that they were turning around to head back to Vis.

Evidently they must have run out of fuel and had to make a dead stick landing in the Bay of Vis. Delena and five of his crew perished in the crash. The radio operator, one of the survivors related the ditching to me. I don't remember if the co-pilot, Hower, who had a previous tour of duty with the merchant marine and had made the perilous Murmansk run to Russia on several occasions survived the ditching.

When I was assigned to targets north of Lake Balaton, shivers would shoot up and down my spine. Those Me-109s were something else. I practically flew all of my missions in a B-24 painted olive drab, numbered 62.5, a small five after the decimal point. Why a small five, I don't know. The ship had a radar dome in place of the Sperry Ball Turret*. When you next see Marion Pruitt, give him my regards.

Sincerely,
Armand Bottiglia, 767 Sq.

** Editor's Note: This was a, "Mickey Ship," The small five may have indicated that the ship was modified to carry radar after receiving a squadron number.*

Dear Bud:

In your recent letter, you asked for a list of my duties with the 461st BG. I am enclosing a copy of a proposed citation which describes my job better than I can.

As you will notice, one aspect of the job was to attend daily briefings and provide the radio operator with frequencies and code words of the mission, give instructions for the use of chaff (known now as window, small strips of metal foil), and on other occasions provide other pertinent information.

These instructions, or orders were given to me at the time of briefings by our CO, his deputy, or Operations Officer. I always thought that our CO, especially Col Glanzberg, enjoyed good relations with 49th Wing personnel, but I never knew how much negotiating room they had relative to the daily missions. By the time I received the orders, they were no longer negotiable.

PROPOSED CITATION

John A Wagener, Major Air Corps, Headquarters 461st Bombardment Group (H), United States Army. For meritorious achievement in the direct support of combat operations from 2 April, 1944 to 25 April 1945. Major Wagener has been Group Communications Officer of the 461st BG since its activation and during this time has distinguished himself by his outstanding performance of duty. He has carried out his responsibility for the maintenance of all radio and communications equipment in his group's aircraft in a superior manner ever since the group began combat operations, despite the many problems with which he has been confronted.

His work in the briefing of radio operators for combat missions and supervising the preparation of radio logs has always been painstaking and accurate. Under this officer's skilled direction, both control tower and a ground station are being operated on the base very successfully. Major Wagener's outstanding efforts in all of these activities have meant a great deal in furthering the efficiency of his organization in combat operations.

Despite the difficulties of a critical lack of necessary equipment and trained personnel, he has nevertheless successfully established and maintained both an excellent telephone network and electric lighting system on his base. These important services have not only been instrumental in increasing the operating efficiency of his group but have also added to the comfort and morale of its personnel to a high degree. By his outstanding professional skill, resourcefulness, and untiring devotion to duty, Major Wagener has materially increased the efficiency of his group in combat operations, thereby reflecting great credit upon himself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America. Residence at appointment, Sparkhill, New York.

John A. Wagener 461st HQ

Dear Bud:

The article I am enclosing appeared in the Abbeville, South Carolina Press and Banner. The mission was to Austria and not Italy as printed.

Bob Bray 826 Sq.

Reunited: World War II Buddies Reunite In Abbeville After 44 years.

Coy Argo was reunited with two faces from the past, belonging to his two buddies from his days in World War II, last week at his home in Abbeville. He hasn't seen either for 44 years. All three men had undergone flight training in the United States as members of the same flight crew. They had only known each other for three months, the last day Coy

saw them was the day before the crew boarded a bomber for a mission to Italy, only to be shot down. Luckily, in retrospect, Argo was not on the plane, having gotten sick from eating bad grapes. Hospitalized, someone else went on the mission in his place. His friends, Robert Bray, and Hubert Ball, along with the rest of the crew, were shot down by enemy bullets on the first bombing mission ever flown by the crew.

The plane was hit on the side and each of the crew bailed out. Everyone survived, but for each, it was the beginning of a long hard separation.

Landing in enemy territory, the crew split up to increase their chance of evading the enemy.

Each was later picked up and made prisoners of war. Somehow surviving the horrors of that experience, being moved from camp to camp, treated with neglect, and suffering from lack of food, the two friends, Bray and Bell emerged free men many months later, each weighing close to a hundred pounds. The two never saw each other until last week when their vacation routes crossed and they both decided to detour to Abbeville to see Argo.

Argo went on to finish the war completing 32 combat missions, eventually receiving a number of military medals.

"He took good care of us," Bray said of his friend, Argo. "He was 15 years older than the rest of us, a sort of father figure".

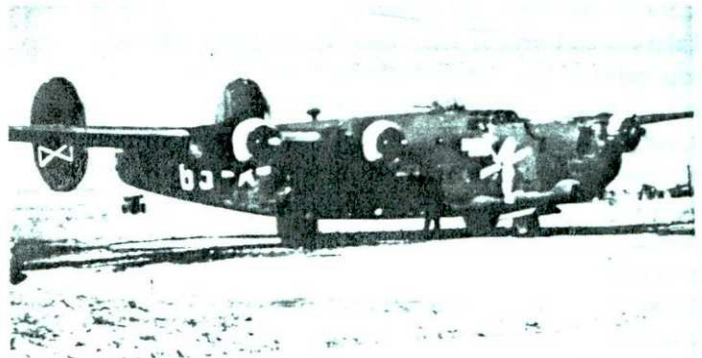


Coy Argo (center) stands with his two World War II wartime friends Robert Bray (L) and Hubert Ball (R) neither of whom he has seen in 44 years until the Abbeville reunion.

To Bud Markel, Editor Torretta Flyer

I am inquiring about the disposition of my aircraft "Salvo Sally" after my crew finished our tour of duty. The crew included: Floyd R Creasman, pilot; John T Harper, co-pilot; J Jordan Glew, Navigator; Marvin C Rudolph, bombardier; Edward Mc Donald, 1st engineer; Raymond B Hinz, 1st radio operator; Williard I Pearson, nose turret; Joseph M Hebert Jr,

tail turret; Timothy J Holland, upper turret, and S/Sgt Stromback.



My question is: Did Sally go down when piloted by 1st Lt Stone, and co-pilot Lt Ripple? Did the a B-24J, s/n 44-10484, that was shown in the spring 86 issue of the Torretta Flyer carrying the same squadron number 63, replace the original Sally? I note she is natural silver color, while the original Sally was a B-24H painted olive drab. I am enclosing a photo of the original Sally as she appeared parked in her revetment on the morning of August 14, 1944, the day after I finished my tour of duty.

Joe Hebert, 826 Sq

Editor Torretta Flyer:

After looking at page 32 of the latest flyer, you have a picture which is labeled unknown St/Sgt. I spent gunnery school with that young soldier and his name is Guy Edward Stottlemeyer of Hagerstown, Maryland. We were good friends but were separated when crews were established. I heard through the grape vine that this man had a medical problem related to bleeding at high altitude that couldn't be diagnosed on the ground. I also heard later on that he did not survive his first combat mission as a result. I would like to know the correct story as he and I were the best of friends, and ran around with each other, in fact we were called the,"terrible twins."

Yours very truly,
Gilbert E Stover, 827 Sq.

461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association
Office of the Editor, Torretta Flyer

Dear friend Bud:

Regarding the deceased list as it appeared on page 7 of Torretta Flyer No 14, a Julian R Rakower is shown. He was in the 824 squadron assigned to the Communications

section. He was one of the four who built a "Tufa Stone", casa in the 824th squadron area, along with Newton D Lewis, Raymond Grenz and myself.

Rakower and myself were radio operators, working at the group radio station located behind 484th BG headquarters. The station was supervised by M/Sgt Bramlitt and Sgt Samson, (not sure of his name). Sgt Bramlitt had a "prize" dog which we all at times attempted to preserve, defend and protect against the hoard of clamoring males, clawing and scratching at our door. It was our job to select the most outstanding mate so as to preserve the blood lines, and let him in to prove his amorous intention. Ha! maybe Bramlitt or Samson would remember this breeding experiment, as I never was able to find out what the results were.

Cordially yours,

Gordon Brant, 824 Sq.
Oelwin, IA

Dear Bud:

In the last issue of the Flyer, Orville Wildman had a letter about one of the Vicious Virgin's missions. Here is a story about the end of old Vicious.

On 1 November 1944, flying our first mission with this colorful aircraft, we were hit over Vienna and unable to feather number 2 engine. We were unable to keep up with the formation, so were on our own. For about an hour I sat like an idiot in the nose watching the propeller snap the crankshaft and pull out about eight or ten inches from the engine and then wobble, chewing chunks out of the the upper and lower cowling. I finally realized that I was sitting in the path that the prop might fly if it came completely loose. I quickly dispatched myself to the relative safety of the flight deck.

After about two hours we lost number one. We had been flying over an undercast so I did not have a reliable position, only that we were over Yugoslavia. We were looking down at the mountains when we lost number one, a minute later we were in a valley looking up at the mountains. The order was given to bail out or prepare for a crash landing. On approach I could see boulders three feet in diameter, and wondered who would survive if we hit one of them. The pilots sat the plane down in the only clear place in the valley no more than two hundred yards in all.

The bombardier and I had our heads up and locked as we were sitting underneath the upper turret, which did just what we had been told it would do, that it would fall through on impact.

The crew cleared the ship in a matter of seconds, the pilots went out their side window with parachute packs on, an impossibility under normal circumstances. I went out the hole left by the upper turret and just as I hit the ground, I re-

alized that the bombardier was shouting that he was pinned in. I climbed back up to help him when he knocked me off the ship as he came out.



The props were laid out in an even row. The partisans stripped the ship of all guns and ammo. The next day they blew her up so the Ustachi couldn't salvage anything. Thus ended a tough old bird.

Yours truly,
R D Pierson, 826 Sq

Editor, Torretta Flyer
Sir:

Enclosed is a photo of our crew. On 9 March, 1945, over Germany at 29,000, the bombardier said, "No flak here", so we dropped down to 17,000 feet when we were hit by a 105 millimeter shell. Upon landing at Cerignola, the pilot stated, "No brakes". We rolled until stopping in a field. Nobody was hurt. We went on to complete 50 missions.

Angelo L Ferrara, Ball Gunner 767 sq.
Essex, Maryland

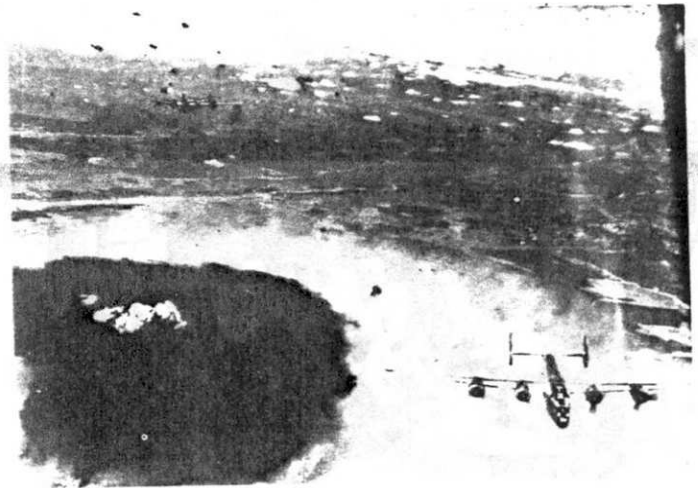
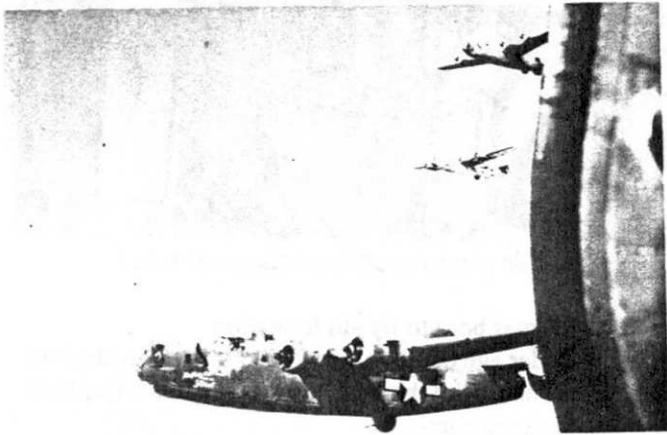


Kneeling L to R 1) Lt Charles L Dean, co-pilot; 2) unknown; 3) unknown; 4) Donald Herbert, pilot. Standing L to R Brevett Hook, engineer; Raymond B Spencer, tail gunner; John L Shaw, nose gunner; John T Ryan, radio operator; Angelo L Ferrara, ball gunner; and Harry Poturalski, upper gunner.

461st & 484th BGA
Bud & Bea

This is a real good shot of "Malfunction". We were granted the use of this old bird when we arrived at the 767 squadron in "44". She always brought us home without fail. The photo is from the Don Charland collection.

Tom Moore, 767 Sq.



As we left the target, flak severed the trim tab control cable to the right rudder. This left the trim tab free to flutter wildly in the slip stream and caused the whole tail section of 81 to vibrate badly.

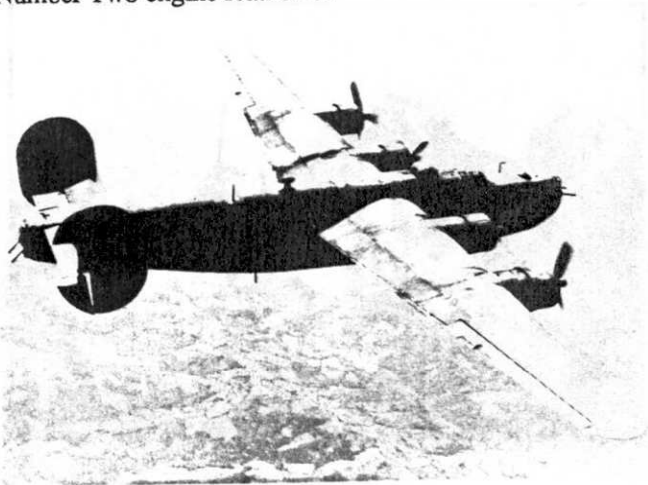
For some reason this caused unhappiness up front. The intercom came alive, I could hear Lt Spaulding, (or Spalding), well enough, but when I tried to explain, the vibration came back making it impossible for the crew to understand me. In a very short time, the tab tore itself loose carrying part of the rudder with it. Everything settled down and #81 came home. Others on the crew that day that I can remember are Keffer, co-pilot, Watson, Gilbert, and Brownie,

Parker Shaw, 827 Sq.

Dear Bud:

I am enclosing two photographs, which may be of some interest. As to the one of a Ploesti mission, I have no information. It was given to me by S/Sgt David Shertzer, of New York. We were both stationed at Tyndall AAFB, Florida as gunnery instructors after returning from Italy, and an instructors course at Laredo, Texas. My log shows that I had two Ploesti missions, but I don't know if I was flying the day the photo was taken.

The picture of 81 was taken on the return from a Budapest, Hungary mission on July 27, 1944. This one I do have vivid memories of as I was flying tail. If you'll notice about 1/3 of the rudder is missing and closer observation shows Number Two engine feathered.



Hi Bud:

The Torretta Flyer No 14, was the best yet. Of particular interest to me was the picture of the crew of Lt Robert E Arbutnot. I was a member of that crew. All of the crew members survived the war. We became a lead crew later, so sometimes our navigator, bombardier, and co-pilot flew with other crews. The navigator, Lt Leland J Harp and bombardier, William E Patterson Jr were shot down and became POW's

On page 15 Torretta Flyer No 14, The Official Report of mission number 67; 22 July, 1944, Ploesti Oil Refinery, Rumania shows that Lt Jack T Gunn bailed out near the base and sustained a broken leg. If my memory is correct he was flying with 1st Lt Taylor, who was noted in the report as bailing his crew out. Our crew was not flying the day of the Ploesti mission

I remember the bomb dump fire. It was some display of fireworks, and the smoke over the runway was bad, and strong crosswinds made it even worse. It was almost impossible to make a normal landing.



Here is a picture of "All American", Lt Arbuthnot. Our pilot flew this airplane on the mission to Linz, Austria on 25 July, 1944. This was one of our roughest missions. Standing: L to R is Warren H Marsh, nose gunner; Hugh G Baker, upper turret; third person unknown. Kneeling L to R: Eliza S Massie, tail turret; Eric C English, waist gunner; Robert L Molyneux, waist gunner; Roy M Walkama, ball turret. Others kneeling are unknown ground personnel. Hugh G Baker Photo 765 Sq

Sincerely,
Hugh G Baker 765 Sq

Dear Bud and Bea:

Thanks for your nice letter and concern.

As for me, I just keep hanging in there and take the days as they come. Some are good, others not so good. As far as we know, the cancer is in remission and we think that most of the pain came from the massive doses of radiation that was given after the operation. I still manage to get in lots of work around the house, but don't think I will ever catch up with the back yard.

We have a special glider field out here on the other side of town and I have been up several times and plan to do more.

Bruesch dropped in on us a few weeks after we moved in. That was a pleasant surprise. We have had quite a few guests and always happy to see old friends. If you get up this way, drop in too, we have lots of room.

Got my name in the paper, a copy is enclosed with this letter.

Better close now,

Love,

Bob Myers, 826 Sq
Vacaville, California



Vacaville precision pilot recalls aerial antics

Robert Myers was born to fly--in formation.

At the tender age of 12 he was forced to land an airplane for a disabled pilot with the help of another aircraft that flew alongside for moral support.

Little did Myers know that almost two decades later he would found--albeit unofficially--the premier precision flying team in the US /Air Force, The Thunderbirds.

His illustrious career probably began that fateful day in Santa Monica when the aviation-mad youngster took a ride with one of the instructors at Clover Field. After an uneventful flight, the plane hit the runway sideways in a crosswind, the tail skid soundly struck the ground and whipped the rudder pedal into the pilot, fracturing his leg.

According to Myers, he put his academic knowledge of flying to use and after they got back in the air he, the injured instructor and an escort managed to land the plane without incident. As soon as the instructor recovered, Myers took flying lessons from the man and received his pilot's license.

Although he didn't then have a clue, Myers had found his niche--a niche that would take him to North Africa, Italy and through the Berlin Airlift to fly 85 bomber and fighter missions during World War II.



His crowning achievement came in 1952 when he and three other flight instructors began performing tricky aerial maneuvers in their T-28 trainer.

"The kids coming in were reticent to fly in tight formation," Myers, 67, of Vacaville said. "So we formed a formation demonstration team."

With Myers flying the lead plane, the seminal squad put on exhibitions at Reese Air Force Base in Lubbock, Texas, over the course of the year.

With the team and the concept gaining in popularity, Myers claims the Air Force absconded with the group's insignia and formations and moved the Thunderbirds to Williams Air Force Base in Arizona.

"When the Air Force got wind of what was going on," Myers said, "they liked it and took it away from us."

Staff Sgt. Frank Paris of the Thunderbirds public affairs office said he knows nothing of a forerunner to the Thunderbirds. He said the team, formerly called the Stardusters, didn't get the Thunderbirds label until six weeks in the 1953 season.

Although not officially recognized by the Air Force, that first group of pilots pioneered a number of maneuvers, including the "bomb burst," which is still being performed today, Myers said.

"The big difference between then and now is performance characteristics, the difference between 250 (mph) and 600 mph."

Myers' team flew the T-28, a single-prop plane with the "flying characteristics of a jet."

"It's (the T-28) a very easy airplane to fly," Myers said.

In 1953, the Thunderbirds went to jet fighters.

Myers sees his year on the team as the culmination of his career. As for his more than 10 years in the Air Force, he offered, "It was a nice experience but I wouldn't want to live through it again."

Although he is no longer a pilot, the wiry Myers still enjoys the sensation of getting up in the air once in awhile in an airplane or glider.

Myers and his wife Juanita moved here from Torrance in April.

The End

Dear Bud:

In browsing through my 461st & 484th file I happened to stumble across the Winter 1984 edition of the Torretta Flyer. Reminded me of two things. On April 11, 1944, ten of us crews were transferred from the 484th in Djedeida, Africa to the 461st in Italy. Upon arriving in the vague vicinity, our pilot, Jack Baker, kept calling for landing instructions from Torretta tower. After what seemed an hour, and a half, we finally got a disgruntled reply from the tower which advised us

not to use the name "Torretta". We were supposed to use a code name, that no one had bothered to tell us about, which was supposed to prevent the Luftwaffe from pinpointing the location of the 461st base, and I suppose to mount a massive bombing retaliation on their part.

Secondly, I suppose you are aware of this, the cover photo absolutely has to be the photograph from which the painting "Raid on Ploesti" (no 3 in the "Pride of the Service series") Armed Service information poster DA21-34, was modeled. Our crew was on the mission which took place on May 31, 1944. Our bombardier, Norm Zollinger had a copy of this poster at our 25th crew reunion in Chicago and insisted that he could pick out our "One Eyed Jack" in the picture.

Now, "One Eyed Jack" got its name as follows. During our training in Harvard, Nebraska, the crew, officers and enlisted men would meet surreptitiously for sessions of poker. High on the list of favorites was Fours, Whores, and One Eyed Jacks. On the flight from Belim, Brazil to Dakar, Africa, being the most responsible as the navigator, I was scanning the night sky for my most likely next star fix through the astro dome, when I realized to my horror, the flight deck was completely devoid of pilots.

"The sons of bitches have bailed out and didn't bother to tell me," was my first reaction. The tortured and lengthy scramble past the nose wheel revealed the entire crew on the floor engaged in their favorite pastime, "Fours, Whores, and One Eyed Jacks".



My rather hysterical objections were met with a pacifying, "Oh! it's OK, we've got her on automatic pilot."

Because our pilot was Jack and the crew's romantic endeavors were legendary, it wasn't hard to combine it all and paint a "One Eyed Jack" of hearts on the nose of number 2 when we got to Torretta. Our only poetic license was to have Jack facing to the front.

Another aside, which I am willing to be corrected on, is the fact (I have been so advised) that our crew left Torretta on August 7, 1944, as the first totally intact 461st crew to

return to the United States. We have over the years credited this to the fact that our crew trained as a crew, partied as a crew. When we got into combat, we knew each other, responded like a crew, respecting each others' responsibilities.

Thomas P ("Teepee") Hendry, 764 Sq
Granville, Ohio

461st & 484th BGA
Dear Bud:

Received the latest issue of the Torretta Flyer, and much to my surprise, in the middle of page 22 there is a picture of my, "old ship No 11". The caption should read L to R: Lt Harold Wells, co-pilot, (later 1st pilot); Harold Smith, engineer; and 1st Lt John Trechter.

Trechter later was given another crew and took our original Orville Fisher with him. A K McGill came on as our new co-pilot with Riechert as bombardier.

Walter Rix's story about the ship flying all those hours without an engine change is very true, as it was written up in Air Force Magazine.

The photos of the 824 squadron on Page 36 are great, it sure brought back memories. When Major Dufour, went up to group, Ben Milam became our C.O. Crew #11 became a lead crew in the squadron and flew with Col Keese, Col Bush, and several other group officers. Lt Wells, Artie Wolf (deceased post war), radio operator and myself were picked to fly with these group officers while the rest of our crew stood down. Don't ask me why.

I finished my 50 missions plus several other missions that did not get into my flight records during the period April 44 to August 44. I was the squadron's aerial photographer, and remember Pres Wade, who may have taken the photograph referred to above. He and I shared fun and scary times, like the mission when the Luftwaffe shot ground rockets at us. This was on a return trip from a mission to Hungary, and we were over the coast near Trieste when they fired at us. Luckily for us they weren't accurate. It sure was hair raising to say the least. On another mission to Southern France, we had only twelve flak guns firing at us, but on the way out we got hit by 30 of 40 guns that were brought up on railroad cars. We took a pretty good shellacking then.

On page 12 of Torretta Flyer No #13 there is a picture of Marty Allen, who later rose to fame as a comedian. At the time he was known as Morton Alpern. I met him several times after the war in Malibu. He used to come into the sheriff's office there and spend time talking to us. He is a great guy.

Sincerely

Hal Smith 824 Sq.
Yachats, Oregon

Dear Bud

I've been meaning to send these pictures to you for about 10 years. We were in the 461/765 from October 7, 1944, when we landed in Bari, Italy until December 17th, 1944 when our crew was shot down over Czechoslovakia. Our crew was one of the greatest. We were all together on every mission from the time we were assembled at Lincoln, Nebraska, through combat crew training in Pueblo, Colorado.



Front Row L to R: Frank Yesia, ball gunner; Roy Doe, nose gunner; and Fred Gaul, engineer. Second Row L to R: Tom Delbert, upper turret gunner; Trefry Ross, radio operator; and Joe Mergo, tail gunner. Back Row L to R: Tom West, pilot; Tom Qualman, navigator; Tom Noesges, bombardier; and Ed Kasold; co-pilot.

Four out of the ten crew members were named "Tom". We all went by our nicknames of course. The survivors were: Ross, Qualman, Kasold, and Noesges

Editors Note: The story, "The Last Flight of Crew #14", was written by Trefry Ross, one of the survivors that describes in detail the events of December 17th, 1944. This was published in Torretta Flyer No 10, Spring 1984, quoted, in part, as follows:

"We were shot down by enemy fighters using 20MM cannon shells from either Me-109's or FW-190's. The ship immediately caught fire within minutes and exploded into several pieces. The main portion of the aircraft held the six crew members, who died in the crash, when it hit the ground."



This is an Italian black marble monument 12 feet high by 8 feet wide which was erected and dedicated in September, 1946, by the people of Troubky, Czechoslovakia. It gives the name of our crew members and the following inscription.

*Here repose American heroes after the last start
Wanderer read and announce to all
We gladly died for that you live and are free
Don't forget us*

*Sgt Fred H Gaul Sgt Roy L Doe
2nd Lt Thomas K West Cpl Frank Yesia
S/Sgt Joseph G Mergo S/Sgt Thomas E Diebert*

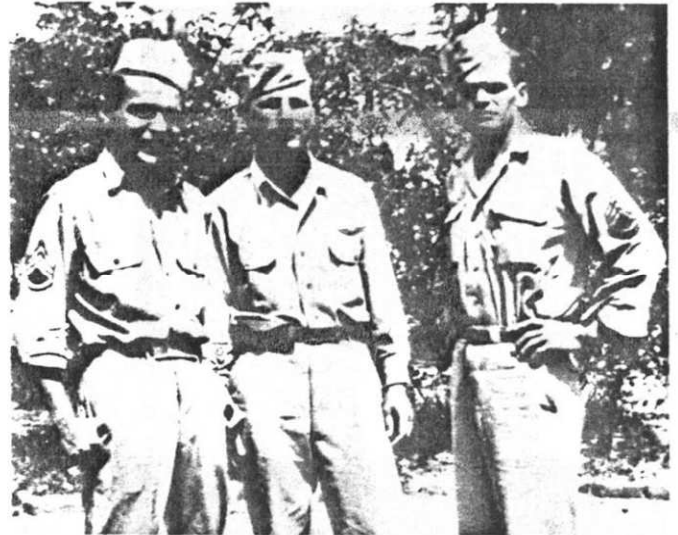
The above inscriptions are in English and Czechoslovakian
The model for the parachutist was Sgt Gaul

Thomas M. Noesges 765 Sq
Palatine, Illinois

Editor Torretta Flyer
Dear Bud

I am enclosing a photograph of three of our crew when we went to rest camp. Photo taken in Naples, Italy

Gino Pishone
Shell Beach, CA



They Are from left; S/Sgt Gino Pishone, Clovis, CA; T/Sgt Howard C White ('Parson White') Pine Bluff, AR; T/Sgt Sam Gilo, Kansas City, MO

Editor; Torretta Flyer

Enclosed you will find a photograph of David E. A. Johnson's crew, 765 Squadron. I have not had any success in tracing my crew, but would appreciate hearing whether anyone else has.



From left standing are: Al Riedel, tail gunner; David E A Johnson, pilot; James Lace, bombardier; and Jack Higgins, upper turret. Kneeling L to R are: William Fennessy, radio operator; Milton Daynovsky, ball gunner; Robert Murray, engineer, and Robert Dalton, nose gunner. The other two crew members not shown are Robert Turner, co-pilot, and Steve Toth, navigator.

Robert Murray, 765 Sq
Peekskill, NY



Ray Foss, 826 Sq

Ray Foss, age 69, pilot, with the 826 squadron, who lived in Malta, Illinois died from an accidental gun shot wound September 19, 1987. Among his war decorations was the Distinguished Flying Cross. He is survived by his wife Grace, a daughter Linda Chapman, three grandchildre and three brothers.

Walter Rix, 824 Sq



We have learned of the passing of Walter M Rix, at (R) 70, a crew chief with the 824 squadron. He served in the CCC before being drafted into the Army in 1942 and was sent to basic mechanics school in Chanute Field, Illinois, and then transferred to B-24 School at Ypsilanti, Michigan, graduating in January of 1944 (The Ford Motor Company had an excellent mechanics school at Willow Run). His wartime service with the 824 squadron earned him a Bronze star for maintaining his aircraft ready for operational status from April 29, 1944 to October 14, 1944 for 56 continuous missions for a total of 554 combat flying hours. His plane never aborted a mission due to mechanical difficulty. His crew, often below TO (Table of Organization), worked

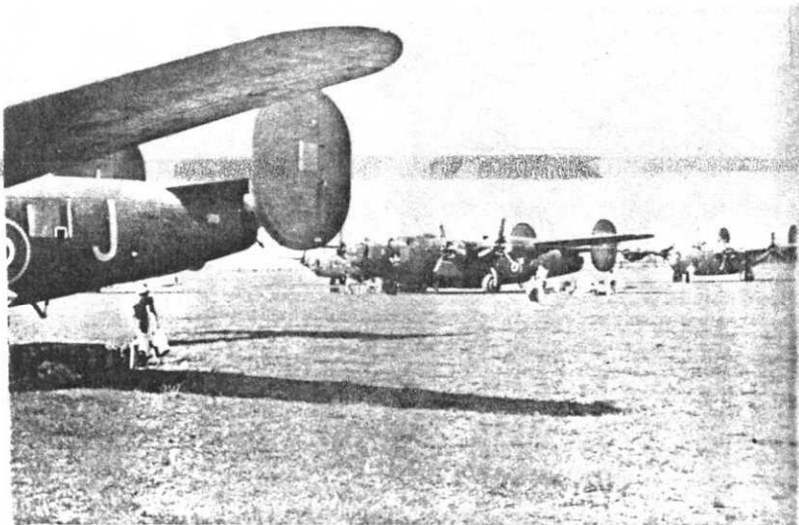
through uncounted nights, night repairing damage from flak and fighter attacks, to make the plane ready for the morning missions. After 56 missions all four engines needed replacement, and were replaced in record time, earning them the admiration of their superiors.

After WWII, Rix attended B-29 School and worked as a B-29 engine mechanic in England during the period of the Berlin Airlift, then returned stateside where he was assigned to KB-29 air refueling operations at Biggs Field, Texas. He was discharged from the service at Maxwell Field, Alabama in 1952. In civilian life, he worked as a licensed journeyman plumber and fitter. He is survived by his wife, four daughters, and seven grandchildren.

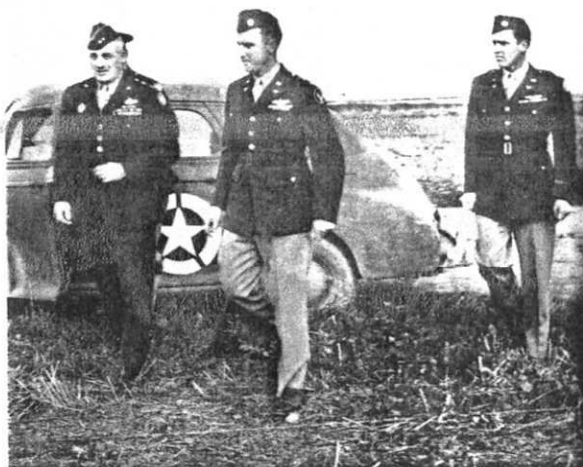
Clarence Byers, 824 Sq

We have learned of his passing recently. He was a Bombardier on R A Dean's crew. On his twentieth mission he was shot down November 20, 1944 on a planned attack on Blechammer when they were hit by flak on the bomb run preventing them from dropping their bombs, losing #2 and #3 engines over the target. With their fuel supply low they headed back to base. They were able to drop their bombs on Novemesto, Czechoslovakia, when the other two engines quit, and the crew was ordered to bail out. They were picked up by partisans, and then travelling by foot and train, they were eventually given over to the American Mission at Sanski Most. From there the crew was put on a train in an attempt to evacuate them to Split, but four days later with snow blocking the track, they were returned to the Mission. They were well treated by the partisans, and only wished that their supplies and clothing were more suited for walking in the mountains. They were surprised to find that there was no money in the escape kits. On January 5, 1945, a C-47 taking off from the mission air strip carried them to Bari. After the war he worked as a sales engineer and was very active in Lions International service club, becoming district governor in 1979. He is survived by his wife, two children and four grandchildren.

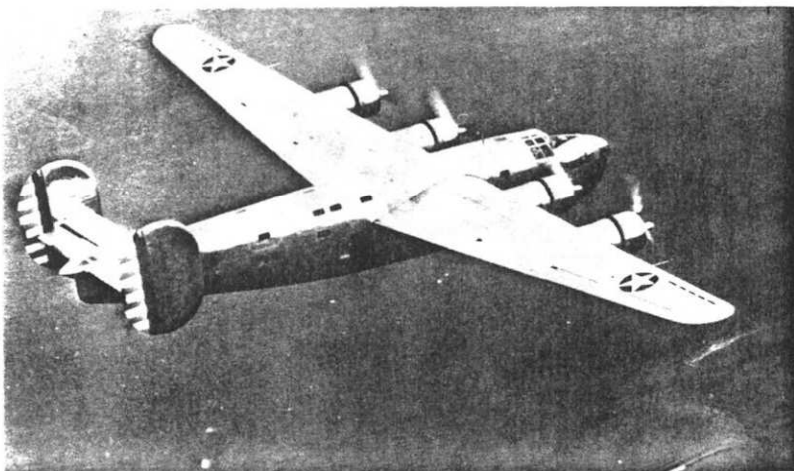




British B-24's in Italy



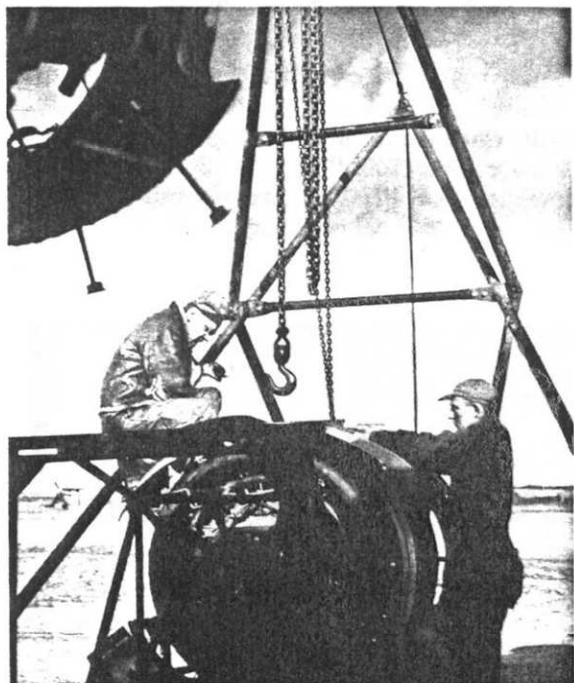
L to R: General Twining, CO 15th Air Force arrives at Torretta for awards ceremony, accompanied by Lt Col Philip R Hawes, 461st BG and Lt Col Chester Bush, 484th BG.



First B-24 on a test flight, 1939

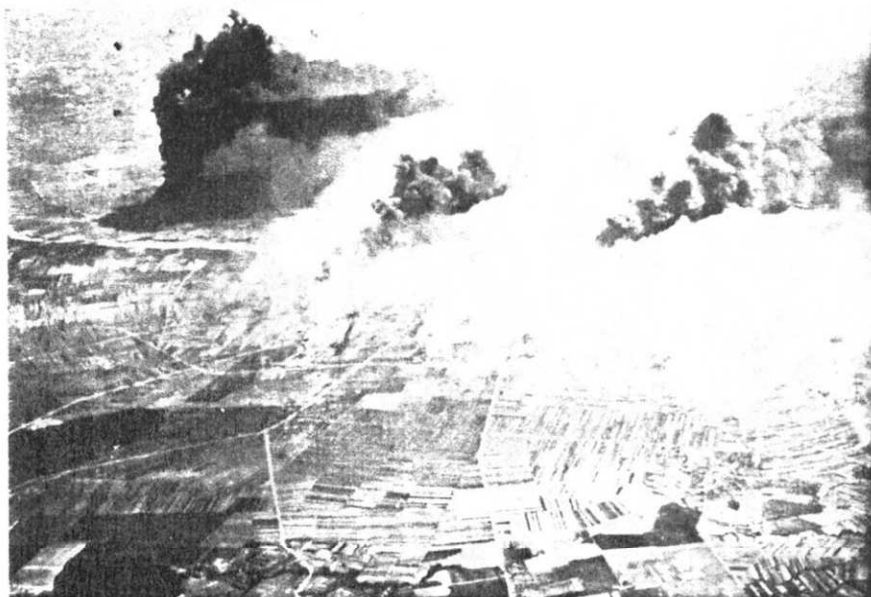


Flak bursts



C/C Leoczynski and Carlson, 461st B G working on an engine change.

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Smoke rises from Ploesti, Romania, 31 May, 1944, after an attack by the 49th Wing.



Day room 824 squadron that made "House and Garden" magazine. L to R Dick Muscatello, and Harold Meshel.



461st BG personnel at Snuffy's Birthday party

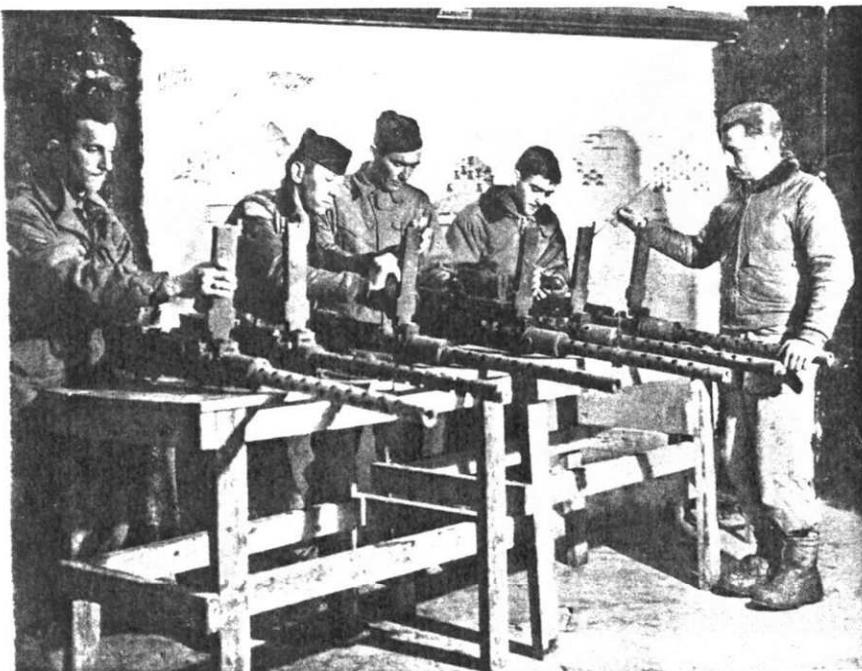
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Harry Hoerman's tent mates, 461st Bomb Group



L to R: Captain Joel Moe, Operations, F/O George "Fox Hole" Adams (B) Langdon's crew, and Lt Phillips, crew commander, All 825 Sq.

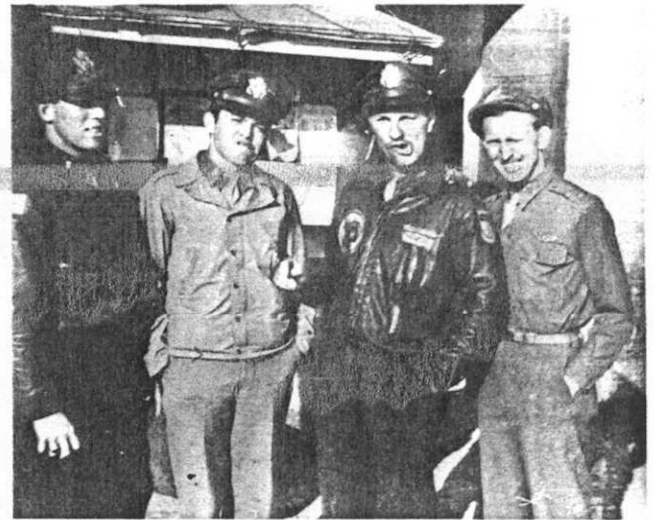


Gunnery instruction 484th Bomb Group





"Big Dick" from the 825 Sq drops its bombs. J R Porter crew, 825 Squadron

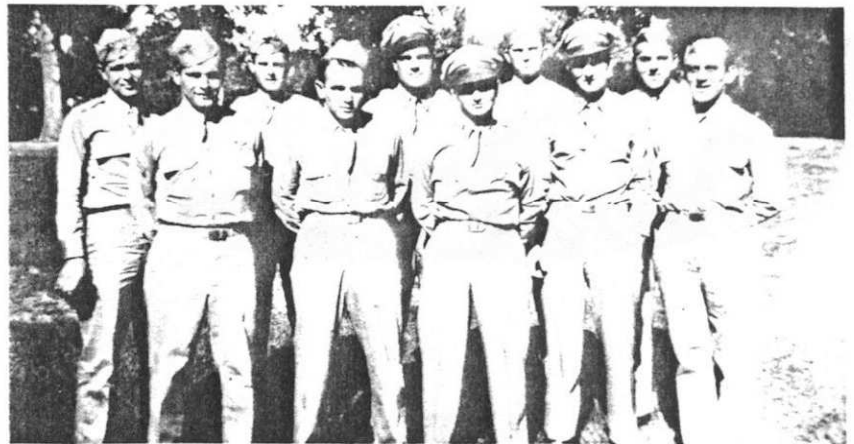


Paul Lawrence , 766 Sq, and some of his fellow officers ham it up

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"Heaven Can Wait" 765 Sq.



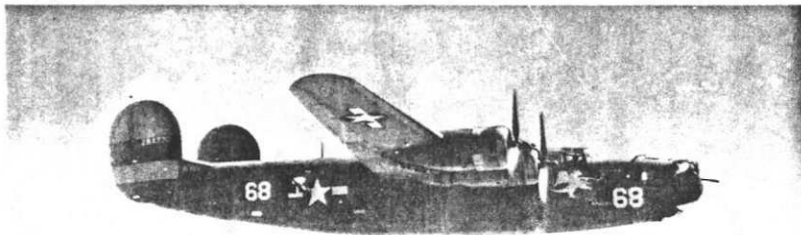
L to R: Charles Shaffer, (N); John Wieland , (R/O); James Wilhelm, (E); Herbert Pinkley, (B/G); Thomas Black, (P); Wayne Bell, (B); Robert Collier, (N/G); James Walsh, (C/P); Robert Butlar, (T/G); and Matt Shematek (U/G), 827 Sq.



"Purple Shaft", 766 Squadron. A popular expression of the time. To get the shaft, one suffered an indignity of great proportion at the hands of the authorities



Crew of "Big Stinky" L to R back row: 1) Deceased, 2) Slayton, 3) Martin, 4) Housholder, 5) Wick deceased, and 6) Brylansky. Fron row: 7) Nixon , 8) Lungren deceased, 9) West, and 10) Spangler, deceased. 765 Sq.



**461st & 484th
Bomb Groups Association
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