

The Torretta Flyer

FEATURES

THE BOMBER VS THE FLAK GUN

See pages 5 & 10

POW STORIES

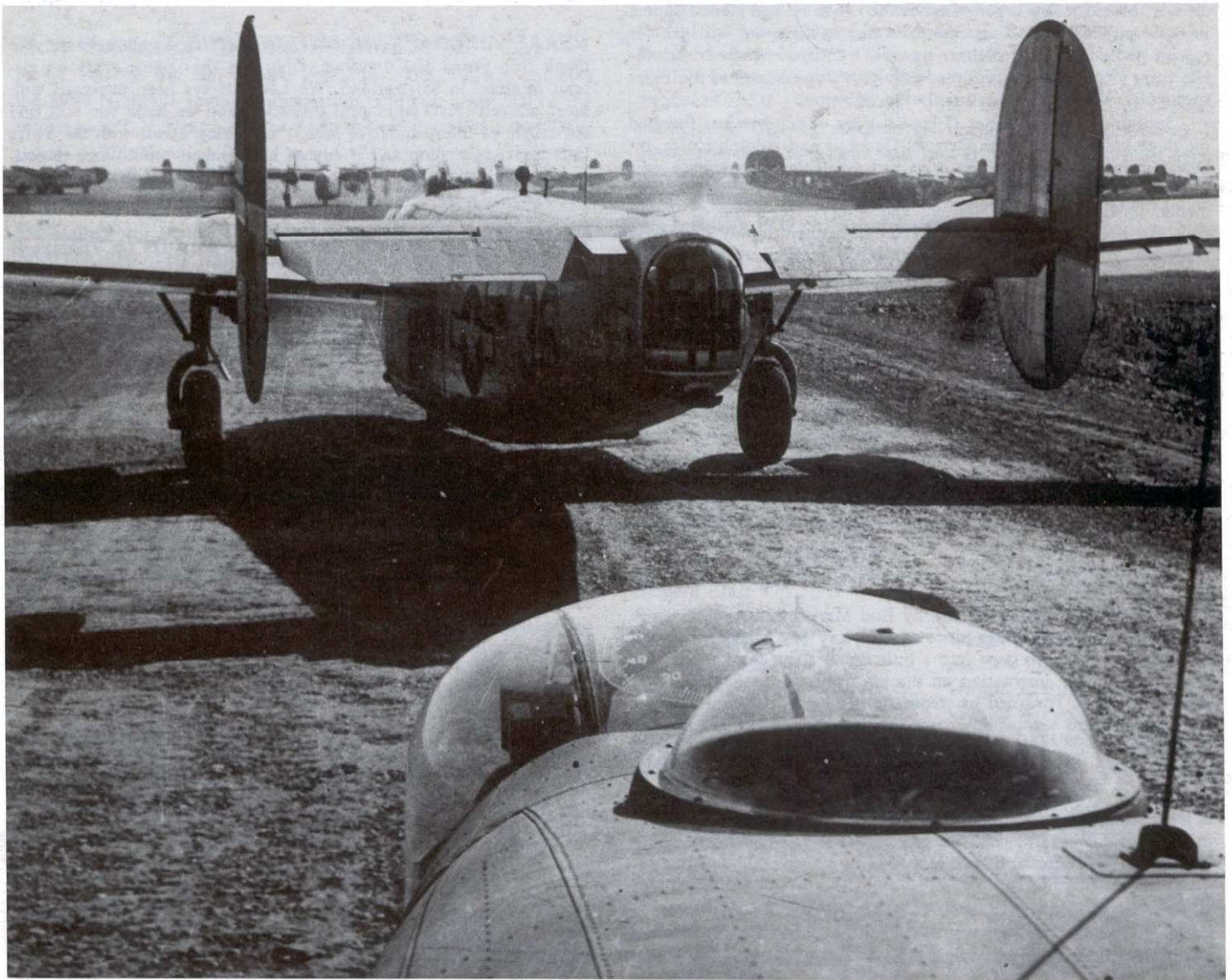
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Torretta Flyer Number 19

Redondo Beach, California

Summer-Fall 1990

Official Publication of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association



B-24s of the 765th squadron, 461st Bomb Group moving out for a bombing mission take off. Sharp eyed gunners may notice the new light weight tail turret installed on ship No 36 in the center of the photo.

Stan Staples photo 765 Sq.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

In a recent Wall Street Journal piece, it was revealed that the World War II series television productions, such as Victory at Sea, and The World at War, draw huge audiences whenever they are shown. Even with repeated showings, the audience does not diminish. It is apparent that viewers of all ages are fascinated with the awesome mystery of World War II. There must be something to it, as books and publications about World War II also continue to sell well. To this end, we devote this issue, as the stories are varied and come from different sources. With this broadening of scope we are moving toward more universal coverage of the War in the Air during WW II. We are appealing to writers to send in stories reflective of all aspects of the air war. Members are urged to advise us when related stories appear in other publications. If its interest value is high, we will ask for reprint permission. Of course, we still want the personal war stories from members that have made the previous editions of the Flyer so popular. Your comments are always welcome.

Speaking of World War II books, your editor has just finished the three volume trilogy on German Generals and Adolph Hitler, by David Irving. They are all in print and available in paperback editions. He has based his work on tireless research of archive documents, letters, speeches, diaries, and interviews, some of which have just been revealed. I highly recommend them to any student or readers of WWII history. They are Hitler's War, Trail of the Fox (Biography of Irwin Rommel), and Goring (Biography of Herman Goring).

MY MISSION LIST. By Felix Rameder. Mr Rameder an Austrian citizen, lives in Ebergassing, Austria. As a 13 year old boy, he witnessed the bombing attacks of the United States Army Air Forces during World War II in the vicinity of his home and as a result has taken great interest in the wartime exploits of the 15th Air Force. "The air war I saw in the Vienna area was such an enormous event in the lives of all of us that one man can hardly describe it exactly and report about it correctly. Along with my impressions I will endeavor to report what others have told me soon after the air attacks. The former bomber crews who flew some 25,000 feet above us may find this report interesting." *Page 5*

THE FLAK CANNON 88MM, by Bud Markel 827 sq. This story was added as a companion piece to the story My Mission List, by Felix Rameder. I have gone into a little detail about the weapon that wrought so much destruction on the air fleets of the RAF and the Army Air Corps. It earned its reputation in North Africa during the early part of the war when it was used primarily as an anti tank weapon. *Page 10*

STANLEY HUTCHINS 824 Sq has written a book review that is featured in this issue. The Book, "Ad Lib; Flying the B-24 Liberator in World War II," may be purchased from Historic Aviation 1401 Kings Wood Road, Eagan, MN 55122. *Page 14*

A POW'S MEMORY OF SURVIVAL, Herman J White 824 Sq. Herman J White was 18 years old when he enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in July of 1944. He was a tail gunner assigned to the 484th Bomb Group. *Page 14*

THE LIFE OF A POW (Continuation of the Last Flight of Crew 14), by Trefry A Ross 765 Sq. "The Russian soldiers were in a

compound next to us. We were separated by a chain link fence about eight feet high. I never heard any Russian speak English or any American speak Russian. Our method of barter was to hold up a pack of name brand American cigarettes, not necessarily a full pack, but to just show what we had." *Page 15*

DOWN IN FLAMES by Arlo Matney 826 Sq. "After 17 combat missions over northern Italy, southern France, and into Rumania with no serious damage to our plane, I was getting a false sense of security. I had seen some planes go down in flames, blow up from direct flak hits . . ." *Page 20*

USAAF AIRCRAFT IN SWITZERLAND, By Bob Fosse. We thank Bob Fosse of Columbus, Ohio, for the photo-essay on aircraft interned in Switzerland. We have always been intrigued with those aircraft "lost" in neutral countries, and we hope you will find the article of interest. We're sure it will "ring a bell with the Swiss Internees Association and if any of its members would care to contact our author, he can be reached at: 5141 Pebble Lane, Columbus, OH 43220. *Page 23*

DETAILS OF GLENN MILLER'S DEATH by Thomas E O'Connel. The story first appeared in September 1988 issue of "Crosshairs" the official publication of the Bombardiers, Inc. and is reprinted with permission of the Founder and Executive Director, E C "Ned" Humphreys. The author Thomas E O'Connel was a Bombardier with the 338th Bomb Squadron, 96th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force. He lives in Bellevue, Washington, where he teaches Spanish at Bellevue Community College. He welcomes any additional information on the untimely death of Glenn Miller. Contribution by Thomas E O'Connel. *Page 26*

MOONLIGHT REQUISITION. By Fred E Bamberger. Getting the job done, one way or another, has always been an American trait, called "Yankee Ingenuity" by some. In the military, there are many stories of the successful "scrounger" saving the day. Fred Bamberger from Tamarac, Florida, shares with us one of the thousands of neat "scrounge" stories to come out of WW II. We're sure this one will recall similar events to many of our readers. The article appeared in the Winter 1990 edition of "Friends Bulletin," The United States Air Force Museum Foundation publication, and is re-published in the Flyer by permission of the author. *Page 27*

HOW I GOT TO TENT 39 AND BACK By Arthur C Barkley 827 sq. "The Gideon Wells weighed anchor on March 23, and it was goodbye to the good old USA. We joined a convoy where our speed was reduced to the slowest ship, about 7 knots. After crossing the Atlantic and entering the Mediterranean off the coast of Algiers, one moonlit night the German Air Force gave us a welcoming visit." *Page 29*

RADAR BOMBING By Thomas C Carroll 484th BG. The new crew position of radar operator combined some of the duties of the navigator and of the bombardier with that of the radar operator. *Page 31*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR *Page 32*

THE LAST MISSION *Page 38*

NEWS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Nashville Reunion.

Plans are moving along for the Nashville reunion. As of the date of publication of this flyer, all of the Grand Old Opry tickets purchased by the Association, and reserved for our members and guests attending the reunion, have been sold out. The seats paid for in advance for the main floor and the upper balconies total 275. Members wishing Opry tickets should call (615) 889-6611 for information regarding availability of additional seating.

Extra copies of Torretta Bulletin No 18 Extra copies of Torretta Bulletin 18 are available. The Bulletin contains the 1990 Nashville reunion information, and tear slips. All of the information is current with the exception of the Grand Old Opry tickets. This function is sold out.

The Italian Tour

The Italian tour is now set to depart April 8, 1991, and return on April 22, 1991. This time period was selected to obtain the best price and to coincide with the scholarship awards ceremony scheduled to take place in Cerignola during that time.

The tour will visit the major attractions of the country. The suggested all-inclusive tour price for 1990 departure will be in the range of \$2600.00- \$2800.00 for a 13 day all escorted tour. Cities visited are: Venice, Florence, Pisa, Rome, Pompei, Sorrento, Capri, Foggia, Cerignola, and Bari. The price includes air fare from New York, all ground transportation, transfers, continental breakfasts, 9 dinners, first class hotels with private bath, English speaking guide, and all taxes and service charges. To set the tour in motion a minimum of 30 persons need to participate.

Sandy Carbone Wilson, is your tour coordinator. All Conference Travel, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey is the tour agent. More information can be obtained by calling her office at 1/800/777/2281, or 201/569/4147. Mention you read about it in the Torretta Flyer #19 Summer 1990.

Dues Increase.

As of January 1, 1991, membership dues will increase to \$20.00 per year, in order to cover increased operating expenses and costs. For those members who have already paid or wish to pay their 1991 dues in advance, the \$15.00 dues payment received up until December 31, 1990, is acceptable.

1991 Reunion.

In the recent balloting for the Midwest site of the 1991 Reunion, Kansas City, Missouri, received the most votes. Dates tentatively set are September 26-29, 1991.

We are in negotiation with the Marriott Plaza Hotel in Kansas City. Mark your calendars!!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Association is most grateful to all of our contributors to this issue of the Torretta Flyer. We extend a special thank you to our overseas friends, Hans Heiri Stapfer, of Horgen Switzerland for his photographs used in the USAAF Aircraft in Switzerland, Felix Rameder, of Ebergassing, Austria for his story and photographs for "My Mission list," and to Gunter Wiesinger for his photographs used in the Flak Cannon 88 mm story.

Hans Heiri Stapfer a former contributor to the Flyer is the author of the book, "Strangers in a Strange Land," The story of Allied aircraft captured in Germany and in some cases flown by the Luftwaffe during WWII. The book tells of a B-24 G--NT 42-78247 #39 of the 765th sq., 461st BG repainted in German markings as CL+XZ, captured at Penzing, Germany on October 4, 1944. The book is in print and should be available in most aviation book stores. Gunter Wiesinger and Walter Schroader are the authors of the book, "Die Osterreichischen Ritterkruztrager in der Luftwaffe 1939-45," (Luftwaffe airmen receiving the Iron Cross decoration).

Introduction of New Members

Listed below are new members of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association who have joined since the 1989 New Orleans reunion. On behalf of the Association and its members we wish you all a "MOST HEARTY WELCOME !"

Harry Adamson 824	Leonard Lackmann 764
Bertrand A Benedict 767	George MacDuffie 825
Keith Berger 826	Edward J Morris 766
Bernard L Berry 766	William Myers 824
Bernard Blass 825	Arnold P Nagelhout 825
Richard Boyce 826	James G Navis 767
John D Bridges 484	Nadine L Odle 826
Howard Burnett 826	James F Pearce 764
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Robert M Hale 825	C H Pete Stuff 825
Walter L Harris 827	John E Tynan 824
Joseph M Heimerl 824	Lloyd O Wakefield 824
Eugene W Hildebrand 825	John N Walker 827
Paul E Johnson 826	Harry G Walsh 824
Edward J Kabasa 824	Carl K Williams 827

William F Wilson 825

Contributors to the Memorial Scholarship Fund

(Since the last edition of the Torretta Flyer No 18,
Winter 89- 90 issue)

Arthur Aldene 827
Alex Azary 765
Charles H Bell 825
John M Billings 825
Joseph C Bott 825
In memory of of Donald Reid,
825 Sq.

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Kelton G Bush 767
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Peter Drill 484
Colin E Dye 826
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Lyman Fairbanks 827
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Leon Usherson 825
Edward J Whalen 827
John A Whitacre 825
Norbert Wholeben 824
Orville L Wildman 826
Ross J Wilson 824
William F Wilson 826

A-2 Jackets

Leon Usherson, 825 Sq. reports that substantial savings can be obtained by purchasing A-2 Jackets in bulk. A regularly priced jacket at \$250 sells for \$150 + shipping with a minimum purchase of six jackets for all normal sizes. If you are interested please contact Leon Usherson 825 Sq 9921 Vale Rd Vienna, VA 22180 or call (703) 938-0114.

World War II Documentary

Warren Wood is doing a documentary for PBS on the American Experience in WWII attacking the oil targets during August of 1944. The targets in question are: 1) 16 Farben-Oswiecim-Monowitz, 2) Bleckhammer, North and South, and 3) Trzebinia. He would like to talk to flight crew members and intelligence officers who participated or had first hand knowledge of these missions. Contact Gordon Freeman Productions, Hollywood, California. at (213) 461-3341.

Air Forces Escape & Evadee Society

The Air Forces Escape and Evadee Society (Winged Foot) is trying to locate air force personnel who avoided capture in enemy occupied territory during WWII, Korea, and Viet Nam when parachuting from their aircraft. As a result of the air war in Europe over 2800 airmen avoided capture of which 800 have been located. Contact Clayton C David 19 Oak Ridge Pnd, MO 63401. Phone (314) 221-0441 for more information.

Aviation Cadet Alumni Association

This organization would like to contact former aviation cadets to advise them of their organization. They need information on flight class, whether primary, basic, or advanced and flying school. Call Col Joseph E Shea (904) 276-5584.

The Torretta Flyer

The Torretta Flyer is the official publication of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association and is published for members of the Association

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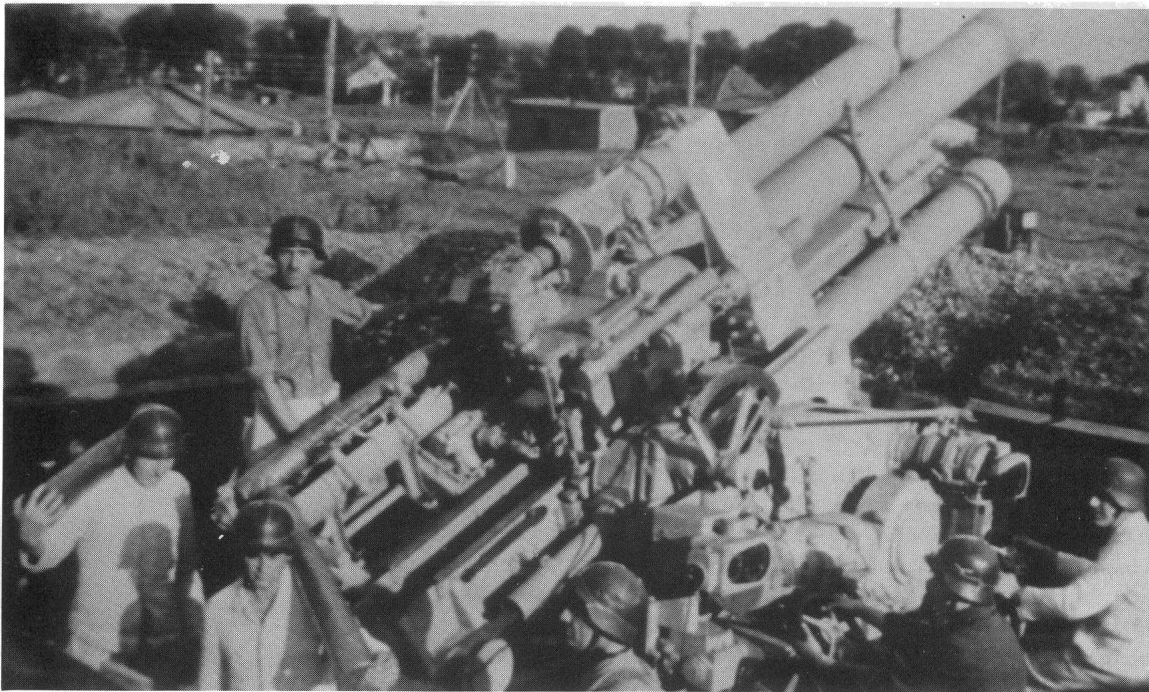
MY MISSION LIST

By Felix Rameder

We have in this story the experiences of a 13 year old Austrian boy who experienced the bombing of his country during World War II. As airmen we witnessed the bombs walking across the landscape in dusty puffs of smoke. The effects on the inhabitants below were unknown to us then. Many bomber crew airmen wondered silently, or in conversation on the effects of the destruction they were witnessing below.

Felix Rameder gives us some insights in answer to this question in this story.

The air war as seen by a 13 year old Austrian boy.



Flak gunners waiting for the next wave of bombers

The Vienna area at the beginning of the air war stretched from Wiener-Neustadt to the industrial plants at Schwechat, Fischamend Market, Vosen-dorf, Lobau and to the refinery at Moosbierbaum, thus covering the whole Viennese basin and the extended Vienna area. For aerial defense purposes this was called the Vienna Area.

This area was divided into three flak defense districts: 1) Wiener-Neustadt, 2) Vienna, and 3) Moosbierbaum. Fighters assigned for protection against the bomber formation were brought into action from the airdromes in the Vienna area depending on the direction of the approaching bomber stream. Seyring, Gotzen-dorf, Fles-am-Wagram, Eisenstadt, Parndorf, Markersdorf, and Vos-lau. Fighters also could be called up from airdromes in Bavaria (Southeastern Germany), Hungary, and even from airdromes in Si-lesia (Old Prussia/ Southwest Poland /Jever)

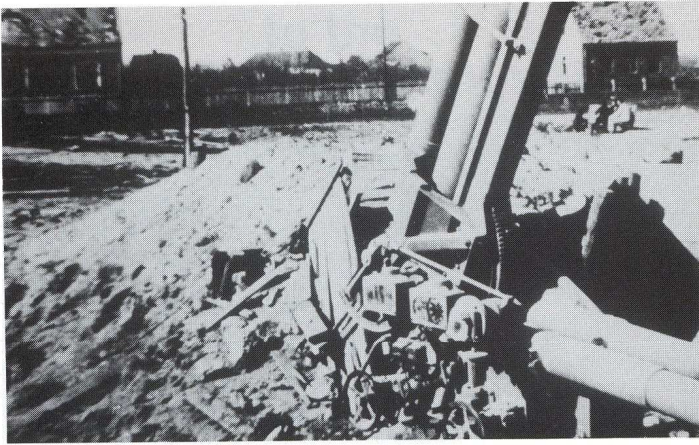
When approaching over the Mediterranean Sea *the bomber formations were located by radar sets installed on the Istrien pen-insula, that is part of modern Yugoslavia. The bomber warning was then transmitted to other aerial region control stations all over the land. They too were equipped with radar sets.

The civilian population was informed about the air raid alarm by an interception of the radio program. A warm, deep, and calm female voice would say, "Attention, Attention, enemy bomber formations approaching Carinthia Styria." Later on another announcement was broadcast, "Enemy bomber formation over Lake Balaton. Then suddenly you could hear a cuckoo's call on the air. This cuckoo's call was only sent when there was high danger of air attack. A few minutes later a pre alarm siren would hoot three time high pitch and three time low pitch. If the bomber formation continued flying in the direction of Vienna the sirens would sound

twelve times high and twelve times low. The regular radio pro-gramming would be terminated. In its stead announcements would be broadcast in code. To decode these messages we had to use a map which was divided into grid squares. If you were fortunate to be near a radio during an attack you could determine the location of the bomber formation by finding the exact grid square and what di-rection they were coming from.

When the bomber formation was located within 15 minutes from the probable target, an air attack warning was given for this area. But often the air attack warning and bomber formation reached the target at the same time. In Vienna when the radio would broadcast, "Bomber formation approaching Carinthia Sty-ria." the people of Vienna, mostly women and children would head toward the flak towers (Huge cement monoliths 50 to 60 feet high where flak guns were mounted). The flak towers gave the safest shelter. Today these flak towers still stand but are used only for storage.

At the beginning of an air raid warning, things always hap-pened in the same way. After the hooting sirens ceased, it became very quiet. Most people went to the cellars and began to wait. Some courageous people stayed in the buildings and watched the sky from wide open windows to see if the bombers were coming or not. From the official announcements and from the grid map one could determine the direction of the bomber stream. On a clear day you would suddenly see many tiny glittering dots, and often condensation trails as far as 30 miles away. In this situation the bombers would reach us in about 10 minutes. The town of Eber-gassing, where I still live is situated 10 miles southeast of

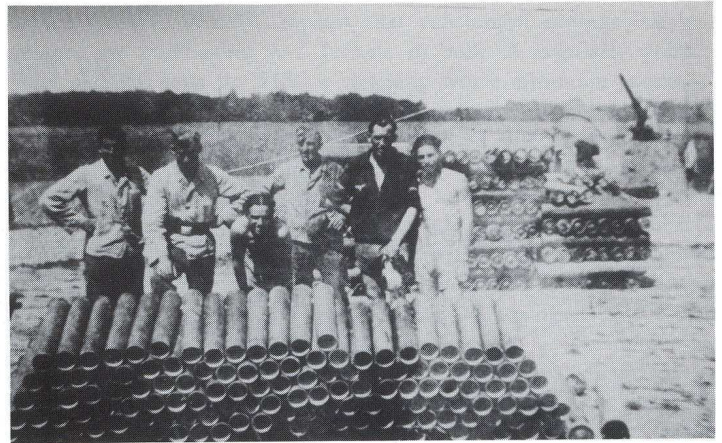


Bomb strike on a flak gun position near Wiener-Neustadt May 10, 1944

Vienna. The outer ring of flak defenses was located here. The flak would begin to fire when the bombers were approaching Ebergassing. It was always the same routine. The flak would shoot a barrier barrage and the bombers flew through. It was some sight. First the roaring of hundreds of aircraft engines, then the cracking of the flak guns and the bursting of shells in the sky, and then the crashing sound of a fallen airplane. When a plane dropped out of formation it would give off a strange howl that was probably caused by overspeeding engines. We waited for the parachutes to appear. When a target near Ebergassing was bombed I could hear the whistling of the bombs. There was a common saying, like a rule, a bomb you could hear would not hurt you.

After 20 minutes the attack was over until the next official announcement informing of another attack, (Editors note: if the 15th was up in force sometimes there would be a time lapse between bombing groups going to the same target). If there were no more attacks signal sirens would hoot a continuous tone for one minute.

13 August 1943 It started on the 13th of August, 1943. The 9th Air Force flew her first air raid to Austria. We had daylight saving time when the clocks were advanced two hours. At 1:30 PM, I was fishing in a brook besides the carpet factory in Ebergassing when I heard a dull rumbling, and the earth was quaking. I thought this was the result of practice firing of the German Army. Suddenly the sirens in the factory were hooting. I kept on fishing. Ten minutes later the director of the factory came running to the brook where I was fishing and cried that I should go home at once because there was an air attack warning. So I ran home, but my mother was working in a field about one mile out of the village so I went to her. I met her in the open field. She pointed in the direction of Wiener-Neustadt which lies 20 miles away and said there was bombing. I saw three huge clouds of smoke rising 30,000 feet straight up in the sky drawing towards the west. In that same evening our neighbor who was working in Wiener-Neustadt told us about the attack. He was assigned to the flak guns. They had 3.7 CM flak cannon in position on the roof of the workshop hall. Shortly after the air attack warning many-people were walking slowly across the air field to the air raid shelter. He saw planes approaching in a V formation from the



160 shells were fired on October 5, 1944 from Battery 4/284 at Neudrfl-heuthal south of Wiener Neustadt. Note the empty shell cases in the foreground. Live ammo is stored just behind.

south. The leader of the flak position looked through his binoculars and cried, "They are Americans!" The flak crew were only able to shoot a few shells at the bombers. They had to seek shelter because the bombs were coming down. Some bombs broke through the roof on which the flak guns were positioned and exploded in the working hall. The attack came as a surprise. There were many casualties to the people in the factory and to those who did not reach the air raid shelter.

24th September 1943 This raid could not be observed because of fog. It was not directed at Wiener-Neustadt.

1 October 1943 I could observe the second attack formation from the third attack of this day. This formation consisted of the 98th and 376th Bomb Groups who flew through heavy flak fire. I could see some aircraft being shot down but couldn't make an exact observation because the location was 20 miles away.

2nd November 1943 I had to pass this first attack by the 15th Air Force in the school bunker.

12th April 1944 I saw from close up the first air attack on Fischamend-Market.

9:45 AM the first aerial danger warning came over the air.

11:00 AM the radio announced: enemy planes approaching from southeast, 40 Km east of Karlstadt in Yugoslavia.

11:07 AM a further announcement: enemy planes in the Zagreb area.

11:10 AM new approach from the south. 100 planes near Panjaluka, Yugoslavia.

11:15 AM highest aerial danger. In Fischamend in the ME 109 Works III, one worker told the others about the announcements. Everyone became nervous and got scared. Many of the workers had been transferred from the Wiener-Neustadt works I and II, after they were destroyed, to Fischamend.

11:20 AM 27 planes of the first wave headed for Steinamanger, Hungary (Szombathey).

11:25 AM Air attack warning. All workers leave the factory, many of them running to seek shelter in the two bunkers built in nearby hill. These bunkers are supposed to be bomb proof. Most

workers however run to the woods adjoining the south end of the factory.

11:32 AM First formation of enemy planes in the Sopron area. A second formation is now spotted in the Kaposvar area headed north and is about 15 minutes from Wiener-Neustadt. An attack on Wiener-Neustadt is imminent.

11:42 AM Enemy planes over Lake Neusiedl. There is air combat with German fighter planes.

11:50 AM A new formation appears north of Sumek, Hungary. A force of 120 planes are headed north.

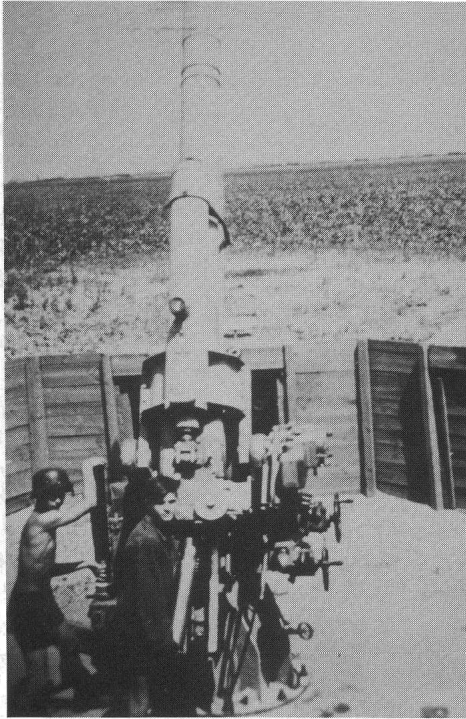
11:50 AM The formation approaching from the Sopron area makes a course change to Wiener-Neustadt. Bombing attack imminent.

12:03 PM Many formations approaching Wiener-Neustadt. 120 planes are located over Lake Neusiedl headed south..

12:15 PM Enemy planes over Parndorf. This formation consists of the planes from the 99th, 2nd, 463rd, 97th, and the 301st Bomb Groups. Their target is Fischamend. The IP is Parndorf. Those of us in Ebergassing can also see many tiny black spots in the eastern sky. You can hear a far droning which is constantly growing louder. I look through the binoculars and recognize the high tail assembly of the Boeing B-17. I shout to my friends, "They are Fortresses" These are the first American planes I can see close up. Above Wiener-Neustadt I can only see glittering dots. We know this attack was meant for Fischamend.

12:19 PM The first planes reach Fischamend. The roar of over 500 engines fills the air with undescrivable loudness. The four flak batteries positioned near Fischamend begin to fire. You can see the black flak burst between the planes of the first formation. Suddenly one plane goes down on fire. I can see seven parachutes. Then the earth begins to quake. The noise level raises from the bursting bombs and the engines of the bomber fleet. Thick smoke rises from Fischamend only six miles away. The whole scene is beyond imagination not real, unearthly. When the first formation turns south to Ebergassing, I run into the cellar and wait until the attack is over.

13:01 PM Air attack siren sounds the all clear. In the afternoon I ride my bicycle to Fischamend to see what it looks like.



Big Bombers, heavy guns with little soldiers age 16. Flak Battery near Wiener Neustadt in the spring and summer of 1944.

The whole works were destroyed. (even today the ruins can be see). Only the first formation dropped their bombs early. The bombs did not hit the works but fell in the wood a half mile away where many people sought shelter. 150 casualties were found. After this attack the production of the ME-109 at the Fischamend works were split up to many small factories. On this same day Wiener-Neustadt was bombed by the 47th wing and Bad Voslau by the 304th Bomb Wing.

The maxim after this raid was to try and get out of the village as far as possible. 2 km from Ebergassing my mother and I dug a little slit trench to use as shelter during air attacks. We used the trench for the first time on 23 April 1944 when bombers hit the Schwechat-Heidfeld Henkel factory.

23 April 1944

1:00 PM Air raid warning on the radio

1:06 PM Enemy formation reported over Zagreb heading north

1:16 PM First bomber wave over Nagykanisza, Hungary

1:26 PM First formation over Lake Balaton. Second wave over Koprowitza. An attack on Vienna is probable.

1:39 PM Enemy bombers over Papa, Hungary

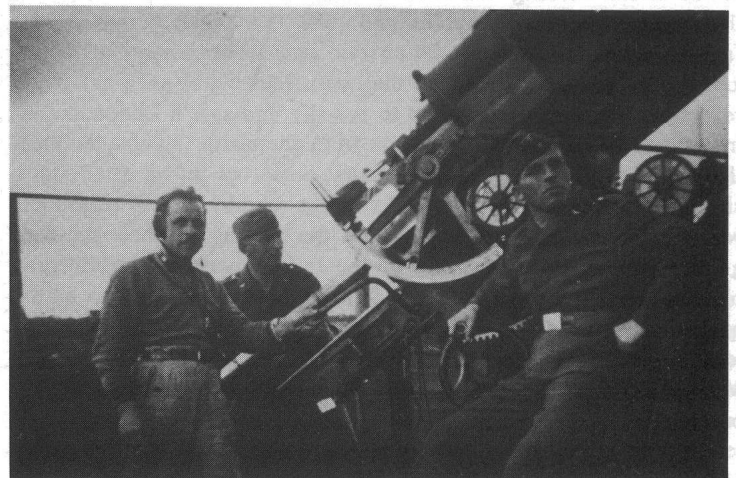
1:51 PM Air raid warning on the radio

1:53 PM Enemy bomber formation crossing Lake Neusiedl heading west

2:16 PM Bombers reported over Eisenstadt. Air attack to Wiener-Neustadt

2:21 PM More bomber formation and escort fighters crossing Lake Neusiedl. Some minutes later we could see the planes coming from the northeast flying over Fischamend toward Schwechat. The planes are B-24 Liberators.

2:42 PM The flak batteries near Fischamend begin to fire. The smoke from the guns hide the last wave of about 30 planes from our view. The Fischamend flak battery is equipped with eight 10.5 MM guns. Suddenly the left inner engine on one plane is burning with a bright flame. The plane falls off into a spin, and levels off for a short time. Three crew members jump. The plane begins to spin again, 2 more crew members jump. Then the plane heads down vertically and crashes 1 mile east of Fischamend. The plane burned for some time giving off a large cloud of smoke. Twenty minutes later the plane blows up probably due to bombs still in the airplane.



A hot day, a little pause, waiting for the next wing.



2 CM Guns near Ternitz. Youthful gun crew waits for low flying Mustangs.

The formation kept on flying and bombed Schwechat-Heidfeld which is 7 miles from Ebergassing. Wiener-Neustadt and Bad-Voslau were also bombed this day.

10 May 1944 This raid was meant for Wiener-Neustadt. I could observe many planes from the condensation trails. The sky above Wiener-Neustadt was covered with flak clouds. No bombs dropped near Ebergassing.

24 May 1944 On this day I had a unique experience. Shortly after 9:00 AM I sat in the classroom in our school 3 Km away from Ebergassing as ME-109 fighters stationed at Gotzendorf airfield rushed over the school. We got nervous. Half an hour later the principal enters the class room and says, "You are still here? An air attack warning will soon be announced!" We hurried out of the school, took our bicycles and rode home to Ebergassing as fast as we could. Suddenly the air raid sirens began hooting but we kept on riding. As we reached the open field we already heard the roaring of engines. I looked up to the sky and saw a Liberator formation coming through the clouds from the north. At that moment the flak guns began to fire. We threw ourselves into a ditch along side the road hearing the whistle of the bombs. I was overcome with fear. The deafening noise from the roaring engines, the flak gun booms, and the whistling of the falling bombs was unbearable. The earth began to shake as if we were experiencing an earthquake. The sound of exploding bombs was added to the din. I looked south and saw dark clouds of smoke over the village of Moosbrunn about two miles away. Then it was all over. In Moosbrunn there was no war industry, only a glass works. Years later researching for my hobby, history of the air war, I found that the 304th Bomb Wing was supposed to bomb the airdrome at Munchendorf which is two miles west of Moosbrunn. The last two

groups approached from too far east, when the formation was clear of the overcast they could not correct their course. They saw a factory and dropped the bombs. This was written up in the report of the 304th Bomb Wing, 454th, 456th, and 455th Bomb Groups.

29th May 1944 It was a wonderful spring morning, warm with a clear blue sky. But there was a war raging and this was good bombing weather.

8:39 AM The Reichsender Ostmark announced, "Heavy bombing formation over Styria." This was the first information about the beginning of a heavy attack.

8:46 AM "Heavy bomber formation over Istria, Yugoslavia approach-

ing the southern border of Reich areas.

8:58 AM 200 bombers over Klagenfurt, the capital of Carinthia heading north for lower Austria. Other groups over Istria heading north. About 4000 American airmen are up in the air in order to destroy the WNF Werk ME 109 factory at Wiener-Neustadt.

9:00 AM Attack on the ME-109 factory at Wiener-Neustadt.

9:31 AM Enemy bomber group from Klagenfurt now over St Poltin to the west of Vienna heading east. There is an air battle over St Poltin. ME-109s of JG 27 attack the bombers.

9:42 AM Bomber formation over Wiener-Neustadt, heavy flak firing, bombs explode in the airdrome area and in the ME-109 factory Werk II.

9:50 AM A new bomber formation attacks Wiener-Neustadt.

9:53 AM 50 B-17 Fortresses approaching Wiener-Neustadt from the north.

9:58 AM Fortresses drop their bombs starting a great fire at the Wiener-Neustadt airdrome. The flak guns respond with heavy firing.

10:15 AM American parachutes can be seen falling west of Wiener-Neustadt. The Police report states that on May 29th 1944 an American bomber was shot down above the district of Gutenstein near Wiener-Neustadt. One of the crew, Phillip J Coroll ASN 17054328 landed slightly wounded. He was captured and taken to the Gutenstein local prison at 11:00PM where a local magistrate caretaker Ferdinand Panzenbock guarded the prisoner. The guard took him home and gave him dinner and allowed Coroll to walk around the house. For that humane treatment Coroll gave Panzenbock some cigarettes when he was taken away by the military police. As a consequence, Panzenbock was arrested, tried by a special court and imprisoned for a year.

During this raid, I stayed in the slit trench far away from Ebergassing. In the clear weather I could see the formation approaching from the west and bombing Atzgersdorf refinery. It looked like a parade. A few ME-110 fighters tried to attack the formation but they had no success. One ME-110 succeeded in breaking into the formation but soon afterwards she went down burning out of the formation and crashed. When the formation reached our area the flak began to fire and we had to dive back into the slit trench.

30 May 1955, 16th of June, and 26th of June 1944, I had similar experiences.

26 June 1944 The attack was made on the airfield at Heidfeld-Schwechat near Ebergassing. The raid was flown by the 47th Bomb Wing. Approaching from the east coming over Bratislava the groups were welcomed by heavy flak fire. Suddenly a plane #4228777 went down burning, piloted by Chandler of the 98th Bomb Group.

8 July 1944 On the 8th of July some bomber groups approaching from the west over Vienna attacked Zwolfaxing airfield. On the approach one B-17 was shot down in flames and crashed near Siebenhirten. Again the deafening noise of battle, earth shaking, the concussion of the exploding bombs can be felt. jolting the buildings. Two bombs fall into a wooded area about a half mile from Ebergassing. After the attack I go into the

wood to hunt for bomb splinters. I found some as large as two hands.

August 23-24, 1944 Several bomb groups coming from the west crossed over the Danube north of Ebergassing and flew on by. One single B-24 came out of the west flying very low, engines on fire and with its undercarriage extended. The plane tried to land near Gotzendorf airfield. The pilot shot green Very lights. Suddenly the airfield 2 cm flak batteries began to fire. I could see the shells hit the fuselage and wings. The pilot tried with one last effort to zoom the plane. After a few hundred meters the plane now on fire tipped over on her left wing, and crashed. A huge cloud of smoke marked the plane's final resting place. After the all clear sounded I rode my bicycle over to the airfield but because this was a military area I was not allowed to get in close, but could only see the wreckage from a distance of 400 meters. I had hoped to identify the plane, but even after all these years I have been unsuccessful. I list this plane among the "Missing in Action" entries in my journal.

Until April 1945 many raids took place. Then the war was over, the skies were quiet once more. But for a boy of 13 the on again off again drama taking place in the space above my home has had a lasting affect on me that lives on till this day.

The End

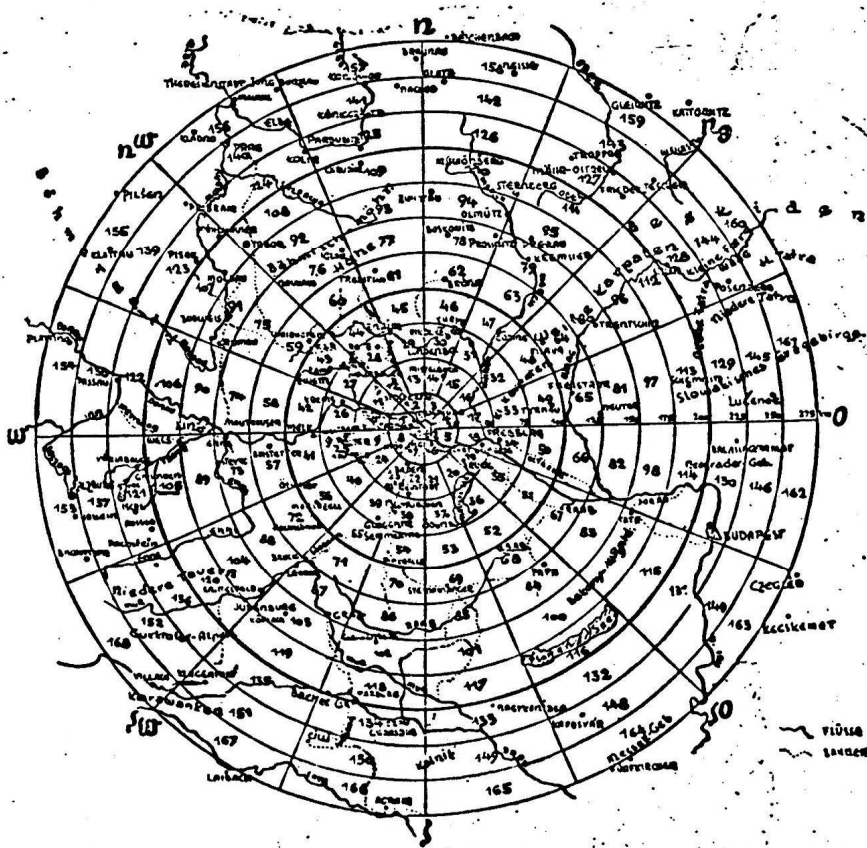
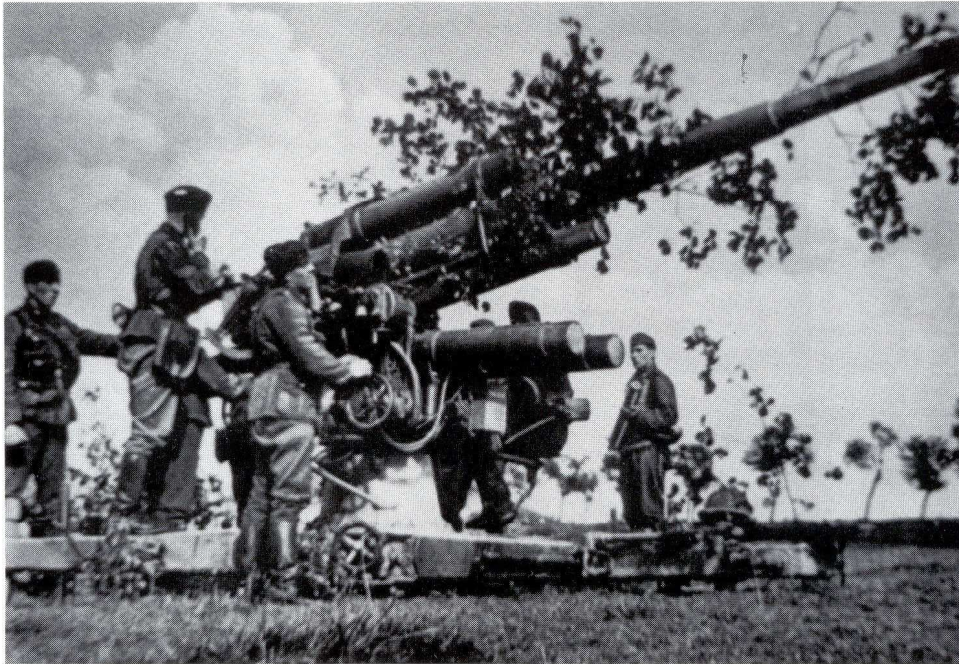


Chart of the Vienna area showing the segmented sections that would be similar to the grid squares referred to in the text. By looking at a map with a grid overlay, and listening to the coded message coming over the radio, you could determine the location of the bomber formation.

THE FLAK CANNON 88MM

By Bud Markel



An 88 mm flak cannon set up to fire at aircraft. The cruciform mount has been lowered to the ground and leveled. The wheel bogies have been removed. When used as an anti tank weapon the gunners were protected by forward facing armor plate.

The modern anti aircraft cannon came into being during World War I to knock down airships and aircraft. A gun was needed to have an effective range of 20,000 ft, or about twice the average height that WW I aircraft usually flew. This required a gun with a bore of about three and one half inches or 88 mm, thus a standard was set that was to continue well into World War II.

To fire a projectile into the air to an altitude of 20,000 feet, which a World War I aircraft was capable of reaching, required a gun with a bore of about three and one half inches or 88mm, thus a standard was set that was to continue into World War II.

This was the dreaded "88" the anti-aircraft gun used by the German Luftwaffe that was to play such havoc with the allied bomber formations especially the USAF because of their predominant daylight operations. During daylight operations predictors (sighting rangefinders) could be used to aim flak cannons fairly accurately. The preference, of course, was gun laying Radar. As a result, as any World War II bomber crewman of the United States Army Air Corps can testify, losses to flak cannon were severe.

It was not a new weapon, but was developed from a World War I design, entered into service in 1916. As a mobile weapon it was mounted on a four wheeled carriage and towed by specially built and equipped trucks. When in action, arms with self contained screw jacks could be swung out to form a secure firing platform. At that time, when aircraft were slow and flew at low altitudes, the design allowed for quick fire, but lacked refinements that were found necessary in modern warfare leading up to and including World War II. The standard 88 mm anti-aircraft cannon of World War I was the Geschutze 8.8 Kw manufactured by Krupps of Essen.

German anti-aircraft fire of the first World War was called "Archie." and was not very effective, as the various mechanical devices used to calculate precise aiming of guns were not very accurate. However, when attacks on enemy observation balloons were made, it was a different story. With the altitude of the balloon known, it was easier to make the calculations required to lay the guns properly.

Commanders of Archie batteries would resort to area defenses

According to The strict terms of the Versailles Treaty (that Hitler was to blame as the cause of World War II), Krupps was forbidden to manufacture the 8.8 in Germany after World War I.

employing barrage firings. When one considers that one cubic mile of airspace contains 5,500,000,000 yards and the effectiveness of one anti-aircraft shell is only a few thousand cubic yards and exists for less than 1/50th of a second, the effectiveness of barrage fire was nil. It was estimated that 3000 rounds were required to shoot down one aircraft. The ratio of rounds per aircraft downed was considerably higher during World War II when sight and radar tracking was used to aim the Luftwaffe flak batteries.

The usual practice during that period was to mount batteries of anti-aircraft guns behind the front in such a manner that when approaching aircraft were detected by sound ranging equipment, gun crews were alerted and then could concentrate their fire on the aircraft. To protect cities or vital military targets, guns were positioned along the lines of approach. As navigational devices were quite crude, pilots often followed roads, rivers and rail lines leading to the cities and vital targets so gun batteries were sited along these same natural barriers and man made features.

According to the strict terms of the Versailles Treaty (that Hitler was to blame as the cause of World War II), Krupps was forbidden to manufacture the 8.8 in Germany after World War I. To overcome this restriction, Krupps came to an agreement with Bofors of Sweden, whereby Bofors acquired the foreign rights for all Krupps designs in exchange for granting design and research rights to the Krupps team working at Bofors. In 1928 Krupps developed a new design for a high velocity 88mm gun with a semi-automatic breech which re-cocked the striker on ejection of the cartridge case. A Krupps representative took the design back to Essen in 1931 where manufacture began in 1933, when the Versailles Treaty provisions were being openly violated by the Nazi Government which took power when Hitler became Chancellor.

The defense of the Reich was given to the Luftwaffe, the German air force. It employed in excess of a million men and auxiliaries to defend the country.

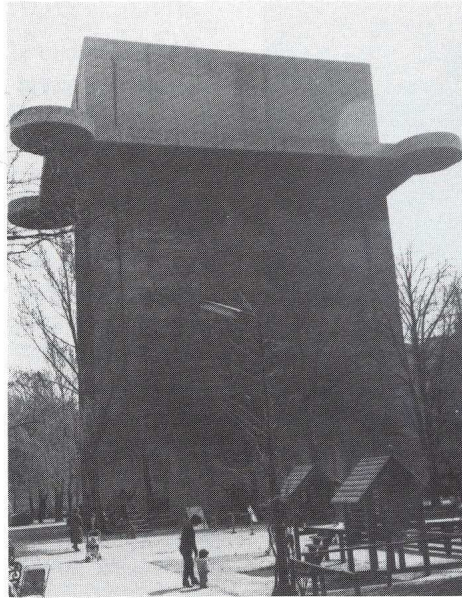
The new gun, the 8.8 Flak 18 was mounted on a cross shaped carriage with dual wheeled bogies that could be turned in pairs for positioning on the ground. The fore and aft legs of the cross were mounted over the wheels with the side legs swiveling up for storage. This was a great improvement over the 1916 model. This design proved rather clumsy from the experience the German Condor Legion gained during the Spanish Civil War, as it was found that the gun platform was somewhat unstable. To overcome this restriction, before firing, the gun had to be lowered from the bogies

to the ground. When the gun barrel was elevated to fire at aircraft the strain on the center of the star shaped cruciform carriage was greatest after the projectile was fired. Battle experience in Spain dictated a need for a reduction in time to bring the gun into a

battle ready state. It was evident also that provision had to be made to facilitate quick changing of the gun barrel in the field if the weapon was to reach its full potential. This necessitated that the manufacture of the barrel would have to be accomplished in sections so that worn parts could be replaced individually instead of a whole barrel assembly. The butt end of the outer barrel where the rifling began was threaded so a new barrel section could be easily screwed on. This extended the gun's service life and allowed assembly line manufacture without the need for specialized machinery. In 1936-37 the gun platform was improved by the installation of winches to the bogies which allowed the platform to be lowered to the ground eliminating the bending force on the carriage support. The bogies/limbers could then be wheeled away and the side arms were lowered. The mounting was then levelled by screw jacks at the end of each arm.

For quick firing when used on ground targets or as an anti-tank weapon the gun could be used from the wheeled position by applying hand brakes and chocking the wheels. With the barrel set almost parallel to the ground the recoil forces would be to the rear and the need to lower the weapon was not as great. The side arms were then dropped and secured readying the gun for action. From 1940 onwards the Flak 18 and Flak 36 were mounted on a Sonderonhaenger type trailer. Later improvements included the installation of twin wheeled bogies and protective shielding for the gun crew. The gun was designed to be towed by a half track vehicle, the Sd. Kfz7 tractor built by Krauss-Maffei. It had seating for the gun crew, and ammunition lockers, making the tractor-gun trailer self contained. When equipped for battle the gun & trailer weighed 7 tons.

The earlier models of the Flak 18 used a data transmission system whereby information on bearing, elevation and fuse setting was sent from the gun computer (predictor) via electric signals that illuminated three rings of colored lamps. The gunners merely turned his hand controls until all of the lights were put out. This system was replaced by a dual pointer system in the Flak 37 model so that the gunners then just turned the control wheels until both pointers matched up. Later improvement of the basic 88mm design consisted of the use of a turntable instead of the usual pedestal mount allowing a lower profile. But with the advent of high altitude bombing during the World War II, higher muzzle velocities were required to lift the shells to the operating altitudes. This was obtained partly by increasing the length of the barrel. This led to the model 41, a new design that led to a host of teeth-



Flak tower in Vienna. Double mount 12.5 cm cannons were mounted on top. 3.7 cm and 2.cm guns were mounted on the lower ring for defense of low flying aircraft.

Home Guard personnel (Luftwaffehelfer), 15 and 16 year old schoolboys, were called away from their classes or out of their beds at night, to man the flak guns. and youths from the labor service (Reichs Arbeit Dienst), which all young men were taken into after leaving high school were also subject to flak duty.



88 mm flak gun in Linz, Austria in 1944 showing two victory rings painted around the outer barrel about where it screws into the larger barrel.

ing problems that were not completely solved, one being that the spent cartridges could not be cleared quickly from the platform. Further refinements were abandoned in favor of weapons of larger caliber.

The gun was capable of firing 25 rounds per minute. Normal rates of fire for the 88mm gun was reduced to 15-20 rounds per minute. The long barrel tended to vibrate under high rates of fire reducing the accuracy of the weapon so that the gun would have to lay silent for short periods to allow the barrel to cool.

There were two methods of fire control in the AA role; 1) Radar, 2) Predictor through a data transmission system. The gun crew consisted of 11 artillerymen, a) a gun layer, b) trainer, c) breech-worker, d) fuse setter, e) five ammunition workers, f) detachment commander, and g) the tractor driver. Each round weighed about 22 pounds. Muzzle velocity was 2690 feet per second.

Much of the fame of the 88mm gun rests not on its performance as a flak gun but as an anti-tank weapon. During its baptism of fire in Spain it was called upon for use as a defense weapon when tanks broke through front line positions and were threatening the anti-aircraft batteries. In the battle for France and in later campaigns it became common practice to attach motorized Luftwaffe flak companies to army field units when German air superiority was uncontested. Again in North Africa, when a German commander was faced with an attack of heavy British tanks, at Halfaya, Libya during the battle of Solum in June 1941, he used his 88s very effectively destroying 123 tanks of the total force of 238 tanks. Badly mauled the British tanks withdrew. The Germans claimed one British tank for every twenty rounds. When the Germans first confronted the new Russian T-34 and KV tanks their standard 5 cm anti-tank guns had little or no effect, so once again the trusty 88 was called upon to stop the Russian heavies. There is an account during the Russian fighting where one 88 gun

destroyed six T-34 tanks at a range of two miles. The 88 had earned its reputation.

Because the gun could be mounted on a mobile carriage, it was often towed from place to place creating problems for the Allied intelligence officer whose duties were to estimate the number of guns defending targets that were likely to be attacked by his bomb group. Bomber crews often cursed the pre-mission briefing on the expected defenses of their target because the information was often old and inaccurate. Generally the number of guns were under-estimated or not placed accurately. Bomber crews often had to interpolate the intelligence estimates using a sixth sense that developed over the experience of many missions. As the war progressed the formations began to loosen up as enemy fighter activity lessened, but mainly to allow the bombers more elbow room to take evasive action. When enemy fighters would appear suddenly the loose formations often suffered greatly as the defensive firepower was spread over a large area making it less effective.

The defense of the Reich was given to the Luftwaffe, the German air force. It employed in excess of a million men and auxiliaries to defend the country. The flak arm had two responsibilities, one was to protect military targets, cities, factories, and rail lines, and the other was to offer support to ground objectives of the field armies. As casualties in the field armies increased with the advancement of the war, able bodied men were drawn from the flak defenses to serve in the army. They were replaced by Home Guard personnel (Luftwaffehelfer), 15 and 16 year old schoolboys, who were called away from their classes or out of their beds at night, youths from the labor service (Reichs Arbeit Dienst), which all young men were taken into after leaving high school. Excepted were boys who went directly into the armed forces, female auxiliaries (Kampfhelferinnen) used in non combatant roles at the gun sites, Russian prisoners who volunteered for the labor battalions, and Italians and Hungarians who acquiesced to work in the flak arm. The flak division responsible for defense of the synthetic oil refinery at Leuna in southern Germany employed a total of about 62,000. Of this total the greater portion were of the auxiliaries shown above.

As this report is confined mostly to the 88, discussion of the larger caliber flak guns such as the 10.5 cm cannon and 12.8 cm cannon will be brief. They were used to obtain greater hitting power. The larger weapons were often mounted on top of the huge flak towers that were springing up in the larger cities during the later half of the war. These larger caliber guns shot mostly time fused rounds, eliminating the manually set fusing where a ring had to be rotated at the base of the projectile.

One method used by the Luftwaffe to increase the hitting power

of the the larger caliber flak ammunition projectiles was to grove the inside of the shells that exploded into larger pieces of about 3 1/2 inches long by 3/4 of an inch long. Towards the end of the war incendiary shells (Brandschrapnel) that burst into 51 small incendiary pellets (88mm shell) and 99 pellets in the 12. 8 cm round. When the shell reached its set altitude, a charge exploded sending the pellets up and away igniting either in the air or when they hit the bomber. After testing, the Luftwaffe judged the controlled bursting shell more effective than its predecessor of small fragmentation, and the incendiary shell the most effective of all.

The standard fire control predictor was the Kommondogeret 36, a long tube range-finder of about 4 meters in length. As long as the operator of the predictor could keep his sight on the target a continual stream of information was sent to the gun crews consisting of gun bearing, elevation and time fuse setting. The instrument was effective on the slow moving bomber formations that maintained straight and level flight. The later model Kommando-geret 40 could cope with a formation in a steady turn and also receive information sent from nearby radars. From the foregoing it can be seen that evasive action on the part of the bomber pilots could reduce the chances of being shot down.

Flak towers were often constructed in pairs in the large cities such as Vienna, Berlin, and Hamburg, one serving as an elevated gun platform, the other as mounting for the radar and range-finding equipment. Generally the gun tower supported four large caliber guns either in single or dual mounts. 2mm light flak weapons were mounted in half round abutments situated at the corners of the tower for defense of low flying aircraft These towers served also as bomb shelters, ammunition storage and for use by civil defense authorities. Flak guns of light and heavy caliber mounted on railway flat cars (Eisenbahnflak) were used to move guns to defend expected targets. They carried their own fire control predictors and could be fired directly from the flat cars where they were placed at sidings or marshalling yards. Because the Italian based bombers of the 15th Air Force timed attacks around the noon hour or earlier depending on weather, it was easy to hide the railway guns inside tunnels to avoid detection by reconnaissance aircraft during the hours when air attacks were not anticipated.

As enemy aircraft could approach the target from any compass point, the flak batteries were laid out so that engagement could take place just as the formation reached the bomb release point. Assuming the maximum speed of the bomber formation would be about 265 miles per hour at a height of 20,000 feet, the bombs would carry forward from the release point for 2- 1/2 miles. Flak positions were laid out so that the bombers could be attacked for most or all of the time until the aircraft reached the bomb release line. In less than a minute a bomber flying at a ground speed of 265 miles per hour can cover a distance of about 3 -3/4 miles. Within this circle of 3 -3/4 miles from the center of the target, was the most effective zone for anti-aircraft engagement. Beyond this circle was the tracking area where the predictors and connecting radars prepared the data that was sent by wire to the gun locations ideally placed within this defending circle. The predictors would sight on the leading aircraft of the bomber stream unless other battery was already sighting this same formation. In this case a second aircraft in the lead group would be sighted on. As the bombers crossed the bomb release line the battery commander



Flak tower in Vienna near the Slifln Barracks. It was called the "Sliflnbunker." It was equipped with double mount 12.8 CM cannons on top of the main platform and 2.7CM and 3.7CM cannons mounted on the outer ring of the tower.

could order sighting on the following aircraft as they approached the flak engagement circle. The fire control command center consisted of a command post, twin predictors, twin radars, and supporting equipment. This allowed orders for two separate engagements to be issued. It allowed smooth transition when more than one bomb group was in the attack force. All of the guns controlled by the battery commander were fired in salvo for the first round. Additional rounds were fired as fast as they could be loaded.

The Luftwaffe employed other flak defenses using smaller caliber guns against bombers and fighters flying at lower altitudes.

The Allied bombing attacks on the axis powers during World War II in addition to its primary role of reducing the enemies ability to wage war, tied down by the end of the war over 1,250,000 flak troops that were sorely needed in both the eastern and western fronts. The war was shortened considerably by the loss of these troops.

The 88mm flak cannon was a formidable weapon and inflicted heavy losses on the allied bomber formations. But as good as the weapon was it could not prevent the bombers from coming through.

The End

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Book Review
By Stanley A. Hutchins 824 Sq.

Ad Lib: Flying the B-24 Liberator in World War II
by William Carrigan.

As a former B-24 pilot, I couldn't put Bill Carrigan's book down. It has the detail of a lecture relieved by the ironic asides of a true raconteur. I felt very much like the wedding guest under the powerful spell of the ancient mariner. I also didn't get a lot of sleep after reading (too many names and faces came back)...a tribute to Carrigan's unadorned prose.

There are many who are grateful to specific B-24s for getting them home, or at least to friendly territory, but few confused this devotion with love of the way she handled or looked. Bill Carrigan calls her a "man's airplane;" he goes on to explain the need for four feet on the rudder (after maximum trim!) when an outboard engine is lost. His examination of the many ways of offsetting unequal thrust during the three hour drag home is first rate and worth at least two rounds of drinks in any reasonably quiet saloon.

Carrigan's bomb group (454th) and mine (484th) were a few miles west of Cerignola, Italy, but our groups belonged to different bomb wings. He never does say quite that he enjoyed his hours at the yoke of a B-24, but one gets the feeling of immense pride and thoroughness. I desperately tried to transfer into P-38s and did everything that a 19 year old can think of to shake B-24s dust off my feet. Tolerantly the 15th Air Force said fine, just finish your bomber tour first. The B-24, and my escapist attitude toward it, ruined my "feel" so that it took 10 hours of dual to check me out in an AT-6 in July 1945. I am grudgingly grateful to the B-24 for bringing me home over those 11 months in combat, still I never got to live my dream of rat racing an ME 109 into the ground.

Anyone who was there or who wished he were will enjoy this step-by-step description of every aspect of the B-24, interspersed with chilling, hopelessly-funny combat anecdotes as acrid as cordite. At the end, I found myself humming our squadron drinking song (tune of "Strawberry Roan")...

*Oh, that B dash two four; Oh, that four-engine whore,
 The boys who fly in them are sure bound to loose.
 At 55 inches she won't even cruise,
 Oh, that B dash two four....*

A POW'S MEMORY OF SURVIVAL

Herman J White was 18 years old when he enlisted in the United States Army Air Corps in July of 1944. He was a tail gunner assigned to the 484th Bomb Group. He participated in bombing missions over southern Germany, Austria, Rumania, and Yugoslavia.

As a Tech/Sgt White had flown nearly 25 missions before he and his crew lifted off the airfield in southern Italy on November 16, 1944, to bomb Munich, Germany. Ground anti-aircraft fire disabled number two engine and torched a fire in number three. With two engines feathered, the ship began to drop over 300 feet per minute as the cylinder head temperatures on the two remaining engines began to climb. One engine was restarted in an effort to fly over the Swiss Alps, but the ship continued to drop, and the effort to climb was abandoned.

The crew began throwing everything out that could be pulled loose to lighten the ship when the order to bail out came.

"When I opened the hatch to make my escape the other crew members just stared ahead. They weren't sure what to do, so I said 'follow me' and out I went", White declared.

As he came down, the plane appeared over his left shoulder to disappear into a mountain. "I thought we were over the Adriatic at 8000 ft, but we were at 3000 ft, 500 miles behind enemy lines. Each of us was scared and bewildered. There were 30 Germans with dogs waiting for us as we hit the ground," White said.

"The Germans began to fire at us but we were not armed. There was little to do but surrender." White said. "I was scared not knowing what would happen next. I knew the Germans were mad about the saturation bombing the Allies were doing."

The Germans took them into northern Italy through the Brenner Pass to Munich and placed White in solitary confinement. "I was in a narrow cell for four days and nights," White said. "It was dark, had a narrow window and I slept on the floor."

"They tried many forms of intimidation but I gave just my name, rank, and serial number"

When he was taken to a train station to be moved, a German woman noticed his unit patch on his jacket. "She was outraged," White continued. "Many of the civilians hated the heavy bombing we were doing. Before I knew it, nearly 30 to 40 civilians were gathered to hang me. The German soldiers prevented this and I boarded the train."

White spent the next seven days on that train, just he and the German guards. They moved him first to the Wetzlar transient camp in Germany, and then to Grostychow, Poland, where 10,000 enlisted prisoners were. Most of them were Americans; only 500 were Canadian or English.

"At this time the Russians were getting close," White said. "The Germans decided to move us to Barth, Germany, a POW camp for officers near the Baltic Sea."

"Before long we were liberated by the Russians. I thought my troubles were over, but what I saw between that time and when the RAF B-17s arrived May 15, 1945 to transport us back, I will never forget. The Russians treated their people badly. Many were displaced and starving. The Russians were only concerned with reorienting them," White continued.

Liberated, White was on his own, he had spent seven months in prison camp and had lost 25 pounds. "Hunger is a horrible thing. You wake up in the morning and it's right there gnawing at you. It's there all day until you go to sleep at night from exhaustion. That's the only time you can get rid of hunger, when you're asleep." White emphasized.

It was then that he was sent to Camp Lucky Strike. Prisoners of war from all over were sent there. "They fed us food without salt or pepper. Everything was boiled. We were given a little egg nog at night and no candy. It takes your stomach a long time to recover." White concluded.

The End

THE LAST FLIGHT OF CREW #14 "The Life of a POW"

by Trefry A Ross 765-058

Continued from Torretta Flyer No 10 Spring 1984

The Russian soldiers were in a compound next to us. We were separated by a chain link fence about eight feet high. I never heard any Russian speak English or any American speak Russian. Our method of barter was to hold up a pack of name brand American cigarettes, not necessarily a full pack, but to just show what we had, then we would show the number of fingers to signify the amount of cigarettes we would be willing to give for the article the Russians had. It usually was an item that could be used for cooking and eating, a small metal pot or spoons, knives, forks, etc. Some of the more enterprising ones of our group would show a pack of Camels, Lucky Strikes or Chesterfields and then insert the required number of cigarettes agreed upon, however instead of putting good American cigarettes in the pack they would put in some inferior and strong (extremely strong) Turkish, Russian, Yugoslavian or Hungarian cigarettes and throw the pack over the fence. The Russians would throw the knife, fork, or whatever over the fence and the exchange was concluded. The poor Russian catching his pack of Camels or whatever, finding he had been duped would rant and rave in his language. We couldn't understand what he was saying exactly, but we didn't need to understand the language. The obvious result if he could get through the fence left no doubts as to the outcome.

You may wonder why we wanted cooking utensils. The Red Cross parcels we had received contained several tin cans in each and among our group were several tinsmiths or sheet metal workers. They would take the cans and for a number of packs of cigarettes would make you a blower. A blower was a miniature forge about 18" long and 6" wide. It had a small fire box and a crank to turn. You would put in a few small bits of wood in the fire box, light up and turn the crank. The fan in the box would blow air on the fire and it would produce an intense heat. One could boil water in a few minutes. Our favorite dish was a Stalag pudding. We



would take brown bread, sugar, chocolate, and powdered milk, mix them together in an empty powdered milk can, bring it to a boil on the blower and let it set. It sure was delicious at the time. I was going to try and duplicate it a home but never got around to it. I may try it one day. The first results of our pudding and rich food from the Red Cross parcels was a continuous line of men running from the barracks to the latrine. We soon learned to take it easy and as our appetites were satiated the "Skoots" problem resolved itself.

Since many of the POWs didn't smoke, before long a good number of packages of cigarettes were available. We used them as one would use money. You could buy sugar, chocolate, etc. One fellow set up a dice table and held nightly games. Some of the lucky ones had close to a hundred packs of cigarettes at a given time.

At this point in my narrative you may begin to think we were having a pretty good time, however in spite of the better living afforded us by the arrival of the Red Cross parcels, several incidents made life quite exciting to put it mildly. The British had their night bombing raids while the Americans had their day bombing raids. For some reason the Americans didn't drop any bombs close to our compound during the day. Whether the British targets were closer than the American targets or because of the inaccurate night bombing, (I don't know which) we had on several occasions front row center seats to some fiery spectacles. The lead bomber would drop a Christmas tree over the target and the rest of the bombers would drop their bombs on the Christmas tree. The Christmas tree was a brightly lit apparatus which was parachuted to the ground by the lead bomber. We would watch from the windows and several times had to open them to keep the glass from being broken by the concussion from the exploding bombs.

One day we were strafed. Having been a flier I had never been exposed to strafing before and quite naively didn't know what was

happening. I thought someone was up on the roof fixing it, pounding nails with a hammer, but the ground trooper POWs knew what it was and yelled, "We are being strafed." You should have seen the group hitting the floor. Fortunately no one was hit. Looking back on it I might add it probably would have been an amusing sight for some onlooker to see such a scramble but at the time it wasn't funny to be sure.

One day the fliers and only the fliers were told to line up outside for a special roll call. None of us fliers had been prisoners very long and hadn't acquired knowledge of any of the German language. We didn't know what really was happening. Some of the infantrymen in the barracks had been prisoners for several years and spoke fluent German. They told us later on what we had been through. It seemed Hitler had become incensed over the success of the Allied bombing raids and had ordered every airman POW shot. Here we were standing in blind innocence not knowing how close we were to being executed. Fortunately the Commandant of the compound refused to obey the order. It was near the end of the war and the futility of the order, and the fear of reprisal kept the Germans there from executing us.

I presume the word was soon received by Hitler that no one was going to carry out his order and after standing in formation for an hour or so, we were dismissed to return to the barracks, where we learned from the infantrymen the reason for the special lineup.

Another special lineup was held one day. Someone with access to a radio had learned of President Roosevelt's death. One can only ponder as to the Germans' bewilderment and surprise as we all filed out of the barracks, formed a precise formation and stood there silently paying our last respects to our commander in chief.

Once in awhile we were taken for a shower. It happened so infrequently that I can't remember the intervals, monthly I think. What I do remember is the place. It was a huge room with a concrete floor having numerous drains and shower heads. We were marched into an anteroom 100 at a time where we stripped and then proceeded to the shower room. One had no control over what happened. Once we were all inside, the doors were shut and the water turned on. So you had a shower whether you wanted one or not. Looking around all one could see through the steam was bare behinds and elbows trying to get soaped up and rinsed off before the water quit. I later learned that this was the way many Jews were innocently led to their deaths hoping for a shower they would be met with deadly gas instead of water from the overhead plumbing. To this day I often wonder if the room I took a shower in was ever used for such a purpose.

Days passed into night and night passed into day and we slept and ate and thought and listened. Listened to a soft crump crump. It was very far away and sounded like a very distant thunder boom. Each day it sounded closer and louder. Speculation ran rampant. We had no news so could only surmise what the sounds were. At last we knew. The Russians are coming, the Russians are coming (as in the funny movie by the same name). As the sounds became more frequent, louder, and, closer, the German guards became very nervous. Then it happened. One night the German guards disappeared. It was an eerie and strange feeling we had. By now we could see the flashes from the Russian artillery and tanks. The Russians came in the morning. They hardly slowed down, coming through the fences, picked up their Russian POWs and then con-

tinued on. It was such a quick, methodical and professional maneuver one hardly knew they had come and gone.

Then quietness and happiness, relief and bewilderment, wonderment, and speculation, but no shouts or hurrahs, clapping of hands or any show of emotion. At last, "It's all over" we thought. How wrong we were. One last thought I had as the Russians departed was, "Goddam," I am sure glad they left. I was expecting some surly mad Russian to come looking for the son of a bitch who gave him some foul tasting cigarettes.

The Germans are gone, the Russians are gone, and "tomorrow we will be gone." Tomorrow came, then another tomorrow, and another, but still we remained. Rumors were running rampant: The Americans were coming with trucks to take us out, the Americans were flying in to take us out, we were going to walk out and on and on. Then we were prisoners again, or at least we thought so. The ranking officers took charge, formed platoons, issued orders for guard duty, and KP duty. We were no longer POWs but back in the army again.

It didn't take long for the disgruntled ones to begin to make plans. A week passed and no Americans came to the rescue. We had full run of the camp now. To alleviate our anxiety and boredom we took daily sorties among the other barracks previously not accessible to us, the German barracks, mess hall, officers quarters, the hospital and the executive officers. We were able to acquire numerous souvenirs, among which I found a German rifle in mint condition. One night we were rudely awakened and with panic in his voice by a non com, "There is a patrol of dreaded SS in camp and anyone caught with souvenirs will be shot." A line quickly formed from barracks to latrine, and an undisciplined scurry was made to dispose of the souvenirs in a place the SS would not look into.

A week or so after our liberation by the Russians, and no action from the Americans, a few of us decided to take off on our own and go to Odessa on the Black Sea to try and catch a ride home on a Liberty ship. Plans were formulated and one dark night we slipped through a hole in the fence and silently wended our way through the darkness. The two of us, Frank Powers and I, were among the ones leaving. Carl Groshell elected to remain as he had a bad leg and didn't think he could make the trip. For several packs of cigarettes, Frank and I managed to acquire a map, so we had an idea as to where we were going. It had to be east, heading for the west meant crossing the Russian front and through untaken German terrain and finally crossing through the German front to reach the Americans, a foolhardy and impractical maneuver at best. It was with mixed emotions that Frank and I left the relative safety of the compound, the friends we had made, the warmth and comfort of a familiar place, to embark on a new and exciting adventure eastward.

It was very dark on the night we slipped through the fence. Having not the slightest idea of which way to go, or how to get there we started walking. We didn't have to worry about the Germans as we were now in Russian occupied territory. Daylight finally filtered through the pines along side the road and we saw the stirrings and heard the rustling of people getting up from their makeshift camps of the previous night. Fortunately, for Frank and I, English being an almost universal language, we were always able to find someone to converse with and soon acquired some directions. I remember one place where we stayed. Frank and I were

surrounded by people of diverse backgrounds. Many ethnic groups of all ages were represented. Many spoke English, some quite fluent, others barely understandable. They all had one thing in common, they all were proud to be able to use their English, and so we talked for hours. Of course, we would reassure them that they were doing great, and it was wonderful to see them break out in big smiles. You'd think they had accomplished an enormous feat of some sort and in retrospect, I guess it was. We soon found out that due to our appearance, people knew we were Americans, something we hadn't thought of as up till now we hadn't run across any other Americans.

You can't imagine the various modes and types of conveyances we managed to acquire or find usable. Sometimes we would catch a ride on a truck, then we would hop freight. We even were picked up by some Russians, gentry I presumed in a carriage. A carriage right out of the movie "Gone with the Wind." Hell! I had never even seen one of those contraptions before. I can only speculate upon the background of the owners of the carriage but from their mode of dress one would be led to believe they had money, as the saying goes. I might dwell a few moments here as to why one found a carriage in a war zone. You see, the Russian army (or I should say the Russian army's rear guard) consisted of soldiers' families, and civilians on the move. They knew they were going to Berlin, and they knew Berlin was far away, and in between where they were coming from and where they were going was plenty of land and other "goodies" to be taken. So the front army moved fast to kill the Germans and the rear came slow to take over. Thus it was that we came across the conglomeration of people and conveyances of various sort as we wended our way to Odessa, or so we thought. We soon met our first Russian resistance. You see the roads and byways were almost always filled by refugees, people of all the Eastern European countries that had been mostly political prisoners, all trying to get back home. Well! to alleviate the chaos, looting, etc, the Russians had established in each city, town, or village, a central mess hall where you could get a nice warm filling meal. Lodging was also provided for the night. The only catch (and catch it was) you were usually escorted by Russian soldiers to an interrogation center where your identity was established and upon completion of the interrogation ceremony you were assigned a room or dormitory to await transportation to one's home country. It didn't take Frank and I long to figure out what was going on...about one night. The Russians didn't have much of a guard or restriction on movements, so each morning after a good meal and warm place to sleep, we would nonchalantly wander off to the nearest road and continue on our way. Needless to say once we were aware of this situation, we knew we had a good meal and bed awaiting each evening so we would conveniently let ourselves be captured at night and the next morning we would be on our way to our next capture.

Another interesting and bordering upon the hilarious situation was Frank and I posing as officers. It was one evening after our capture and while eating with the general populace, we noticed a table at the head of the hall seating a dozen or so people. They all had various insignias representing their rank obviously from different countries, noticeable, of course, by their uniforms. Well, Frank not being one of them there slow ones says,

"Well, Tref, tomorrow after our capture you and I will be eating at the head table."

"What the hell are you talking about Frank? You saw all the brass and we're only sergeants."

"Hell! it takes us only a few minutes for us to change from sergeants to officers."

That night during our proverbial capture and interrogation (and don't forget now each capture and interrogation is in a different city or town a hundred or so miles down the road) Frank is a Lt. Colonel and I chose to be a Major. The Russians never even doubted our stories, our clothes were remnants of uniforms, flying uniforms, and we had no insignia. There was no doubt we were flyers and Americans, so the Russians took us at our word. That night we were escorted to the head table.

"Son of a bitch," I said to Frank, "Look at that joker who's sitting there!" It was an American Captain, among others of various rank.

"Keep your cool man," quips Frank. "He's not a flyer and he hasn't seen us before nor will he see us again after tonight." Well the evening passed uneventfully and you'd have thought we were having dinner at the officers club. Frank and I, by this time, were quite adept at prevarication and I am sure we would have been elected honorary members of any liars club in existence. The next morning, as Frank and I escaped, we bade farewell to our fellow officers. Frank and I often wondered whatever happened to the people that stayed in the cities and towns. One interesting fellow we met one night was a General from Yugoslavia, Romania or some other country. He had been at this particular place for some time, and said the Russians were going to give him a car and wanted us to stay until the car arrived and he would take us to his villa and then see that we would be flown home. We had a few reservations about the outcome for many reasons and I don't think I have to mention what his reaction would be upon finding out we were not the members of society we pretended to be.

One day while walking with a quite a group of displaced persons (as we were now called) as usual strung out single file on both sides of the road, we saw up ahead people suddenly diverting their direction of travel and diving for seclusion of the shrubbery alongside the road. It was almost comical and the reaction was instantaneous and unplanned. It reminded us of a row of dominoes falling over. Frank and I were at first unaware of the cause but soon heard the low flying aircraft and the splaying of bullets. "Goddam!" yelled Frank, "hit the dirt." We were being strafed. As far as I know no one was hit, and it was all over in a few moments.

A few days later, (Frank and I were alone at the time) we were stopped in mid-day. This was somewhat unusual, but after chatting with the Russian officer for awhile it was apparent we were getting a little too far east for the Russian's comfort. We didn't know if there was something they didn't want us to see or what. Anyway, we finally convinced the officer we were just trying to get to Odessa and he wrote out a pass. Of course, it was written in Russian and for all we knew it could have said take these damn fool Americans out and shoot them, but evidently the pass was legitimate for it helped us through what appeared to be a couple of nasty situations.

Speaking of nasty situations, Frank and I were probably the original "Babes in the Woods" Little did we know Russian soldiers had been left behind to kill looters and thieves. We would nonchalantly walk into town and go into a store and rummage around.

We didn't take hardly a thing. I don't know why, but I presume it was a subconscious act knowing we could carry only so much and then the agony of the choices to make. It seemed hardly worth while. Occasionally we saw some soldiers but they paid scant attention to us. It was while on one of our so called forays we met two other fellows not of European descent, I might add. One was a Britisher, the other Australian. A couple of the most ingenious fellows you would ever want to meet. We four made quite a group and decided to travel together. Not one of us, luckily, was apprehended or approached for being in town, let alone being in stores.

By now the weather was beginning to get a little warmer. Summer was almost here and it was a warm sunny day when we approached a typical German village. It had a strange feeling about it. Not many people about, it looked as if they had just left...leaving what few were behind for what reason I don't know. Well the few that were there were people like us, displaced persons looking for food and a night's lodging. The original inhabitants has just upped and left. Apparently the Russians hadn't given the Germans much warning so the townspeople fled in panic, leaving everything behind. The apartment we chose was completely furnished, with place settings on lace tablecloths, clothing, pictures on the wall, and cupboard and dresser drawers filled with personal items. Needless to say we made ourselves right at home and so did numerous others. It was almost as if the village had come back to life. Sundays were an idyllic interlude from the daily routine. With the exception of Frank, myself, and the Britisher, and the Australian, the rest were Europeans and had to have their Sunday afternoon soccer game. It was almost as if there was no war and we were in suspended animation, living in a small world all our own. So it was, Sundays we went to the park for the soccer game and afterwards sat around and talked in English with our ardent admirers.

It was on one such day we were just sitting around listening to the radio. Yes, our apartment had a radio! What a spot to ride out the war, in a fully equipped apartment, Sunday soccer games, teaching English to fair damsels and other things, and even a radio. Well, everyone it seemed let out a yell almost simultaneously, for over the radio word came that the war in Europe had ended. "Gee Frank, you know what this means, don't you?"

"Yea, I guess the party is over and we might as well head back west. The hell with going to Odessa." Frank replied.

So the next day the four of us packed what few belongings we had and headed back west. We weren't so much fired up for dallying and sightseeing now, so instead of picking our way along the back roads, we went in search of the autobahn, (the forerunner of modern freeways in America). Much to our surprise they were practically deserted and we made no progress as far as getting some transport. The Aussie, who had been captured by the Germans in North Africa and had been a prisoner of war for three years, more or less, spoke fluent German and he decided to acquire some bicycles. We didn't get them all at once, but as some poor innocent farmer rode by on his prized possession, he was suddenly confronted by four scroungy looking civilians who wanted to abscond with his bike. I can't vouch for the exact exchange, but we ended up with the bike.

We topped a hill late one afternoon and saw off to our left in a secluded valley a small village that had all the trappings of good

meals and warm night's lodgings plus. We peddled on down and much to our surprise found it relatively untouched by the war. Obviously, the Russians had used the autobahn and in their haste had overlooked this small village. Obviously the Russians had much bigger prey in mind and by then were on their way to Berlin. Anyway, we were standing on a corner wondering what to do next when we were approached by a middle aged man who spoke perfect English and introduced himself as Wally Lange, all of a sudden we had our lodging for the night. The meal was an experience all of its own, but first about Wally Lange. He had migrated to Australia a number of years before and decided to return to Germany for a visit with his mother. He couldn't have picked a worse time, for during his visit war broke out and Wally Lange was virtually a prisoner in his own country. Anyway he invited us to his home where we met his mother and they offered to put us up for a few days. His mother began to prepare a meager meal. It was quite apparent they hardly had enough for themselves let alone enough for four starving road runners. The ingenious Australian who had been travelling with us remarked, " Let's go see what we can scrounge" and telling Wally and his mother to wait a while we took off. It was time for a lesson in the German language and POW diplomacy, meaning we took anything we wanted. We didn't have to go far before we came upon a farmhouse with a number of chickens running around in the front yard. The Aussie speaking in fluent German, asked politely if we poor old POW's could have a couple of chickens. The response was obvious, not only in tone of voice but by the menacing gestures. "Come on lads, grab a chicken and haul ass." the Aussie shouted. We managed to get three chickens before the lady of the house screaming and with raised pitch fork rushed from the house. Back at Wally Lange's house I asked ole Aussie what the lady had said. "She just swore using every known German invective". We had a simple but ample meal that night and the next morning.

Our original plans were to stay a few days resting and seeing the sights. That morning we were wandering about the village and had an almost simultaneous meeting with two of the most diverse people that we could imagine. Which by the way would have a most profound effect upon our immediate plans. First, as we stood on a corner, a Jeep appeared, almost it seemed out of nowhere... an American Jeep. It had a small American flag flying from the radio antenna and was being driven by a solitary figure dressed in civilian clothes. At that same moment, a gorgeous blond female was sighted at closer range. So it was a most confusing spectacle for any observers. I was yelling for the Jeep to stop, I can't describe how excited I was to see an American flag. Frank was yelling stop to the blond. Each of us, of course, had a quite different motive in mind. The Jeep and girl stopped, and there we were. The driver of the Jeep was an American Red Cross official on a short holiday. He was looking for his parents who he hadn't seen or heard from for years. The blond was a local village girl and seemed to be quite intrigued with Frank so we had two lively conversations going on at once and as is turned out, a whole new ball game.

Up to this point, Frank and I had been together approximately five months, but would now separate. The Red Cross official was in a hurry and said he would take us to the American forces in Leipzig, but we would have to leave in a few hours. He was on his

way to a nearby village and would return to pick us up. Frank and the Australian elected to stay behind as they were now firmly entrenched in the blond's life and also with her girlfriend. So it was with mixed emotions that the Englishman and I bid farewell to Frank, the Australian, the two girls, and Wally Lange and his mother. I exchanged addresses with Wally and subsequently learned he was able to return to Australia where he married and resumed a normal life until his death some years later.

I never had such an antsy three hours before the Jeep arrived. I didn't budge an inch from the place where I spotted the Jeep. I wasn't about to miss my ride. We didn't go directly to the Americans, but had a night's layover across the river from Leipzig. The Red Cross official spoke fluent German and had made a number of contacts and acquaintances. We were to spend the night with one of these acquaintances, a German family. The Englishman and I didn't know for sure what was happening. The Jeep driver wanted to know if we could scrounge some food from the mess hall of an American troop detachment guarding the bridge near the river at Leipzig. It was our first encounter with American troops since our departure from POW camp and we felt funny asking for a handout, but the mess sergeant was quite considerate and gave us a good assortment of goodies. The Red Cross man then drove us to the house of the German family.

It was quite an emotional experience. Even to this day I don't know exactly what the Jeep driver's motive was for taking us to the German family. It was evening when we arrived. The family consisted of the old mother, and father, a daughter about the same age as I (then 23), the daughter's friend, a girl a little older and a small child, the daughter of a friend. We were to have dinner and spend the night. The Jeep driver would be back in the morning to pick us up, he said on departing. We began the evening. The daughter's friend spoke passable English and the Englishman spoke passable German. My contribution was passable Pig-Latin. After a few glasses of wine we began to relax and enjoy ourselves. It was at the end of the meal, after several hours of fraternization that it hit me. Here we were having dinner in the enemy's home, only days after cessation of hostilities. What were we thinking of? Were we not their enemy also. What had the evening's conversation revealed? I had been a prisoner of war, the daughters friend's husband, and father of the little girl was at this very moment a prisoner of the Americans. Something in common? I asked myself.

During the meal the mother goes to the fireplace and takes down a picture from the mantle. It was a picture of a young German soldier in uniform. She shows it to us babbling in German. I don't understand what she is saying, but it is all spelled out in her emotions. She is very upset, crying and disturbed. It is apparent the young soldier is her son, brother of the daughter of our hostess, and is dead. We share an intimate feeling. I can't help but think that she could be my mother wailing over me. What is so different the world over? Nothing, we are all flesh and blood, we feel, think, eat, sleep, and live, in similar ways. What is this all about? It is about the uselessness of war.

This warm friendly, good smelling room could be my room back home in the good old USA. She is my mother crying over me, I am thinking. Why do people have to fight? The picture slipped from her fingers crashing to the floor snapping me out of

my hallucination. Then deadly silence, everyone looking at each other. The spell is suddenly broken by the little girl saying in universal language, "Momma, Momma I have to pee-pee."

The mother has calmed down and we resume the evening in strained silence for a while. Finally, the dishes are cleared from the table and the table pushed to one side. Wow! This can mean only one thing. Back home when the table is pushed to one side, it means dancing, or trying to. "Hey Ma look I'm dancing." What will be next I am wondering? We've had a nice meal, a nice visit, the old folks have paid their respects and departed for bed. The little one is also in bed. I'm beginning to get ideas. Aw, no, Tref, I am saying to myself, this is too good to be true. Records miraculously appeared, to be played on a gramophone that too appeared suddenly. According to the word of someone whose name fails me at the moment, a pairing of males and females occurs spontaneously, fortuitously and (most of the time) agreeably to the parties concerned. The younger girl and I found ourselves together so the Englishman and the older girl paired up. The evening proceeded predictably. We all danced and it was great. We had more wine, some left over cheese also great, some more spam, not so great. Time passed rather quickly in this delightful mode. Now comes the inevitable moment when one's thinking I'm getting pooped. Where am I going to sleep? Mentally, I'm counting the rooms, beds, and the more I count and the more I see, more and more the conclusion is that it is going to be more than I could hope for. Could it be true? Yes it was.

The Jeep and driver appeared the next morning as promised. We bade farewell to our gracious and charming hosts, clambered into the Jeep and roared off towards the west. We crossed the river at Leipzig and were deposited at the end of the bridge. At last we were back home. This was American occupied territory and we were on the last lap. I remember asking an American soldier for a cigarette and he gave me half a pack of Lucky Strikes. The Englishman couldn't believe it, a whole half pack of cigarettes was given without a second thought. He said he probably would have gotten only one cigarette from his cohorts. I find this hard to believe, but at the same time he seemed elated over our gift, but at the same time was embarrassed and wanted me to return all but two cigarettes. Perhaps the Englishman was right and they were not as fortunate as us. As we were sitting beside the road enjoying the smokes, a lorry came by and he jumped on. He was gone just like that, waving a friendly goodbye. It happened so quickly we didn't have time to exchange addresses.

I was taken to an abandoned German airfield at Halle. This was a collection point for American POWs and when enough POWs were assembled a troop train was formed and we were transported to Le Havre, France. The flight from Leipzig to Halle was an event I will never forget. It was my first flight in an aircraft since being shot down. I really didn't have much time to think about it, which was good I suppose. I don't know if I would have done anything different than I did, which was merely to walk out to the aircraft and climb on board and wait for whatever would happen. It did seem rather strange to be a passenger and not a crewman. The trip itself was uneventful, not even rough air, and upon landing and departing the aircraft I thought, that wasn't so bad after all. I might even try it again some day.

The end.

DOWN IN FLAMES

A POW Story

by

Arlo Matney 826 Sq.

We had no trouble finding the target and I released the bombs when the lead Bombardier released his. We circled around to begin the long ride home when someone announced that enemy planes were sighted. I heard gunfire and when I looked out the side window I saw an FW-190 with a big black cross on its side streak by.

On June 11, 1944, we were up before daybreak and were dodging tent ropes and fox holes on our way to the chow line and breakfast of dried eggs, corned beef hash, rolled oats and condensed milk. At briefing we were told that our target that day would be some oil storage tanks along the Danube River near the town of Giurgiu, Rumania. Just another milk run we were told as there were no flak guns in the vicinity. We picked up maps and pictures of the target area and were soon on our plane ready to take off to join the formation. As Bombardier, I made sure the bombs were armed and that the guns were test fired when we were over the Mediterranean.

We had no trouble finding the target and I released the bombs when the lead Bombardier released his. We circled around to begin the long ride home when someone announced that enemy planes were sighted. I heard gunfire and when I looked out the side window I saw an FW-190 with a big black cross on its side streak by. Instantly we were in a steep dive with the engines screaming loudly till I could hear nothing else. The plane was burning fiercely so I pulled the emergency lever to open the nose wheel doors. The doors didn't open until I jumped on it a couple of times and then I went part way out feet first. The nose gunner was waiting to get out so I pushed myself free and out, scraping my chin on the side of the door as I went.

It was a relief to get away from the plane and after a few flips it seemed like I was suspended in mid-air in a sitting down position. I remembered to delay opening my chute but I kept a good grip on the rip cord. I watched the ground and when it started coming at me real fast I jerked the rip cord.

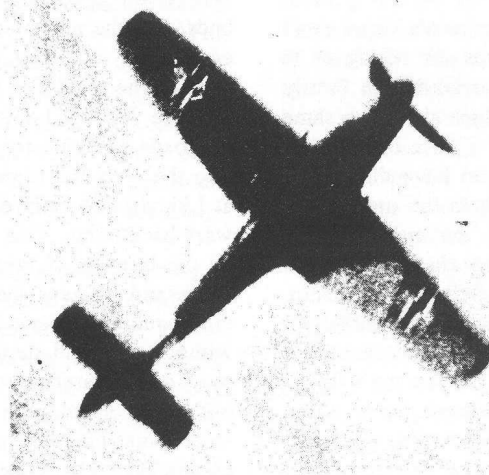
Next thing I remember was picking myself up from the ground. I could see soldiers on the hill above me searching for

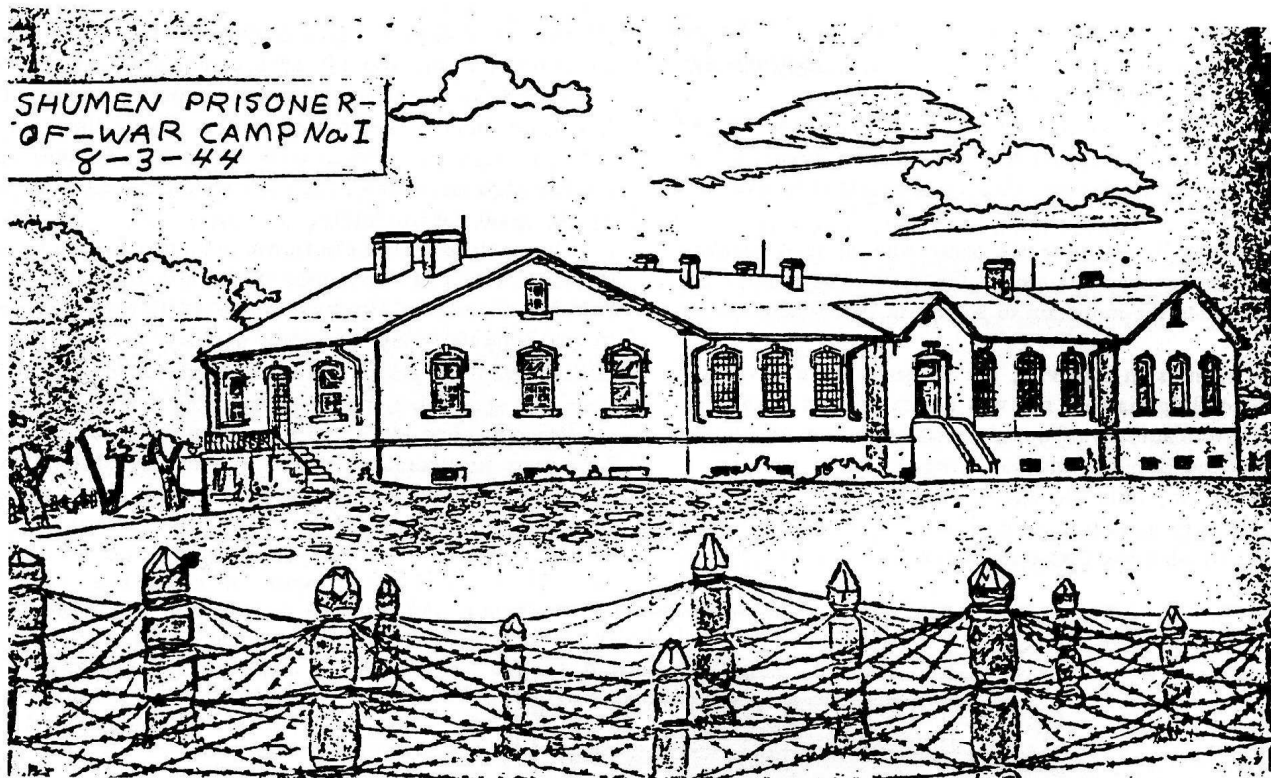
survivors so I walked down the hill to where a farmer and his wife and son had stopped work to watch. I couldn't understand them but the women brought me some soup. When the soldiers got there they indicated that I should get on the farmer's wagon. We headed for town and picked up some of the other members of the crew, including the ball gunner who had jumped without his chute. The upper turret gunner may have gone down with the ship as he wasn't accounted for. Before we got to the town of Rusa, Bulgaria, we were relieved of our jackets, watches and billfolds. We knew by hand motions and a few nudges with their bayonets that they wanted souvenirs. I lost my boots when my chute opened. I had been riding in the wagon with the body of the ball turret gunner, they gave me his boots and I walked the rest of the way into town.

In the small town of Rusa, we were put in a building that had bars all across the front wall and I think most of the town's people came to see the American gangsters. One older gentleman who could speak English and who used to work in Chicago, believed that New York City and Chicago had been bombed and were in ruins. Later that evening, we were moved to a place like a warehouse to sleep. Early in the night, air raid sirens sounded and we were taken to an air raid shelter in the river bank. Most of the people from town were there also. I was glad that we had guards to protect us from them.

The following day we were taken one at a time to be interrogated by a German officer who could speak good English. He wore a dark blue uniform trimmed in red with a lot of medals, braid, and a long sword fastened to his belt. He wanted to know the name of our unit and where it was located, I gave him, name, rank, and serial number and he informed me I could be executed. I reminded him that international law protected prisoners and he told me that not many people knew we were prisoners.

"Instantly we were in a steep dive with the engines screaming loudly till I could hear nothing else. The plane was burning fiercely so I pulled the emergency lever to open the nose wheel doors. The doors didn't open"





The Shumen POW Camp #1 September 3, 1944. 342 POW's were held here at the time that I was released.

After interrogation, another prisoner, Laurens Woolhouse and I were moved to a small room with two cots, a small cabinet and one window. There was a guard outside at all times but they let us out to go to the outside toilet and sometimes to just sit in the sun. We tried to talk with the guards to find out what they would do with us. They shook their heads forward and back like our yes, but meaning no when we asked if we were going to be shot.

A Bulgarian officer who could speak English, and his wife, visited us there after a few days. He resented that the Germans were taking all of the Bulgarian young men and food for the German Army.

There was a shortage of lead so the guards would use tightly rolled paper slugs in their reloaded cartridges. They would shoot at rats behind the building. They were very impressed when I killed a rat with a slingshot I had improvised with the suspenders from my electrically heated trousers.

We were outside when an elderly man came by carrying a board. He got excited when he saw us, started jumping up and down, and I think he would have hit me with the board if the guard hadn't stopped him. I deducted that the board was all that was left of his bed after the bombing raid. The guard gave me some notebook paper and pencil so I spent some time drawing pictures of our lodging.

After we were there about a week, we were moved to another building overlooking the Danube River, where we joined the other members of our crew and one other B-24 crew. There were two rooms with a hallway in between them. Each crew had a room with two barred windows, a board platform for sleeping and a stool. We took turns sleeping on the cement floor as the platform would ac-

commodate only half of us. There were no blankets or mattresses and quite often air raid sirens would sound. We could also hear planes going overhead, so some nights we didn't sleep very well. During one air raid we were moved to trenches near the building where we could see some planes spiraling down after being hit and hear the bombs coming down. Communications with the guards improved and those needing medical attention for burns and shrapnel wounds were treated.

After being here for about ten days, we were loaded on an open freight car and moved by train to Shumen, Bulgaria. Before the train left town, some German flyers came to look us over causing us some concern when they started spitting on us, but the guards were quick to separate them from us. During an air raid as we left Rusa, the train parked under a row of trees outside of town until it was over.

At Shumen we were housed in an army barracks, where we had beds with straw mattresses to sleep on. There were bed bugs and fleas in the mattresses but they didn't bother me as much as they did some of the others. One of the fellows who had part of his heel shot off slept on a wooden bench to avoid them. It was, I believe, during the week we were there that we were able to write home. My letter was received at home one year later.

From town we were taken by truck up a winding mountain road to the Shumen #1 Prisoner of War Camp. There were 342 POWs there. It was mid summer, the weather was nice and we spent a lot of time in the sun getting a good tan. The food was a crude soup with moldy black bread. Our guards ate the same fare so we couldn't complain. We still had the straw mattresses so also had the fleas and bud bugs. After a bout with dysentery, we were al-

lowed facilities to heat water and clean our eating utensils. Water was limited as it was hauled up the mountain by donkey cart, so we would stand outside when it rained to bathe ourselves.

Later on in our stay, we had goat milk to drink and limited amounts of fruit and eggs. The building and the area around it was enclosed with barbed wire fences. Three goats seemed to have the run of the area.

There were some Britishers in the camp who enjoyed debating which proved to be good entertainment. Once while we were there we were herded down the mountain to a Turkish bath where we got cleaned up.

After three months in captivity, the Russians were advancing from the north so Bulgaria said she was neutral. Seven days later, she declared war on Germany. Three days later Moscow announced an armistice between Bulgaria and the Allies.

On September 7th, 1944 we were loaded on trucks and taken down the mountain to a waiting train. The train sat there all night while we wondered what was happening, then we headed for Turkey

and freedom. When we passed through towns, the guards would shoot into the air, and I'll always remember the people in rags who turned out to see us when we stopped in Greece. They would fight each other to get cigarettes the guards threw at them. We spent one night on a Dutch boat at Istanbul, Turkey, before going to a British base in Iran, where we were deloused, had warm showers and given clean clothing.

The next day we were flown to Cairo, Egypt, by the British. The American Red Cross took us by bus out to see the pyramids while we were there. Planes from the 484th Bomb Group picked us up the following day and flew us back to Cerignola. Here we learned that three planes were lost from our formation the day our plane was shot down and only two crews survived.

Recently after 44 years I have been in contact with four of our B-24 crew members and talked to them by phone. I am looking forward to meeting them at the next reunion.

The End



Picture of my bed at the Shumen POW Camp #1

USAF Aircraft in Switzerland

By Robert M.Foose

Imagine being a sailor adrift in a large ocean and rejoicing upon the sight of a small island: this would be a good comparison to how many of the bomber crews viewed Switzerland as a haven for their crippled aircraft during World War II. The U.S. 8th and 15th Air Forces, as well as RAF Bomber Command and the Mediterranean Tactical Air Forces, on numerous occasions during 1943 thru 1945, sought the sanctuary of Swiss territory when bombing targets in southern Germany and occupied Europe. An aircraft with serious combat damage, wounded crew members, major mechanical problems or low on fuel was faced with a long trip back to either England or southern Italy. The odds were greatly against them, especially if they were forced to lag behind the main bomber force, thus making them easy prey for the Luftwaffe fighters which were almost always on the prowl for cripples.

This article will focus on some of the U.S. aircraft which found refuge in neutral Switzerland, and hopefully stir interest and feedback from some of the readers who "visited" that country during the aforementioned time period. On August 13, 1943, a B-24 from the 93rd Bomb Group became the first of 167 of U.S.A.A.F. aircraft to find refuge in Switzerland. A total of 82 B-24s and 76 B-17s from both the 8th and 15th Air Forces would eventually end-up in Swiss hands. Many of these bombers were repaired and returned to the U.S. forces by late 1945, after the end of hostilities. The large majority of crew members also returned after the war, with the exception of those who were repatriated early or returned to Allied territory by "other" means. There were also those who did not return, a total 43 aircrew members died in crash territory of wounds received in combat.

A bomber crew's worries were not always over upon reaching Swiss airspace. The Swiss flak and fighter units (equipped with several versions of the ME-109) would, and on some occasions did, fire upon Allied aircraft if they felt the aircraft was not following their instructions or was not trying to land at the nearest airfield.

A topic of discussion which invariably always comes up when either historians or veterans talk about the aircraft which were interned in Switzerland and Sweden, is the question: Did any of the crews intentionally seek internment? The one item that originally struck me in my early years of researching the air war over Europe, was the fact that many of the photos of interned aircraft showed them to be in good condition. As I interviewed aircrew members for several other projects, I found the following points need to be considered before passing judgement on this topic. 1. Serious combat damage was not always obvious in photos. All that was needed was one or two pieces of flak or 20mm in the right spot (fuel tanks, oxygen supply, supercharger, etc.) to cause serious trouble. This damage is not always viewable in photos taken from a distance. 2. The need to seek immediate help for a wounded crew member was also a key factor in the decision to enter neutral territory. 3. Some inexperienced crews or aircraft used excessive fuel and would have been forced to ditch in the sea or crash land in hostile territory if they tried to return to their home bases. 4. The stress of the moment also has to be considered when combined with any of the other aforementioned points. It is always easy to say "How I would have handled it." 5. The Swiss (and I'm sure the Swedes did too) completed a written report on the condition of all aircraft which landed in their country and noted combat damage or equipment malfunctions.

The accompanying photos will add some additional information concerning USAAF aircraft interned in Switzerland, and I hope will be of general interest. Any comments, personal experiences, or additional information concerning the aircraft in the following photos or other aircraft interned in Switzerland will be most welcomed.

REFERENCES:

Deutsche Luftwaffe uber der Schweiz, Karl Ries
The Yoxford Boys. Merle C. Olmsted

Escort to Berlin, Fry and Ethell

Photo Credits: 1) Hans-Heiri Stapfer except as indicated, Horgen, Switzerland, 2) Hans Dubler, and 3) USAF

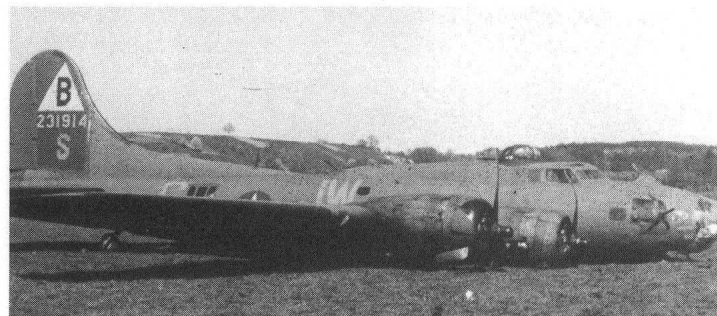


Photo # 1 When the 1st Bomb Division of the 8th Air Force went to Oberpaffenhofen on April 24, 1944, three aircraft from the 92nd Bomb Group would end-up in Switzerland. The B-17G in this photo (#42-31914) is from the 326th Bomb Squadron and was flown to Dubendorf airdrome by Lt. Rosenfeld. A total of thirteen B-17s and one B-24 landed or crashed in Swiss territory on this day, one B-17 crashed with all ten crew members perishing. Photo by Hans Dubler

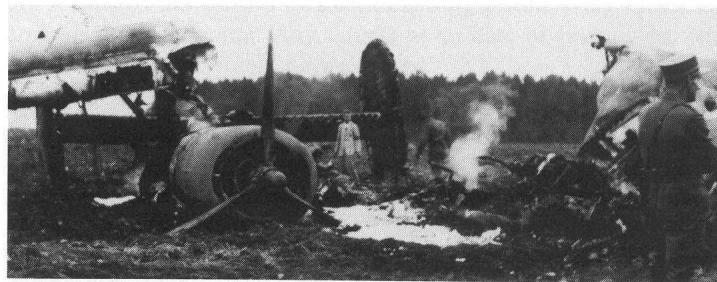


Photo #2 On 13 August 1943, "Death Dealer" from the 67th Bomb Squadron, 93rd Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, became the first American aircraft to land in Switzerland. This aircraft (#42-40611) was damaged over Wiener-Neustadt by a bomb from another aircraft, and was landed by 1st Lt. Raymond Lacombe on a grass field near Thurau-bei Wil. Unsure as to their exact location (Germany or Switzerland) the crew set the aircraft on fire. The photo will attest to their success in doing so. The crew of 11 were interned (the extra crew member was Capt. Robert L. Cardenas, who was aboard as Command Pilot).



Photo #3 Crew members of "Death Dealer" being escorted by Swiss soldiers.

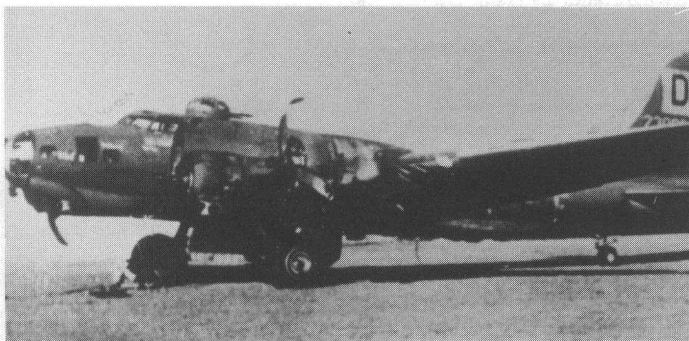


Photo #4 "High Life", a B-17 (#42-30080) of the 351st Bomb Squadron, 100th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, crash landed in Switzerland on August 17, 1943 after bombing Regensburg, Germany. Flown this day by 1st Lt. Donald K. Oakes, the photo shows "High Life," after it has been raised off the ground and resting on its landing gear.



Photo #5 The second Schweinfurt mission on October 14, 1943 brought a B-17F (#42-30831) from the 364th Bomb Squadron, 305th Bomb Group to Switzerland. The aircraft was piloted by 2nd Lt Edward W. Dienhart. The plane crash landed near Reinach-Aesch, minus the co-pilot and top turret gunner, who had bailed out over Germany.

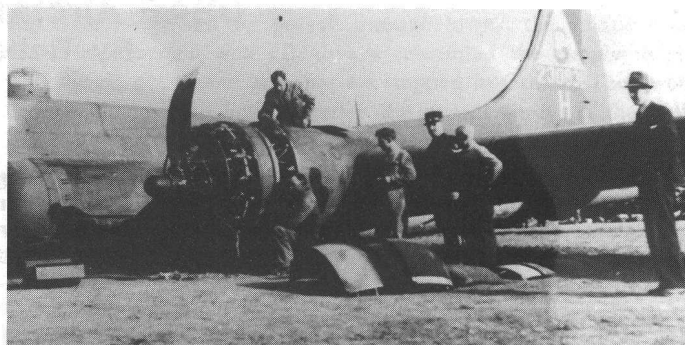


Photo #6 Swiss authorities examining the #1 engine #42-30831, note the condition of the #2 prop, showing it was feathered when the aircraft crash landed. The Swiss would salvage parts from downed aircraft which were not repairable, in order to put other less damaged aircraft back in flyable condition.

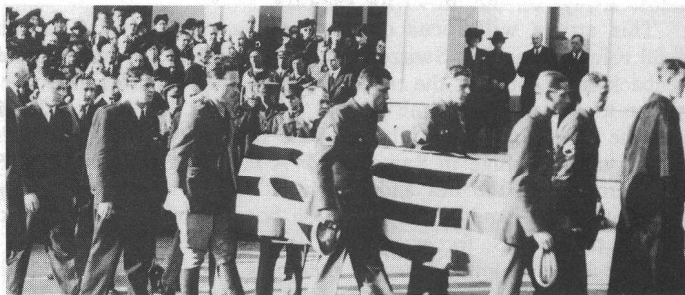


Photo #7 The flag draped coffin of 2nd Lt. Donald T. Rowley, who died of wounds received on the second Schweinfurt mission on October 14, 1943. Lt. Rowley was the navigator on Lt. Dienhart's crew which landed in Switzerland on October 14, 1943. Two other members of this same crew were wounded and taken to Basel hospital for medical treatment.



Photo #8 "Chicago Gun Moll" was flown by Capt. Robert D. Brown of the 357th Fighter Group, 8th Air Force, and on May 27, 1944 became the first P-51 to crash in Swiss territory. Capt. Brown (along with other members of the 357th) were involved with a number of ME 109s, one of which was to be claimed by him, but he was winged by another enemy aircraft. After reaching Switzerland, Capt. Brown bailed out of his P-51B which crashed near Lutisburg and was interned. This photo shows Capt. Brown's ship at Leiston airfield in England, home base of the 357th. He was a member of the 362nd Fighter Squadron, and in the aforementioned combat two other members of the 357th were shot down and became POWs. Photo USAF

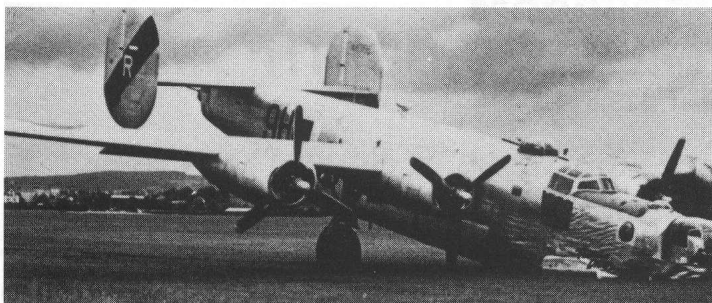


Photo #9 The Munich raids of July 1944 brought a number of 8th Air Force bombers to Switzerland. "Tequila Daisy" (#44-40168) flown by Lt. John C. Tracey of the 857th Bomb Squadron, 492nd Bomb Group, landed at Dubendorf on July 11 1944, as a result of flak damage causing loss of fuel and hydraulics. "Tequila Daisy" successfully landed in spite of the failure of the nose gear. One other 492nd aircraft (#42-95196) flown by Lt. Paul Plantinski of the 856th Bomb Squadron also landed at Dubendorf on this day, as well as three additional B-24s and three B-17s.



Photo # 12 One of the more tragic occurrences between U.S. aircraft and the Swiss Air Force happened on September 5th, 1944. On this day a B-17 from the 390th Bomb Group (shown in above photo at Dubendorf) was being escorted to Swiss airspace by two P-51 Mustangs from the 339th Fighter Group. As was customary on many occasions when foreign aircraft were entering their airspace, the Swiss would send several of their fighters (Bf 109Es) to intercept and escort the intruding aircraft to one of their airfields. Unfortunately on this day, the Swiss markings were not noticed until the Mustangs had shot down one (killing the pilot) and damaging another, causing it to crashland.

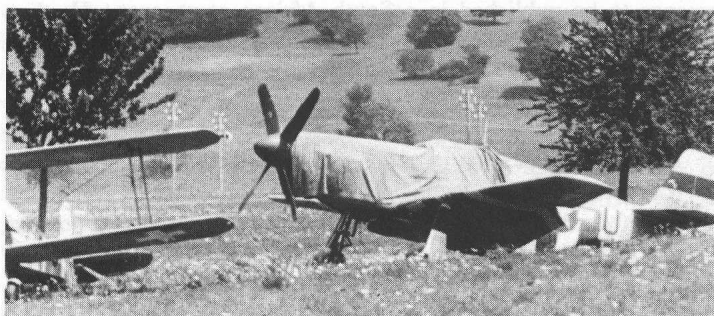


Photo #10 The heavy bombers were not the only ones in Switzerland during July 1944. A P-51B (#42-106464), coded WD-U from the 335th Fighter Squadron, 4th Fighter Group, 8th Air Force, landed at Ems. The aircraft was flown by Lt. Curtis Simpson and he reported a glycol fuel leak (which was bad news for a Mustang pilot). Lt. Simpson, eventually evaded back to Debden, England in October 1944. This was the first flyable P-51 which was interned by the Swiss.

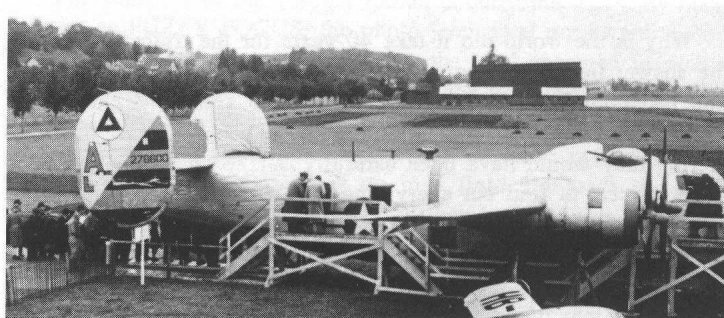


Photo #13 Not all aircraft interned in Switzerland were from the 8th Air Force. This B-24 Liberator from the 98th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force, is on display and is being given a close look by a number of Swiss civilians. Note the damage to the left rudder of the B-24 and the Benzin 1020 L.stenciling on the wing of the aircraft in the foreground. Any details as to date of internment, pilot and circumstances, would be welcomed.



Photo # 11 Damaged by flak over Leipzig and short of fuel "VONNIE GAL" of the 527th Bomb Squadron, 379th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, landed at Payerne airfield at 12:55 hours on July 20, 1944. It was on its 50th mission, and after landing at Payerne a Swiss crew flew it to Dubendorf. "VONNIE GAL" returned to Burtonwood, England on September 25, 1945. The crew of nine were interned. The author would appreciate hearing from anyone who could confirm that the pilot of "VONNIE GAL" on July 20th, 1944, was 2nd Lt. William Moore.

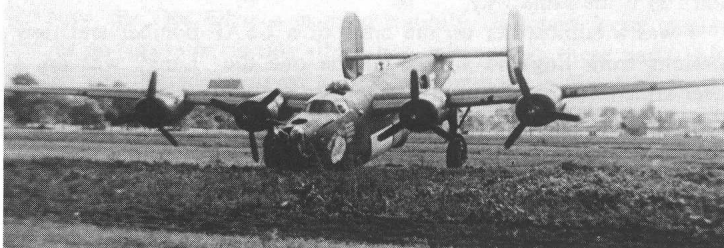


Photo # 14 Another 15th Air Force B-24 Liberator which landed in Swiss territory was "Brown Nose" and it is from either the 460th, 464th, or 465th Bomb Groups. Any information as to the group, pilot and date it was interned would also be appreciated.

DETAILS OF GLENN MILLER'S DEATH

By Thomas E O'Connel 338th BG

The mystery is solved. we now know quite certainly what happened to Glenn Miller. A Royal Air Force Lancaster bomber was responsible for his disappearance on a flight from England to Paris in December 1944. The jettisoning of the Lank's bombs after an aborted mission to Germany accidentally caused a small plane flying below to spin into the English channel. The small plane was carrying Miller, everybody's favorite World War II band leader.

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Why in the world did it take 40 years for the truth to emerge? The answer lies in the word "aborted." If that RAF bomber squadron had completed its bombing mission to Germany, the crews would have been debriefed after the flight was over. At that debriefing they would have been carefully quizzed by trained intelligence officers to find out everything that occurred during the mission. The Lancaster pilot and navigator who have now come forward to tell of the previously forgotten incident of their 1944 flight, would surely have informed authorities of seeing the small plane going into the channel, if that had been the case.

The particular crew in question took off in England, got in formation and headed for their target, the railway yards at Siegen, Germany. Then the weather deteriorated and before the planes crossed into Germany they were ordered back to base. Under such circumstances the procedure in both air forces was to jettison the bombs into the channel. It would have been dangerous to land back in England with those heavy volatile bombs aboard.

There was apparently one key procedural difference between the RAF and the USAF: in aborted missions the RAF bombs exploded and ours were dropped unarmed. Ours didn't explode, they dropped to the bottom of the channel. I don't know why the RAF didn't do it the same way.

I was a bombardier on the crew of a USAF bomber and flew missions from England similar to the one the "Lank" was on. I never armed our bombs until it was absolutely clear we were going to drop them on the target. In the event of jettisoning on an aborted mission, the impact on friendly craft below us would have been much less. Apparently, it was the shock waves from the exploding bombs which caused the little Norseman aircraft carrying Glenn Miller to fall into the sea. If the bombs had been from a USAF plane, Miller might be playing his lovely music even now.

Apparently, the weather was really terrible that day, December 15, 1944.

An early inquiry to the RAF about its possible inadvertent in-

volvement in Miller's disappearance elicited the reply that, "not even the pigeons were flying that day." But recently the RAF crew's navigator, who now lives in South Africa, caused an article about his suspicion of his plane's involvement in Miller's disappearance to be published in a South African newspaper. He thus set in motion a sequence of events which resulted in a further investigation of the RAF records. It turned out that true, no RAF bombing missions were officially recorded for that date, but yes, there was one flight of 150 Lancasters which had been sent out but then ordered back.

What prompted the navigator to remember now that his fellow crew members had seen a Norseman D-64 crash in the channel that day after their jettisoned bombs had exploded? He saw a rerun of the movie, The Glenn Miller story in South Africa. As a further irony, he had first seen the movie in 1954, and had realized that his crew's bombs might have been responsible for Miller's death. But when he approached newspaper reporters on the matter they didn't pay any attention.

Of course, there were lots of airplane accidents over England and the English Channel during that period. Thousands of us bomber crews were zipping all over the sky going to continental Europe and coming back. Most of us had little training compared to today's airline crews, and air control systems were nothing like the sophisticated current ones. My crew got to England about six weeks after Glenn Miller's disappearance. By that time our planes were so numerous that there was more danger to us young bomber crews in our chaotic daily pre-dawn rendezvous with planes from our own squadrons than there was from enemy action over Germany. Losing one small Norseman D-64 was no big deal.

What made it important, of course, was that Glenn Miller was on it and he was everybody's darling. His sweet music stood for peace and for good times past and -if we all made it back-yet to come. I remember his death as a personal loss. It was so to millions of us, somewhat the way John Lennon's death was to my current students and their contemporaries.

Historian Lillian de La Torre once advanced a theory that ran something like this: any historical mystery will eventually be solved if there is sufficient continuing interest in it so that curious investigators are prompted to explore it for long enough. Glenn Miller's death was such a long standing mystery. I'm glad it is solved after 40 years.

The End

Moonlight Requisition

By
Fred E Bamberger

"Captain, your reputation as an 'operator' is not altogether unknown in these parts. After all, you did work for us too. And your boss in Hq. 12th needs you because he knows of your 'taking ways'."

Victorious Allied operations had finally forced the tenacious Teutonic forces out of North Africa and up into the boot of Italy, and in this rapid northward sweep the Commander of the 12th Air Force advanced his headquarters to the city of Foggia. Due to the constantly changing pattern of operations, along with shortages of personnel and equipment, Hq. 12th AF was being supported by elements of the 90th Photo Recon Wing based in San Severo, a nearby town about 17 miles to the north. This arrangement worked fairly well, but required continual communication and courier services. Another prime headache was the erratic Italian electric current that constantly fluctuated in voltage output, and played havoc with the sensitive-photo equipment. This galling situation had the Hq 12th Supply Officer climbing the wall and had him constantly on the prowl for mobile electric generators, which, of course, were in critical shortage throughout the entire combat zone.

The Luftwaffe weren't very cooperative, either, and managed to sneak a few aircraft over at night, which caused the area to be blacked out.

The Germans were most persistent in these efforts, and after the third nightly foray that had shut off his lights, the commander of the Twelfth Air Force gnashed his teeth in the inky blackness and vowed,

"THIS has got to stop right now" Early the next morning he summoned his supply officer and roared,

"Culpepper," if you don't come up with a generator like right now, you've had it!"

The harried A-4 nodded and mumbled grimly, "We had one but it was moonlight requisitioned."

The General waved him angrily out of the office, and then pressed PHOTO on his intercom and spoke softly and quickly,

"Captain, I'm tapping into your generator until A-4 gets his thumb out of his ear and gets one."

Photo came right back, "Yes Sir, is there anything else?"

"That's enough," snapped the General, "Just be damned sure I got lights, you understand?"

Again Photo came back, "Yes Sir!"

But now the General's tone grew silky, "Captain, I get the word that you are a gentleman who knows how to get things done. You think you might find a generator for me?"

The Photo man sighed audibly, "We'll give it a try, Sir." The voice in the intercom suddenly became tinged with a steel edge,

"Don't just try. FIND IT, and that's an order!"

Checking the regular supply channels was wasted effort. Later in the afternoon, the 90th Photo Recon people called to advise that a batch of prints were ready. The photo officer glanced at his

watch and then spoke to his chief non com,

"Andy, I'll take the run up to San Severo tonight and make the pick-up" The sergeant grinned condescendingly,

"Corporal De Feo won't be too thrilled about that, Sir. He's got a 'thing' going up there."

"I bleed for him," growled the photo officer in mock sorrow. "But if I don't scrounge up a generator for the Old man, I'm in deep trouble."

"Yeh," echoed Sgt. Anderson, "the word's out that he's really 'browned off' cause the 'Eyeties' blacked him out three nights running."

The Captain grinned, "Boy, it sure gets around fast. but maybe I can con those jokers up there in the 90th out of one."

"No way, Jose." retorted the sergeant, "They're running them bowlegged now."

"Yah," agreed the Captain, "but I got to give it a shot anyway. Tell Eddie I'm sorry to louse up his love life, but I'll take the run."

The sunset over the verdant Italian countryside was truly magnificent as FUZZY FOCUS, the photo jeep, sped northward toward San Severo. How rich and productive the land appeared in such a serene setting, and so far removed from the terrible turmoil of war.

This illusion was swiftly shattered as the vehicle swept past an anti-aircraft battery neatly arranged in close proximity to a heavy searchlight battalion set up in a field alongside the road.

Arriving in San Severo without further incident, he picked up the prints and then strode toward the Mediterranean Allied Officers Club.

Glancing about, he spotted the Operations Officer at the bar. Easing over, he greeted him casually, "Hi."

The Ops Officer gazed at him quizzically. "Something must be really hot when you come out to the boonies."

"What's my problem?" The Captain grinned, "Have I ever got the Old Man on my case. I need a generator."

"Can we work something out?"

The Ops Officer set his drink down very carefully. "Impossible," he snapped tartly, "We're running close to two million prints a month, and we can't run on the 'Eyetie' current either, as you know god damn well yourself. My boss would really break my nuggets if he even thought I'd let loose of one of his generators."

The Captain shrugged expansively, "So don't tell him."

Now the Ops Officer grinned toothily, "Captain, your reputation as an 'operator' is not altogether unknown in these parts. After all, you did work for us too. And your boss in Hq. 12th needs you because he knows of your 'taking ways.' We are doing most of your photo work, and he knows that too. So why don't you let me buy you another drink before we send you home."

The Captain was feeling quite relaxed when they helped him into FUZZY FOCUS. He thanked his companions as he chided them at the same time,

"You aren't as chintzy with your liquor as you are with your god damn generators, but thanks anyway for your liquid hospitality."

Steadying himself in the fresh air, he unlocked the chain

The aircraft proved to be Ju 88s, well-known workhorses of the Luftwaffe, and who were now attempting to work over the searchlight battalion near the road.

from the steering wheel, slid onto the seat, and gently coaxed the engine into life. The little vehicle snaked through the winding streets easily, and he was already well away from the town when his ears picked up the tortured wailing of the air raid alarms. Having gone through this exercise many times, he quickly doused his headlights, and as his eyes became accustomed to the dark he continued rolling slowly along the road.

High overhead an airplane engine moaned and the Captain speedily swung over to the side of the road, killed the engine, and leaped out. Breaking into a sprint, he raced down the road for about a hundred feet, crossed over to the other side, and slid down the shoulder into the drainage ditch that ran alongside. It wasn't a second too soon, as the sky suddenly became alive with long probing fingers of high-intensity lights seeking to pinpoint the intruders.

The anti-aircraft batteries, starting to zero in, began firing and as the cacophonous clamor of combat intensified, the Captain swore softly. "Why did I have to louse up Eddie De Feo's love life"? Now we both got problems.

The airplane engines rose in screaming crescendo to a high snarling whine, intermittently interspersed with the angry chatter of machine guns. The aircraft proved to be Ju 88s, well-known workhorses of the Luftwaffe, and who were now attempting to work over the searchlight battalion near the road. The markings on the wings reflected eerily in the weird patchwork of light and darkness, and as it flashed past overhead, the telltale shrill whistling scream of falling bombs grew ominously louder. The Captain braced himself as a sharp, crackling explosion, accompanied by a spreading luminescent sheet of intense flame arose when one of the bombs scored a direct hit on the nearby searchlight. With an angry hissing roar the long beam of brilliant light suddenly went black. The engine noises slackened, and the Captain raised his head cautiously and glanced about.

It was a scene of surprising disorder. Vehicles had been crazily tossed about like toys, the searchlight had been demolished, and its crew were nowhere to be seen. Staring at the various components strewn haphazardly about he was startled to see, standing not 50 feet away, the power source for the unit, a big heavy-duty generator mounted on wheels that had been chocked to hold it in position. And more impossible to believe, it wasn't even scratched.

The Luftwaffe decided to make another bomb run, and as they swung around, the Captain scrambled up the embankment like a man possessed. He ran back to the jeep, started it up and carefully inched it off the road, over the ditch and out onto the field next to the generator.

While the night raiders were busy lining up on the lights for another bomb run, the Captain jumped out of the jeep and moved swiftly to undo the tow bar of the generator and connect it to his towing hook. Throwing a hasty glance towards the sky, he continued to disconnect the power cables and flung them into the

back of his vehicle. Now starting to clamp the metal side covers into position, he again heard the agonized whine of the engines and the screaming whistle of the bombs, but did not even turn his head and continued feverishly to button up the generator. Sweating profusely, he finally grunted with sheer joy as the last snap lock clicked into place. Vaulting into the jeep, he started feeling his way toward the road. The flak was intense as the bombs struck again with thunderous bursts; now they were wide of their mark, but their flashes helped him find his way back to the road.

Cautiously following his earlier track, so as not to get mired in the drainage ditch, he inched out slowly while silently exhorting FUZZY FOCUS not to fail him. He breathed a long sigh of elation as the wheels of the generator barely cleared the rise of the embankment and rolled onto the road.

Suddenly, just as it had begun, the air attack was over. The intruders of the night were quickly lost to view and the steady insistent drone of their engines gradually faded away to the north. One by one, the big searchlights slowly flickered out until the whole area was again immersed in silent darkness and peace.

The Captain sat immobile for a time, his ears tuned for any sound or cries of wounded for assistance, but there were none. The unit began to resume its activities, and some guarded lights became visible as crews began moving about inspecting the damage. Now easing the jeep further down the road, the Captain could still hear their voices in the night quite distinctly."

Jeez, they really clobbered this light!"

Then another voice chimed in, "Not only the light, Lieutenant, but the damn generator's gone. Completely disappeared. There ain't even a hunk of scrap metal left!"

"OH NO!" came the Lieutenant's voice, "The Major will blow his mind. That's the third one we creamed this month, and that's not counting the one we scrounged from the Air Force."

"Okay, Okay," sang out another voice, "Let's stop all the jawing and get this mess cleaned up. Anybody get hurt?"

"No, Sir, the crew crawled into the slit trench, and took off when the light got pranged."

Staring at the various components strewn haphazardly about he was startled to see standing, the power source for the unit, a big heavy-duty generator. . . .

Now the Captain had heard enough. He stepped lightly on the gas pedal and rolled quietly down the road and out of sight. It had all happened so quickly. Riding down the road slowly for a few minutes, he braked to a very careful halt, got out and took a long appraising look at the big mobile powerhouse he had just acquired. Then straightening up, he snapped to attention and smartly tossed a crisp salute in the direction of the recently departed Ju 88s.

"My compliments to your Luftwaffe, Sirs," he sang out. "Your supply system beats the 90th's cold, and there's no paperwork." He was laughing uproariously as he slid back into the seat of FUZZY FOCUS and asked himself,

"But what do I REALLY tell the Old Man?"

The End

HOW I GOT TO TENT 39 AND BACK

By Arthur C Barkley 827 Sq



Replacing a fuel cell in Broad Abroad. From left: Cpl Art Barkley, S/Sgt Jessie Hogan, and Cpl Edgar M Livingston.

I took my basic training at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi, then on to the Army Air Force Base, Salt Lake City, Utah. They told me they were assigning me to the Signal Corp. I informed them I had been deferred to attend Elmira Aviation Ground School where I earned my A&E license. So I took a test and was classified Engine Mechanic 747.

The Army Air Force sent me direct to Harvard, Nebraska, to join the 484th Bomb Group for combat training and overseas service.

Prior to service, I attended Elmira Aviation Ground School and worked for the Elmira Area Soaring Corporation, Army Air Corps Detachment, Elmira, New York. The corporation had contracted to train glider pilots. The planes we used for towing were Stinson L-1s and BT-13s.

We used Schweizer gliders, German sail planes, Aeronca gliders. In the fall of 1942 the operation was moved south to Bates Field, Mobile, Alabama, so flying could continue in winter. When the soaring contract ended I went to work for Waterman Airlines on detached duty at the Brookly Field Army Air Field, Mobile, Alabama. We prepared B-24s and B-17s for service in the

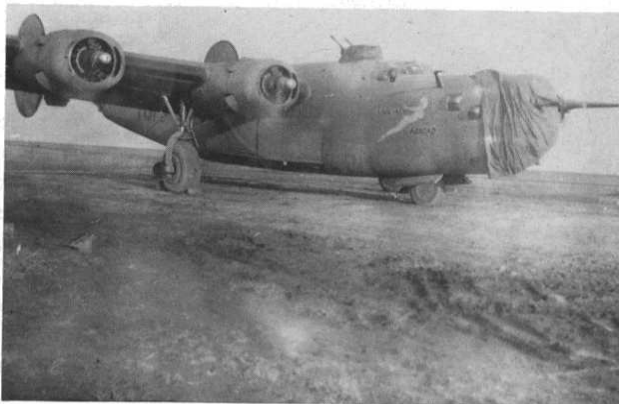
Pacific Theater.

Winter in Harvard, Nebraska was no picnic. We had to work in sub-zero weather to keep the planes flying, but we did survive, and all the shots in the arm too. The ground echelon left Harvard about March 7, 1944, for Camp Patrick Henry, Norfolk, Virginia, for embarkment on the SS Gideon Wells a Liberty ship converted to carry troops.

The Gideon Wells weighed anchor on March 24, and it was goodbye to the good old USA. We joined a convoy where our

speed was reduced to the slowest ship, about 7 knots. After crossing the Atlantic and entering the Mediterranean off the coast of Algiers, one moonlit night the German Air Force gave us a welcoming visit. The ship's gun crews were accurate and shot down a couple of planes, before the attackers left. It took 28 days to reach the Adriatic Coast of Italy. Because of suspected air activity by the Germans instead of docking at Bari, we had to sneak into Brindisi, Italy.

We were shipped to Bari via Italian rail that was something out of a silent movie. The cars were hooked together like log chains and had square wheels. It was a long bumpy



Broad Abroad undergoing pre-flight engine run up. Note the nose turret cover is still in place.

ride and cold as hell.

Trucks took us from Bari to the farm at Torretta and on to tent 39. At first six men were assigned to a tent that was supposed to hold only 4. Our first job after raising the tent was to dig slit trenches. In ten days the planes and flight crews arrived, and the ground crews had the planes ready to fly their first combat mission on April 29, 1944. To get parts and tires, Master/Sgt Ray Juhl, Line Chief had the ground crews do some moonlight-

ing to obtain certain items. The first operation on the planes was to remove the deicer boots and other non essential parts to increase bomb load.

At first I was assigned to the crew on "War Weary". Later I transferred to to the Jessie Hogan crew on #700 "Abroad Abroad", a 827 squadron Mickey Ship (radar bombing equipped).

Tent 39 members were; Frank Simmons, Jay Lowry, Chuck Marrs, and Art Barkley. As the summer wore on, tent 39 put in a wood floor, side walls, and a stove. Cold weather came with snow, yes, snow the first of the year January 1945.

Franks Simmons told the 39 crew how he ran a movie house in his home town. He thought the 39 crew ought to develop films and print pictures. The thought interested me, Jan, and Chuck. I got on the horn and wrote to my mother for a developing tank and chemicals. In time we had the necessary equipment, Frank Simmons built a printer. Tent 39 was now a photo shop. One night we would develop 10 rolls of film, hang them up to dry in a loop around the center tent pole. A couple of days later, we would print them. Printing paper was one item we had to get here or from the States. But through channels we obtained it. Tent 39 developed a lot of film for flying crews.

I wish I could remember the Navigator or Bombardier who had his crew buzz his grandparents home in Sicily. I took pictures out through the nose turret, which I developed and printed for the crew members. Does anyone remember?

The 484th ended operations April 30, 1945. The war in Europe ended. We were all thinking about going home, but not for the ground crews of the 827 squadron. We were assigned to the clean-up crew, and were probably the last crew to fly out of Torretta.

The ground echelon 827th personnel were assigned to the 1252nd North Africa Division, ATC. We were transported by air to Casablanca, Camp DuShane. I was assigned to the ATC base at Oran, Algeria. At this base we did maintenance work on all C-47s in the North Africa Division. There were three shifts around the clock.

The war came to an end on August 8, 1945. We were sent back to Casablanca to join all of the high point men. Now the long wait for a ship to take us back home. September and October went by. We did odd jobs. I worked at Casablanca Air Base servicing C-47s and did my share of KP too. Chuck Marrs and myself spent many days touring around Casablanca.

At last November 6, 1945, the SS Frederick Lykes arrived. We departed with a 1200 man overload. The trip back took 16 days.

The End



827 Squadron Area looking west from the officers tent area. Photo was taken after VJ day as the tent tops have already been removed.



The responsibility of this clean-up crew was to restore the land in the manner in which it was found prior to to use by the 484th Bomb Group. They are from left: Richard Warrington, Charles Marrs, James Lowry, Art Aldene, Edgar Livingston, and James A Hart

Radar Bombing

By Thomas Carroll

The new crew position of radar operator combined some of the duties of the navigator and of the bombardier with that of the radar operator. For the purposes of this report he will be referred to as the radar navigator

After completing B-17 phase training at Dyersburg, Tennessee in late December 1943 our provisional group traveled to the 7th processing Unit at Kearny, Nebraska to pick up B-17s for transfer to the United Kingdom. After briefing, but before departure, our crew was one of those broken out of this group for transfer to the 1st AF-I Bomb Commist SAG Group, 4th Squadron at Langley field Virginia. This was a search and attack squadron

There the navigators received ground and flight training in radar navigation and bombing, using H2X radar. The radar scope and operational equipment were located behind the bomb bay across from the radio operator (B-17).

The ball turret was replaced by the radar dome and could be raised and lowered as necessary. The operational scope was curtailed off for darkness to ease the reading of the scope.

The navigators were trained in blind radar bombing tactics and were schooled in operation and adjustment and light maintenance of the H2X radar equipment. Training flights involved radar navigation to industrial and other selected targets, simulated radar bomb runs and simulated radar bomb drops. Radar was a great navigational tool and a reasonably accurate bombing tool when weather or other conditions rendered use of the Norden visual bombing impossible. On training missions the radar navigators coordinated by intercom with the pilot and bombardier and on combat missions they also coordinated with the lead navigator in arriving at the initial point. With this equipment the Radar Navigator could assist the lead Bombardier in finding the primary target. When the radar navigator was well trained and his equipment was working properly the need to bomb alternate targets was greatly reduced, because the odds were greatly increased

On completion of radar training eight crews with eight radar B-17s, extra radar parts, some support personnel, departed Langley Field on February 25, 1944 For Morrison Field, Florida, and then on down the Southern route across to Daker and up to Tunis and over the Mediterranean to a B-24 base north of Taranto, the home of the 47th Wing, 376th and 515th Bomb Groups. They arrived March 11, 1944.

The radar navigators remained here with their special radar B-17s. The rest of the B-17 crews continued on to join the B-17 Wing north of Foggia.

Practice missions were flown from this B-24 base making radar bomb runs and drops on exposed hulks of sunken vessels in the Adriatic. These were excellent radar targets because of the water/metal contrast. These bombing runs were excellent, but locals then fishing fairly near the sunken hulks may have acquired a few more grey hairs.

On combat missions the Radar B-17s were originally on detached service to the B-17 groups. Initially a Skeleton B-17 crew would be flown to the B-24 field to fly the Radar B-17 back to

their base the evening before a scheduled combat mission. It would pot luck for the transient radar operator in finding a bed. Then following early briefing, the combat mission, debriefing and the flight back to the B-24 base. Later these radar B-17s and their radar operators were permanently transferred to B-17 groups near Foggia. The make up of a pathfinder lead crew usually varied from mission to mission, so the radar operator had to adjust to new pilots, lead navigators, and lead bombardiers rapidly.

My first combat mission and to the best of my knowledge one of the first combat use of radar equipped B-17s out of Italy was March 30, 1944 to Sofia ,Bulgaria. The target was clear and there were no unusual navigational problems. The lead navigator and bombardier were considerate and friendly. The radar equipment was not of any significant importance on this mission. The veterans told me it was a milk run.

The next visit to the B-17 base last longer. The B-17s hit Budapest on April 3, Bucharest on April 4, and Ploesti on April 5. There was more weather and could coverage on these missions. The lead navigators checked out my radar positions against there calculations in reaching the IP. There was more coordination with the visual lead bombardiers on these three bomb runs, but all drops were eventually made by the Norden bombardier. On the Ploesti bomb run the cloud coverage was very heavy and the lead bombardier called me on and off a couple of times, but finally had enough visibility to use the Norden with very good results. The B-17s were off the target and on the way home when the black oil smoke finally broke through the cloud cover.

On April 9, 1944 the radar B-17s and radar navigators were transferred to the B-17 groups near Foggia. The remainder of my combat missions were the the 414th Bomb Squadron, 97th Bomb Group located north of Foggia There several of us radar navigators shared a tent. If I recall correctly some of them also flew on combat missions with B-24 groups stationed near Cerignola.

My closest friend John F S Adams, now deceased went down on a mission to Ploesti and was a POW until liberated. Other radar navigators also participated in solo plane night missions in foul weather penetrating deep into enemy territory, triggering their radar defenses, alerting their interceptors, and generally wearing them down and exhausting their defensive resources.

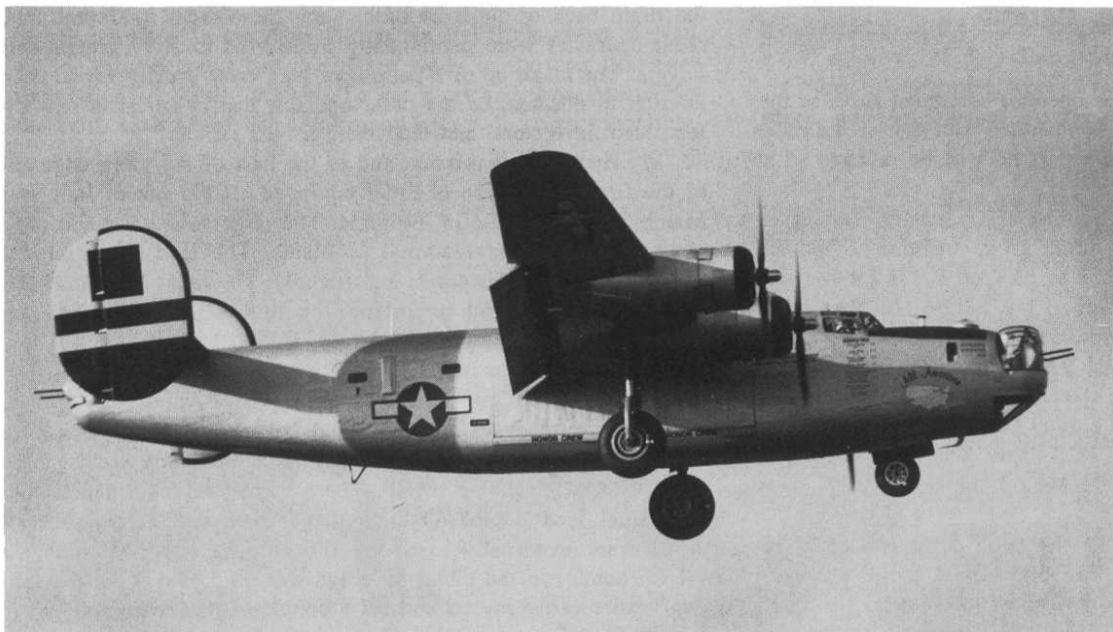
Following long distance combat missions on April 12 and 15, our B-17 group went to Wiener-Neustadt on April 23, 1944. Other 15th AF bombers hit Bad Voslau and Schwechat on that date.

On the bomb run two engines were lost to flak and could not be feathered. Our Colonel pilot held the plane on the run and the bombardier made a visual drop. The formation stayed with him and he skillfully maneuvered us back to the vicinity of Zagreb, Yugoslavia, where most of us joined the Caterpillar Club.

The partisans and a British Mission officer assisted us most generously and various relays of Partisans eventually guided us and the remnants of a B-24 crew that went down also to a British Mission in southern Yugoslavia. There was a most interesting and educational walking tour of Yugoslavia with lots of memorable events along the way. The Good Lord was taking care of us. A C-47 crew bringing supplies at night to this British Mission took back to Italy our group and wounded Partisans for hospitalization in Bari on May 16, 1944. At that time this was a ticket back to the States.

The End

MAIL CALL



The completely rebuilt B-24-J "All America." John Aunapu photo

Dear Bud:

I am enclosing a copy of a report that was submitted for a B-24 publication.

It was a cold morning as we climbed aboard our B-24 on December 18, 1944, for our mission to Blechhammer, Germany. This was our eighth bombing mission with the 825th squadron, 484th Bomb Group (H) Cerignola, (Torretta), Italy. As we left the IP on the bomb run, flak was moderate, our ship sustaining four holes in the bomb bay and flight deck. The #1 engine was hit and was feathered quickly. We continued the bomb run to the target. As we left the target area, we were unable to maintain air speed to keep up with the rest of the group. We proceeded to fly to Yugoslavia, on our way home. We contacted "Big Fence," for a fix of our location and identified to them our problem. They directed us to the Island of Vis, off the Yugoslavian coast. Vis had a runway of 5000 feet and we were told that if you don't touch down in the first 500 feet, the aircraft would probably not be able to slow down, and fall off the end of the runway to fall into the sea 500 feet below.

We were now flying at 15,000 feet when the choices were given to us: land at Vis, ditch in the Adriatic Sea, or crash land somewhere in Italy. All of the choices were not the best. After consulting with each of the crew members, we decided to "hang a sky hook," and just float across the sea to Italy. It felt as though we were actually hanging in the sky, as we throttled back our three engines. We commenced some fuel transfer from the #1 engine tanks. We all prayed. As a result, we all became more confi-

dent that we would make it across. Inter-com conversations from each of the crew stations, and talking to each other, kept up our spirits.

It was a cloudless sky that afternoon and as we headed home toward Italy, we could see the coast line of Italy about half way across. We contacted "Big Fence," again giving them our decision to try and make it to Italy. They directed us to the closest airfield near Manfredonia, a place on the spur of the Italian boot.

We contacted "darn thing tower" the B-17 base. We told them our problem, flying on three engines and getting low on fuel, and requested clearance to land. The tower operator requested our ETA for landing.

We stated approximately 30 minutes. The tower answered back, "You had better hurry since the B-17 group was due to be landing at this air-base about the same time. We replied "Roger."

The navigator and bombardier were busy on their charts trying to locate the field. Co-pilot Bob Sheldon was given controls of the ship since I was busy with the engineer Sgt Ken Querry as to the management of the fuel and transferring of fuel to each of the remaining engines, while receiving instructions from the navigator, Tracy Denninger and bombardier, Hatfield, as the heading for final approach to this strange field. The trim tabs had been set for over control required for three engine flying.

The aircraft was re-trimmed for final approach to the field. The tower gave us wind direction from the east. I replied that we would be making a "down wind," landing to the west, since we did not have sufficient fuel to make a normal traffic pattern. The tower responded "Roger," clear to land.

As co-pilot, Sheldon lowered the landing gear and flaps, the outboard engine on the port side failed! I hit the feather button immediately. We were now on two engines on final approach. I was helping the co-pilot with the rudder pedals to keep the aircraft lined up with the runway. As he pulled back on the wheel, just before touch down, the inboard engine quit because of lack of fuel. I hit the feather button for #3 engine. Sheldon landed the aircraft within the first 500 feet of the runway. It was a gentle smooth landing. I yelled "let the aircraft roll, no brakes!" knowing that with only one engine operating, we could not taxi or make it to the end of the runway. Finally at about 3/4 down the end of the runway, with the aircraft slowing down, and because of the angle of the wings, the fuel supplying the remaining engine ran out, starving the engine. There must have been some conversation from

the tower to us, we did not monitor the radio conversations of the B-17 pilots, but I am certain they were very disturbed, especially being inconvenienced by a broken down B-24 stuck on their runway.

Finally a tow truck came out to tow our aircraft off the runway and on to a hardstand. We left the aircraft, went to debriefing and retired quietly to some quarters for rest and food. The next day I requested the ground crew to measure the amount of fuel remaining in the tanks. The report came back that all were empty, except the center fuel tank that had 5 gallons remaining.

We were most grateful that we had been able to find a landing strip and to land and survive. No one at this base knew of our ordeal. We were re-fueled and took off for our field near Torretta, about a half hour's flying time away.

When we got home there were guards posted at each of our tents, since the squadron officer must have assumed that we had been lost in combat.

What a great day! We celebrated our return by going to the chapel and praying, giving thanks for the Lord having watched over us one more time.

The B-24 with its fuel system transfer saved our lives. We had practiced and trained many times for the procedure of fuel transfer. The training on the fuel transfer system saved our lives.

Our crew always had confidence in the aircraft, confidence in each other to perform each of our duties, and especially in this situation, to Sgt Querry, the engineer, for his skill in transferring and balancing the fuel from one tank to another.

Appreciation goes to bombardier Hatfield and the navigator Denninger for their skillful navigation to get us to "Darn Thing" landing strip, and to Bob Sheldon for his skill in piloting our aircraft to a safe landing.

We all completed 33 missions. The name of the aircraft ironically was "Pot Luck," a B-24 G. Captain Reed Sprinkel flew Able One on six of his missions

"The flight experience took me back 46 years when I flew as a pilot on the aircraft. Tracy Denninger, my navigator, joined me on this flight. I relived flying in formation, turning on to the IP and 'bombs away' over our targets. Yes! I think I saw a few ME-109s coming in 12 o'clock high."

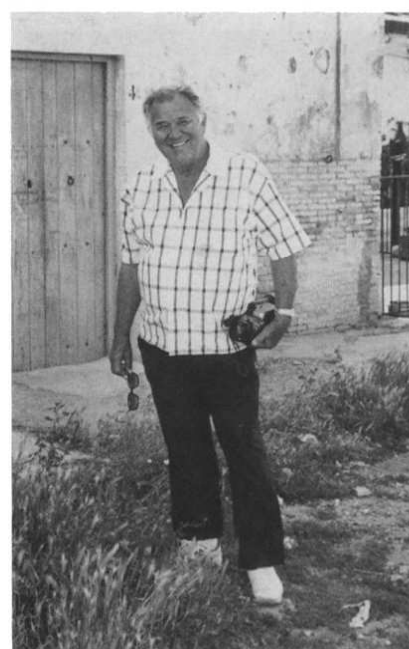


This photo taken at Torretta may be the headquarters area of the 484th

In a recent letter Reed Sprinkel wrote the following:

I experienced a thrilling experience on Sunday March 18, 1990. I piloted the B-24J "All American" for 30 minutes during a flight from Ft Lauderdale International Airport to Kissimmee Airport, Florida.

The flight experience took me back 46 years when I flew as a pilot on the aircraft. Tracy Denninger, my navigator, joined me



on this flight. I relived flying in formation, turning on to the IP and 'bombs away' over our targets. Yes! I think I saw a few ME-109s coming in 12 o'clock high.

Rita and I visited Torretta field last year. It was a great experience to walk around the old buildings and to locate the mess hall, officers mess, headquarters staff offices, and the building where the church services were held, and the briefing room. Of course, all of our tents with tuff block walls are gone as well as the PSP runway and hardstands. The valley to the north,

where we would dip down into to gain airspeed is now a lake.

With best wishes,
Reed Sprinkel , 825 sq

Coconut Creek, Florida

Dear Bud.

The enclosed photos were taken some time ago when the B-24 "All American" was at a local airport. You will note, in Photo 1, the command pilot is none other than our own Reed Sprinkel of the 825 squadron. Photo 2 is a shot of me in my old nose turret.

Best Regards.

Adolph Marcus 824 Sq



Photo 1



Photo 2 Back in my old nose turret

Dear Friend Bud;

I want to express my gratitude and extend my thanks for myself and others involved for the efforts and organizing you have done to put together the 461st & 484th Association.

You formed a group of 49th Wing people that certainly has been appreciated. The organization has brought together a lot of people for reunions and friendship.

With the organization of the separate 461st organization, I found a group I could more associate with since that was the people I flew with and was acquainted with.

Because I can't belong to all the associations involved, I plan to continue with the 461st and drop my membership in the 461st & 484th.

Because of the great success of the 461st Association, it seems the natural thing to do would be to form a 484th only group and have separate organizations for each group.

Thanks again for your efforts.

Best regards,

Ted Ahlberg 766 Sq.

Editors Note: Ted Ahlberg was dropped from the membership rolls on May 10, 1990.



Port Jervis, NY

Dear Bud:

I read with great interest Joe Hebert's letter in Flyer #18 regarding the amulets he traded his undershirts for, in Dakar, French West Africa, now Senegal. We too flew our new B24H, (Puss in Boots #64) to Italy via Lincoln, Nebraska; to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach; Florida, Waller Field, Trinidad; Belem, Brazil; Fortaleza, Brazil; and across the Atlantic to Daker.

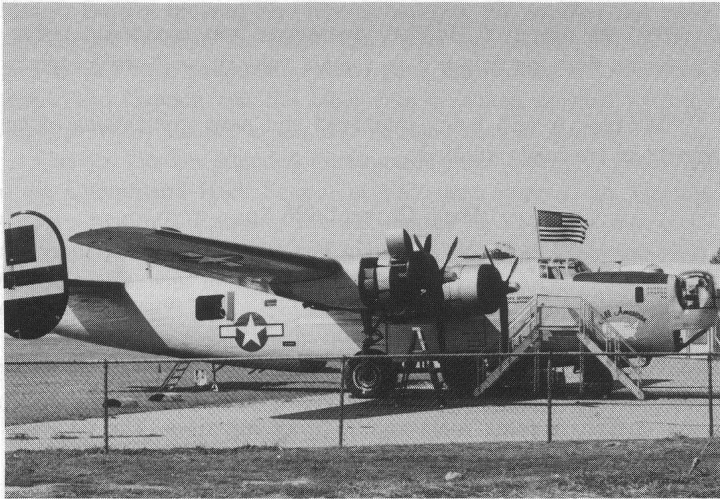
Our radio operator, Al Petrillo had a somewhat similar experience. He traded a couple of undershirts to a very tall Senegalese civilian for a native made hunting knife with a very colorful leather sheath. The handle of the knife was bound in bright colored leather. We were leaving the next day for Marrakech, Morocco, Al put the knife in a barracks bag with his laundry, and put the bag in the luggage racks in the bomb bay.

A few days later, after flying from Marrakech to Djedeida, Tunisia, we unloaded some of our luggage and moved into tents as we were to fly practice missions from there for two weeks. When Petrillo opened his barracks bag in the tent, the most awful stench came out. Apparently, the knife handle and the sheath had been made from untanned green hides. I don't recall how Al disposed of the knife. It was never seen again.

The Berlin Airlift article brought memories of our pilot, Lt Robert R Nichols who stayed in the service and flew in the Berlin Airlift. Later on, he flew transport aircraft, attaining the rank of Major. He was killed in a plane crash in Greenland in 1956.

Also am enclosing a photo of the B-24J "All American" which appeared at the Orange County Airport, Montgomery, NY.

This airplane which was mentioned in Torretta Flyer #15 is billed as the only B-24J now on flying status anywhere in the



world. The plane is beautifully restored inside and out. There are four 500 pound bombs (empty) in the bomb bay. All of the turrets have complete armaments. There is even a bomb sight in the nose compartment. Not being a bombardier, I can't say whether or not it's a Norden. The only disappointment was that they kept my ball turret retracted.

I thought this might be of interest to the membership.

Sincerely,
John Hicks 826 Sq.

Santa Maria, California
Dear Bud:

You asked in the Torretta Flyer for names of additional members of the 484th and 461st BG. A name that I haven't seen or heard so far is Don Reiter.

Sgt Reiter joined John Roedel's crew #76, 827 squadron, about half way through their 50 missions. He was a radio maintenance man who decided that the only way he was going to get home before the war was over was to get on a flight crew and get 50 missions credit. So he volunteered to be a ball turret gunner, (that is real desperation). The original crew members eventually rotated back to the ZI (Zone of Interior) and left him to finish up on his own.

I looked him up as I passed through San Francisco in 1948. He was in the grocery business at the time and we discussed the possibilities of getting a commission in the Air Force.

The next time we met was at Stead AFB, Reno, Nevada, about 1952. I was a weather officer and he was a Strategic Air Command pilot going through the SAC survival course there.

We met again, going in different directions, at Goose Bay, Labrador. He was a Major and crew commander of a B-47.

After that I think I gave him a weather briefing at Greenham Common, AFB in England. Then we lost contact.

I believe he was from Oakland, California.

Regards as always
Fred M Roessler, 827 Sq

Moscow, Ohio
Dear Bud:

I was crew chief on "Miss Fire" until I took over a "Mickey Ship." I made some of the supply runs to Lyon, France, also. Included with this letter are some clippings from here and there that might be of interest to the members. Hope to see you all in Nashville.

From the Stars & Stripes Liberators Turned Into Transports

This is another of those "now it can be told stories." It concerns the big bellied Liberators of the 15th Air Force, the Seventh Army, the Tactical Airforce, and the critical days of September 10-October 5, 1944 when the Seventh, and the fighter-bombers were almost stopped in Southern France for want of aviation fuel, oil, ammunition and bombs.

The Seventh Army was plunging up the Rhone Valley under direct ground support of the Tactical Air Force and taking everything in stride. The situation was promising.

Then came the problem of supplies for the fighter bombers, There were plenty of supplies in the ships laying off the wrecked port of Marseilles and there were even considerable stocks on the docks. But to unload and transport them over the cratered roads leading from Marseilles would take days to reach the emergency airfields in and near Lyons, the temporary supply center for the fighters, and time was figured in hours and minutes.

So they consulted Major-General Twining who in turn called on Colonel William L Lee, the Wing Commanding Officer. He ordered the heavy bombers of the 49th Wing to be made ready immediately to run the stores to France.

On September 10, the first formation of Liberators stripped of turrets and turret guns took off from home fields to Southern France, loaded with supplies. They landed at the Lyons-Bron airfield. Officers, men and local help unloaded the aircraft. Portable pumps were rigged to the Liberator's big gas tanks and poured into 50 gallon drums. Just enough fuel was left on board for the Libs to fly back to their base. As the fuel drums were being filled, 50 caliber ammunition and 500 pound bombs were being unloaded to be rushed to fighter refuelling points on the field, and the fighters took off to continue the support of the Seventh Army, then well past Lyons.

All in all, between September 10, and October 2, 1944 the Liberators flew 704 unescorted sorties, carrying 1,000,000 rounds of ammunition for the Tactical Airforce.

"MICKEY"

Makes Bad-Weather Raids a Cinch for 15th AAF Bombardiers.
By Don Williams Stars and Stripes staff writer.

In a Flying Fort over Germany, November 22, 1944. flak bursts punctured the cloud ceiling below. Clusters of 500 pound bombs hurtled from the open bays and were swallowed up in the dense swirling mass. The bombers wheeled and headed for home.

The communique probably would read; "Heavy bombers of the 15th Air Force attacked targets in Germany and Austria to-day. Intense flak was encountered at some of the targets. Bombs were dropped by instruments, but the results could not be observed because of the heavy cloud formations.

What the communique did not say was that the large scale attack in the overcast weather over Austria and Germany would have been impossible without the aid of "Mickey," the code name for the navigational and target sighting radar device that has been one of the most hush hush of the allied secret weapons of this war.

"Mickey" employs radio (radar) waves to literally stitch a path through the clouds and along the sea and ground to the target and then to cut a hole in the overcast or smoke screen over the objective so that the radar operator sees through the medium of radar, (High frequency radio waves bounced off the ground objective and returned to the aircraft. The time delay is plotted and shown on a ground return pattern that is painted on an oscilloscope tube by a rotating scan line.)

No longer need the Flying Forts and Liberators sweat out a clear day or moonlit night to go winging over the Reich and unload their high explosives.

As a matter of fact the development of "Mickey" and its employment in so called "pathfinder" missions had the heavy bombers personnel of the 15th Air Force more or less broken into competitive teams, with the pathfinder group hopefully looking for bad weather and the others sweating out the good days. This friendly competition, however bodes ill for Adolph Hitler and his Nazi satellites for it means that the Reich is subject to heavy bombing attack by day and night in fair or stormy weather. All that is required is that there is enough visibility at the home base to take off and land.

"Mickey" was put through its paces in a simulated bombing mission over southern Italy recently by Capt. Stan Beerli of Portland, Oregon, a pioneer in the use and development of this equipment in the 15th Air Force. He is also a 54 mission flyer, 44 of which have been in "Mickey" ships.

With Capt. Charles McCrary of Brownstown, Indiana, at the controls, the plane was flown back and forth below cloud level and the terrain observed through the oscilloscope. Then Capt McCrary lifted the Fort above the cloud level and traversed the same course, and the observers again peered through the Mickey screen. The images, projected onto a fluorescent dial, resembled a topographic relief map and even to an untrained observer appeared identical with those previously seen.

Capt Beerli explained that the frequency of the radar waves sent by the transmitter, unaffected by the cloud layers, bounce back from the ground and produce varying intensities of light on the screen that can be read by a trained operator.

The Fort then made a simulated bombing run on an a friendly oil refinery as the target with Capt Beerli directing the bombardier, Major Everett C Davis of Eastland, Texas, by use of the interphone as to the operation of the bomb sight, and automatic bomb release. If the bombs actually had been dropped in accordance with this synchronized technique developed by the AAF, the oil refinery would have been a dead duck in the opinion of the observers looking through the camera well.

"Mickey" was first used by the 15th Air Force for navigation on March 20, 1944, and for bombing purposes in the April 15 raid on Ploesti. Regular use of the pathfinder technique got underway in June, 1944 and "Mickey" is given credit by the 15th AAF officers for much of the success in the battle of Ploesti. Late in

October, the scope of "Mickey operations was broadened when pathfinder ships participated in a night raid on an Austrian target.

"Mickey" is still being improved and new applications of its principals are being studied.

Hank Cushard 826 Sq.



Portsmouth, Virginia

Dear Bud:

I am enclosing some memorabilia from my files. The enclosed newspaper clipping might add some light on the crash into Huntington Lake in the winter of 1943. Capt Darden was my squadron commander and pilot at this time. I missed this flight because I had gone on a flight as engineer with a Capt Dickinson to Sacramento to pick up some aircraft tires.

It was rather ironic that I was on his crew at Wendover Field, Utah. When he came down the road in a command car, he stopped and asked my name and if I was from Portsmouth, Virginia. I will never know why, because I had never seen him nor known him before. Strangely, I knew his father very well and later worked with his sister in the police department.

Following is the text of the clipping from a Portsmouth, Virginia, newspaper:

Air Captain's Body Found After 1943 Crash

The body of Capt. William H Darden USAF, son of Mr & Mrs William B Darden of Grove Park, Virginia, who lost his life in the crash of a B-24 into Huntington Lake, south central California December 6, 1943, has been recovered.

Parents of the long-lost airman were notified by telegram received late yesterday from the post commander, Army Air Force, Presidio, San Francisco, California.

The father immediately wired the Department of Defense to send the remains to the Snelling Funeral Home where rites will be held at a time to be announced.

Five members of the bomber's crew lost their lives beside Captain Darden. The scene of the crash was at an altitude of 12,500 feet atop a long mountain. Huntington Lake, 10 miles long and averaging about a mile wide, occupies a rough valley in the mountain range. The lake is almost perpetually frozen over, which has made recovery of the six bodies a 12 year task for the Army.

According to information received by Captain Darden's parents at the time of the crash, his plane had gone out on a routine flight from Hammer Field Monday December 5, 1943 with other ships of his squadron.

Upon return to base, one plane was missing and Captain Darden ordered the other planes to land and returned with his own search for the missing plane.

The search required a flight into the Huntington Lake depression, which is surrounded by high peaks, with the plane near the surface. Then motor trouble developed and it was impossible for

the big bomber to climb the high rim.

Captain Darden ordered his crew to bail out, the co-pilot and radio man slipped through the bomb bay doors and parachuted to safety. The two men found afterward, gave an account of what happened. The Captain and the other five crewmen crashed with the plane, probably unable to get free in rapid loss of altitude.

Captain Darden attended Portsmouth public schools, graduated at the Churchland High School in 1936 and entered the Virginia Military Institute. Entering the air service in 1940, he was commissioned a first lieutenant and given his wings at Maxwell Field, Alabama. He was immediately assigned to active service in the Army Air Force.

Besides his parents, he is survived by two sisters, Mrs Anne Odom of Arlington, Virginia, and Mrs Otis E Mason of Portsmouth, Virginia

End of story.

Editors note: The story of Capt Darden's crash was reported in Torretta Flyer No #11 Winter 84 edition page 23. In that story the crew members who died in the crash besides Capt. Darden were: Samuel J Schlosser-(N), Franklin C Nyuswonger-(E), Richard Spangler-(G), Donald V Vander Plasch-(G), and Richard E Mayo-(G).

Enclosed is my crew photo



Crew photo of Douglas L Robertson 766 squadron crew #48 photo taken December 17, 1983. They are from left standing: Merlin Thomas-(E), J Piat-(P) who was deceased before deployment overseas. He was replaced by Douglas L Robertson. Paul R Smith-(C/P), James C Laulis (Deceased)-(N), and James Jones-(B), Kneeling from left: Kenneth Gray-(E), Bernard Berry-(E), Donald B Bryant-(R/O), Frank C Manna-(G), and James V Scott-(G). Crew's aircraft was #436 " Down 'n Go."

Richard L Berry 766 sq



Huntington, NY
Mr Bud Markel

Your letter inviting me to join the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association was most welcome and I plan to attend the reunion in Nashville.

I was a Radar/Bombardier on Vincent G DeMaio's crew, 824 squadron. and flew on the last mission when the war ended.

I elected to go through pilot training in grade as a 1st Lt after the war, finishing up at Williams AFB, Arizona in 1948, as a P-51 pilot. I returned to civilian life, but still continued flying with the Air National Guard for 5 years. Your letter sent me to the attic to locate some old papers which had been all but forgotten. This search revived old memories of service in Italy, as they were a big part of my early life.

Sincerely,
John E Tynan 824 Sq.



Tipton, Iowa
Dear Bud

I have been trying to locate the surviving members of my brother's bomber crew. He and three other enlisted men of the crew died very tragically in a train wreck near Terre Haute, Indiana, September 14, 1944. The crew had completed their missions and had returned home for leave. The accident occurred when they were returning to duty to a distribution center for reprocessing. At the time of the accident I was serving aboard a ship as a gunner's mate, United States Coast Guard in the South Pacific and wasn't able to attend the funeral. My brother's name was Arthur D Fitch, he was the engineer on Charles E Nash's crew, 826 squadron. The last I heard Lt Nash was living in San Diego. I know it will bring up old wounds, but being able to talk to some of the guys who knew Art will give me some comfort.

Sincerely,
Forrest D Fitch

Editor Note: Charles W Kowalski, the ball gunner, is a member of the association and lives in Henderson, Nevada. Readers who may know of the other crew members, as shown in the accompanying photograph are urged to contact the editor.



Crew photo of Charles E Nash 826 Squadron. From left, top row standing: Wallace F Doefler (D) -Radio Operator, Andrew Lopez-N/G, Arthur D Fitch (D)-Engineer, Charles W Kowalski-B/G, Robert C Hecht (D)-E, and Robert Pardue (D)-G. Bottom row kneeling from left: Charles E Nash-P, John Fenick-C/P, L Ponick-N, and Emil Maniak-(B).

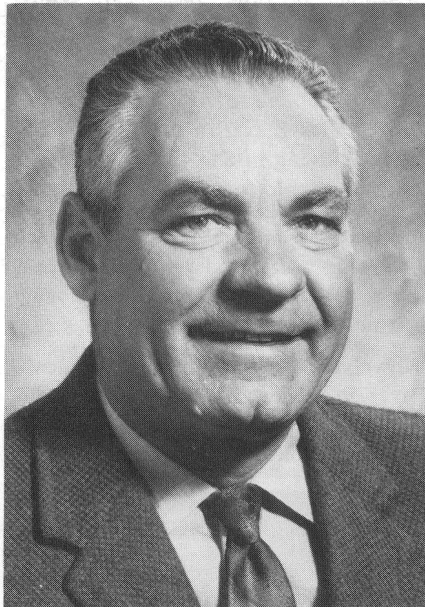
The Last Mission

Meyer Brownstein , 764 Sq. of Burbank, California died February 6, 1990. He leaves his wife, Marjorie, two sons; Don, and Richard A Brownstein; two brothers Max, and Abe Brownstein, and four grandchildren, Meyer attended many of the Association's reunions, Williamsburg 1983, Orlando 1984, and San Antonio 1986. He enjoyed the company of his wartime buddies at the reunions.

He was part of the ground echelon, specifically aircraft maintenance, and was mostly assigned to ship #13.

Albert "AL" C Hitzing, 824 sq , 72 years 484th Bomb Group has succumbed to cancer. He died May 10, 1990. He is survived by his wife Holly Hitzing, four brothers, and and five sisters.

Al was a well known Florida businessman who took a small grocery store in North Fort Myers and built it into a thriving financial network. A native of Montana, he was raised in Jacksonville. After a tour of duty with the 824 squadron, 484th Bomb Group in Italy during World War II as a B-24 bomber pilot, Hitzing settled in North Fort Myers with his wife Holly.



They bought the old "Town Hall" nightclub a 3500 square foot wooden structure and opened "Al's" Grocery and Market" in 1947. The original store employed three people, the Hitzings and a butcher. But by the time Al retired in 1981, he had expanded his ventures

into a multimillion dollar a year empire employing hundreds in the grocery, hardware, and appliance retail businesses.

Al believed in promotions and set a new trend years ago with his outside tent sales; giving away 30 pounds of choice beef with the purchase of a major appliance; free breakfasts of hot cakes and sausages; marathon sales with stores remaining open around the clock.

" When we first opened 'Al's' we hired four people to man the phone lines," his wife Holly said recently. "He had hired boys to distribute handbills with the store's phone number and then we sat back and waited for the phone to ring. But it didn't. We really hadn't thought about it, but not that many people had telephones back then."

From then on one success led to other ones, and he was on his way to a successful business career.



Photo above Crew photo of Al Hitzing crew 824 Sq: Back row from left; Archie E Olson (R/O), Elmer O Adams (N/G), Edward J Kabasa (C/P), Cecil E Wilkinson (B/G), Albert C Hitzing (P), and Stanley G Zawaskas (B). Front row left to right: Albin A Rogers (E), James K Baker (E), Hilton C Bowen Jr (T/G), and William C Crawford (N).

Joe Horn 767 sq. 66 died suddenly March 26, 1990, of an apparent heart attack. He had helped his son Joey unload hay for the livestock that morning and talked about going to the Nashville reunion. Joe was an armorer and loaded bombs, and shared the same tent with Harold Miller. Joe attended the Williamsburg reunion in 1983. He was very close with his daughter, Tracy and give her away in marriage the previous September.

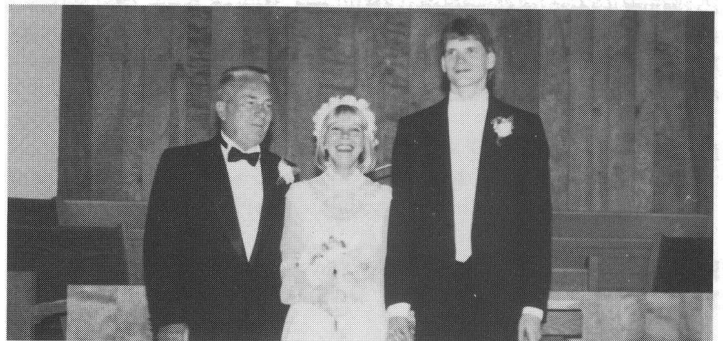


Photo (above) from left: Joe Horn, daughter Tracy and son-in-law Michael.

Ruben J Kaiser, 825 sq 73, of Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, passed away June 5, 1990, after a short illness. He was born Nov 29, 1916, and was married to Petronella B Wondra on May 25, 1946. He had lived all his life in Beaver Dam. He was employed at Monarch Range Co for many years, operated the Kaiser Shoe Store for 19 years, and later worked for Hillside Memorial Hospital until his retirement in 1981.

He was a veteran of World War II where he served as a First Lieutenant and pilot in the United States Army Air Corp's 484th Bomb Group, 825th Squadron.

Ruben, an active member of the Association, together with his wife, Petronella "Pete", attended many reunions and participated in the Association sponsored Italian tour in 1982, which included a tour of the Torretta airfield area and Cerignola.

He was reported missing in action on the December 11, 1944, bombing mission to Vienna, Austria. On the way to the target, engines one and three were running rough and had to be put in automatic rich. The I.P. was reached and owing to a sharp turn, the formation split up. After regrouping the formation went on to the alternate target Graz, Austria which was bombed successfully.



On the return to base, Lt Kaiser's ship remained with the formation for an hour, when owing to a fuel shortage they left the formation to take the shortest route home.

Finding that they did not have sufficient fuel to reach the Italian mainland, Lt Kaiser headed for the Island of Vis where there was an emergency landing strip. Over Yugoslavia, number three engine started cutting out due to fluctuating fuel pressure. At 11,000 feet all four engines cut out over the Benkovac area (44 03N 15 36E) owing to lack of fuel.

Lt Kaiser saw what appeared to be a piece of smooth white terrain, so they circled preparing to land. At 3300 feet he was able to see that the ground was not level, and ordered the crew to bail out. Seven of the crew bailed out, but Cpl Calvin Teel, the radio operator, had left his chute back in the waist position and did not have time to fetch it. Lt Kaiser and the co pilot Chester Jones elected to stay with him in the plane to land it. The hydraulic system being out due to loss of electrical power, the pilot made a successful belly landing and no one was hurt. The plane landed two miles east of Benkovac and was wrecked.

After destroying secret equipment, the pilot, co-pilot, and the radio operator were at once contacted by the Partisans who escorted them to Partisan headquarters in Benkovac. The rest of the crew that had bailed out with the exception of the ball gunner were picked up and brought to Benkovac to join the three crash survivors. The ball gunner, Eddie Yurochko landed in a pit, and was instantly killed when his head was slammed against the rim of the pit.

At Partisan headquarters the crew was well treated. Partisans gave them continuous bulletins until all of the crew members arrived about two and a half hours later. The Partisans carried all of the crew's baggage and spare clothing to headquarters. After spending the night in the house of the mayor of Benkovac, where they were very well cared for, the remaining nine members of the crew attended the funeral of Cpl Yurochko at St. Greya Church in town. The Partisans gave Cpl Yurochko a funeral with full mili-

tary honors. Two Catholic priests officiated at the ceremony and he was then interred in the Catholic cemetery one mile west of town with the grave site marked.

On the afternoon of December 12, 1944, the crew was taken by bus over a narrow and treacherous road and over a temporary bridge to Zara, Yugoslavia. The party embarked at once on a British cruiser where they spent the nights of December 12 and 13. The next morning they were transferred to a British destroyer which landed them at Bari that afternoon. The crew were well treated on both ships despite the overcrowded conditions on the destroyer which was carrying escaping British POW's.

Besides Kaiser, Jones, and Teel, the rest of the crew consisted of Lane S Mckone (N), Charles E Laster (B), Charles F Elsesser, deceased 1972, (N/G), Ralph H Christensen (U/G), Albino Frigo (T/G), Charles J Shanklin (E), and Eddie Yurochko KIA.

Ruben Kaiser was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, a Mediterranean Theater Ribbon, and four battle stars.

Survivors include his wife, Pentronella Kaiser, one daughter: Julie Kaiser, three sons: Robert Kaiser, John Kaiser, and Ruben Kaiser, a granddaughter, and a sister Gertrude Kaiser.

Franklin C Moore, 824 supply, passed away January 16, 1990 after an extended illness. He leaves a wife, Ruby, three sons; Richard, Gary, and Thomas, who serves with the Air Force in Alaska, a ten year military career man. He leaves a daughter Anne. He was very proud of his children. T/Sgt Moore was named in the following document.



Meritorious Achievement Statement in Direct Support of Combat Operations March 24, 1945. Sergeant Moore has been section chief of the Air Corps and Technical supply of the 824 squadron from 9, April 1944, to the present time, 24 March 1945, in Italy. Prior to his arrival in the European theater and while still in the Zone of the Interior, (Continental United States) Sergeant Moore was called upon to combine various squadron material until such time as each individual squadron could function on its own. The plan was accepted and Sgt. Moore labored countless hours organizing equipment available to begin operations on arrival in a combat area. Once at his base, Sgt. Moore immediately began the never ending task of keeping his organization continually supplied with the multifarious requirements of a heavy bombardment squadron. Despite his foresighted planning, he was continually handicapped by lack of proper equipment, material and vital aircraft parts. With exceptional ingenuity and outstanding professional skill, Sgt Moore overcame these obstacles and on many occasions utilized salvaged material in order to get aircraft in the air for the following day's mission against the enemy. To assure a continual flow of supplies, he devised safer methods of storage and thus cut down on deterioration of valuable sensitive parts and equipment. In addition, he developed and installed a complete sorting unit to speed up the flow of vital parts, instituting this system in such a manner that even inexperienced personnel were able to quickly locate and provide necessary parts for proper aircraft maintenance. His never flagging energy and his untiring efforts on behalf of combat operations have been a continual source of inspiration to his subordinates and to combat crews.



B-24's of the 484th Bomb Group on their way north on a bombing mission probably in the Summer or Fall of 1944. Note that there are 24 flak bursts in this photo indicating many batteries are firing. Judging from the shape of the flak bursts the gun positions are ahead of the bombers at angles to the horizon of 18 to 60 degrees. King Beach photo 827 Sq.

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