

The Torretta Flyer

1992 Reunion Update

The Dearborn Inn located a few blocks from the Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, will host the Association's 1992 reunion. Dates are September 24 -27, 1992. Visits to the Yankee Air Force Museum and the Ford Family estate are planned. A Trolley service that takes visitors to many of Dearborn's attractions stops just outside the hotel front entrance. Windsor, Canada a short drive out of the city is another place to visit during your stay in Dearborn. Do plan to join us.

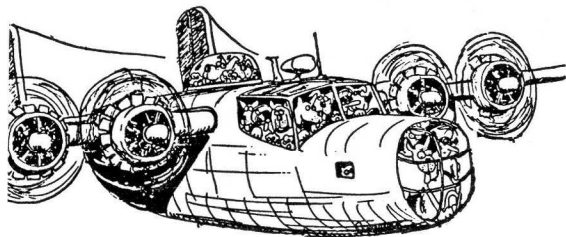
Torretta Flyer No# 22

Summer-Fall 1992

Redondo Beach, California



While waiting for our turn to land we saw a plane touch down hard on the runway. A 500 pound bomb, fully armed fell out of the bomb bay, bounced, and blew off the tail of the plane, causing it to roll end over end. 484th BG photo via Robert A Harrison , 825 sq.



After a tour of bombing missions to central Europe and the Balkans, some airmen turned their B-24 into a flying kennel. See "Coming in on a Wing and A Paw" by Robert F Pease , 827 squadron page 14.

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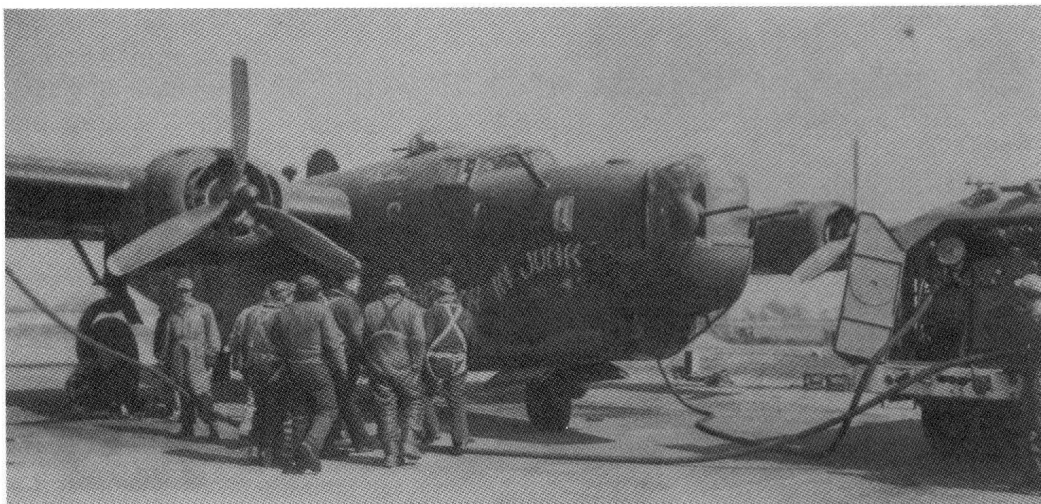
View From The Editors Desk

Books and Such

My sister asked me in a recent conversation what I would do if I were to win the lottery? "To Build a library" I responded quickly." She then went on to ask if I played the lottery often. Not at all was my reply. How do you expect to win she countered. I do have some schemes, but I won't tell you right now I said recovering quickly. She had caught me in a surprise psychological test, and I thought of books, a lot of books, or a library. Which brings me to the subject of books that this issue is built around.

You will note that several books are reviewed in this issue as well as the printing of a chapter from Roger Freeman's book, "The Experiences of War, The American Airmen in Europe" Arms and Armour Press, London, distributed in the USA by Sterling Publishing Co. New York. Published by permission of the author. Roger Freeman lives in England where he farms and writes books. He has produced many fine books that have become classics in the field of the Air War of World War II, such as "The Mighty Eighth War Manual," and "The Mighty Eighth War Diary." The latter book is a chronicle of all of the missions flown by the Eighth Air Force. If only such a work was available for the 15th Air Force. I am thinking of suggesting this to our British authors.

I purchased a paperback book, "Elusive Horizons" by Keith C Schuyler, Avon books, just recently reprinted. He describes flying a double mission on April 27, 1944. Roger Freeman's Eighth War Diary confirms double missions were flown on occa-



The flight crew of "Rhapsody In Junk" arrive for their second mission on April 28, 1944 as the fuel tanks are being topped off. Roger Freeman photo from the "Mighty Eighth War Diary."

sion when the days became longer as summer 1944 approached. This brings on the question, did any of the 15th Air Force bomber crews fly double missions?

Ian McLaughlan, another British author, was kind enough to send the Association a review copy of his work. "Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories," Patrick Stephens Limited Sparkford, England, available in the USA from Motorbooks International Osceola, Wisconsin.

The two daughters of one of our contributors, Felix Rameder, who wrote "My Mission List" which appeared in Torretta Flyer No 19- Summer Fall 1990, made a surprise visit to us last winter. They mentioned that their dad was looking for



Felix Rameder

some books, including the Desert Rats, by Michael Hill, which I had just purchased from Powell's books in Portland, Oregon, a short time before. I gave them my copy. Little did I know that it was out of print and hard to find. Unbeknownst to me, Felix on his own initiative wrote to Mike Hill asking him to send me a copy, if one was available. An autographed copy of the "The Desert Rats" arrived in due time, so I could review it for this issue. It is the story of the 98th's participation in the famous August 1, 1943 low level attack on the Ploesti Oil Refineries. At the time of the raid the group was based in North Africa, and assigned to the 12th Air Force. Later when the 15th Air Force was created, the 98th was moved to the 47th Wing 15th Air Force.

Real Heavy Bombers

Roy Nichols the engineer on Robert Fritt's crew, 825 squadron, tells about the transfer of B-24s from the 8th Air Force to the 484th, and what dogs they were.

They were much heavier than our

planes and flew awkwardly due to the extra weight of armored pilot seats, and flat armor around the flight deck. Thus when power was decreased, the momentum carried them forward, and the only speed control was to raise the nose, which sometimes was impossible due to the position in the formation in which it was assigned. We could have rammed the plane above, which would be fatal to both planes, and possibly others that were close by.

Quote from his Diary:

"One of these planes in our group flying the "Brownnose Position," was caught in a drift on the bomb run. Being under the lead plane he could not slow down by lifting his nose. At that moment the time came for bombs away and an unarmed 500 pound bomb fell on the nose just forward of the flight deck crushing the flight controls by snapping cables, pulleys, and push pull rods, disabling the plane completely. The plane fell off in a tight spin the wing tip in an almost 90 degree bank trapping the crew inside with the centrifugal force. We saw no parachutes, or no flak. It disappeared into the clouds below never to be seen again".

I bring this matter up as a follow up to the photograph of "Rhapsody in Junk" that appeared on page 11 of Torretta Flyer No 21 showing the armored cockpit window and armor plate bolted to the outside of the fuselage. Incidentally this same airplane was involved in a double mission on April 28, 1944, when the same aircrew of 458th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force flew two missions in one day.

Those Crashed Airplanes In Southern France

We received another letter from Philippe Castellano (See page 20 Torretta flyer No# 20) regarding B-24's from the 461st Bomb Group that fell in Southern France during the latter half of 1944. He wants to invite the survivors of the crash of a B-24H 42-52399 May 27, 1944, piloted by Gerald G Maroney to visit the crash site in France. They are: Al Raines-T/G, Owen Streeper-B/G, and Benjamin Norrid-N/G. They will be surprised to see what he has found.

He goes on to say that in the cemetery book of the small villages of Seillons and Ollieres, he found the names of Richard V Darvie, Arnold R Ducatman, and Robert D Cumming. The History of the 461st Bomb Group shows that the crew of Chester A

Ray, 766 squadron, was missing in action on December 7, 1944, on a mission to Nimes, France. Other members of that crew reported missing were: Merrill T Spring, Rudolf H Wild, Andrew T Smith, Gerald Rahl, Arthur D Morgan, and Thomas J Moss Sr. On that same day another B-24 of the 461st Bomb Group piloted by Richard S Fawcett was reported missing. The other members of that crew are: Frank J Dunstead, Walter J Graham, Robert M Sanders, Walter Gladowski, James W Kelly, Robert J Weisfeld, Dunne J Lantow, Joseph A Brnetich, and Leonard J Johnson. Mr Castellano would like to know if there are any survivors of these crews. I have sent him what information we have.

Mr Castellano and his associates are also excavating crash sites in France and gathering parts of the aircraft in a similar manner to what the English have been doing, as reported to you in the last edition of the Flyer, Although he doesn't say if the aircraft parts have been put into a museum like setting. We are not aware of similar activities in Italy and other countries where our planes fell. Mr Castellano can be reached at Rue Chateaubriand Mandelieu, France 06210.,

The Cover Photograph

The photo shown on the front cover of this issue is one of a series taken on August 13, 1944, on a mission of the 484th Bomb Group to bomb the marshalling yards near Vienna, Austria. See page 25 The war diary of Roy Nichols, 825 squadron. Official photo 484th BG via Robert A Harrison 825 squadron

Acknowledgments

We wish to thank:

Ian McLaughlan and the estate of Russell J Zorn for permission to reprint a portion of their book, Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories. Motorbooks International Osceola, Wisconsin.

Roger A Freeman for permission to reprint a portion of his book Experiences of War, The American Airman in Europe. Arms and Armour Press London, England.

Michael J Hill, and Pictorial Histories Publishing Co, Missoula, MT for sending The Desert Rats, so that we could include a review in this issue.

The Torretta Flyer

Number 22 Summer-Fall 1992

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The Torretta Flyer is the official publication of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association. Normal distribution is limited to members only. Requests for copies from non members should be directed to the editor.

Contributions of stories, articles, memorabilia, and graphic materials to the Torretta Flyer are always welcome. Clean typewritten manuscripts and Microsoft Word disks are preferable. Other forms are acceptable also. Please contact the editor for further information.

The Torretta Flyer reports primarily on the history of air warfare during WWII and the accomplishments of members of the 461st & 484th bomb Groups during WWII. From time to time the magazine will cover other subject matter related to aeronautical events as material becomes available. Readers are encouraged to submit their own stories or material from other sources.

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Associate Editor, Bea Markel

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The 1992 Reunion

The next reunion of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association will be held at Marriott's Dearborn Inn from September 24 to September 27, 1992. This reunion runs through the usual Thursday through Sunday arrangement, as in last year's Kansas City conclave. Disregard previous bulletins that showed slightly different dates. A separate reunion bulletin will be mailed out as in previous years. It will include the reunion registration and Marriott reservation forms.

The 461st & 484th bomb Groups Association welcome you to the Dearborn Inn, a Marriott Hotel. It is tucked away on 23 tranquil acres of gardens and countryside across from the historic Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, this hotel brings you a stately, Early American setting with "bed-and breakfast" charm. Located in a residential area, the tranquility of the parkland setting invites total relaxation.

Located 16 minutes from the Detroit Metropolitan Airport, the elegance and hospitality of a bygone era are beautifully preserved by the use of colonial furnishings reproduced with attention to authenticity. The full range of modern comforts and conveniences make this an ideal vacation spot not to be missed.

Flanking the main buildings are a village of five historic American homes that are authentic replicas of the birthplace or residence of a famous figure in American history.

Dining and entertainment options include the Early American Room which offers fine cuisine and gracious service amid richly appointed Early American decor. The Ten Eyck Tavern serves homestyle favorites for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in a relaxed setting reminiscent of an authentic Colonial tavern. For a relaxing drink at sunset or after-dinner dancing and entertainment, try the Golden Eagle Lounge.

During 1988 and the first part of 1989 the Inn has undergone extensive renovation, restoration and expansion. It reopened in late April 1989. Once part of the Edison Institute, the foundation of the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, the Inn was built by Henry Ford in 1931 as one of the world's first airport hotels. Mr. Ford saw the need for some accommodation facilities close



by his Ford Airfield and so designed the Inn to be the finest in Northern hospitality. Its Georgian architecture and stately style set it apart from any other hospitality facility and over the years the Inn gained a fine reputation as the place to stay while in the Dearborn area.

In 1934, Mr. Ford added a dormitory building to house the employees and in 1936 and 1937 he began to build his colonial village in the rear grounds. He built replicas of famous American homes as another form of hotel room and originally planned to build

18 houses. However, the Second World War broke out and the concept was never completed. As part of the restoration program five houses; the Barbara Fritchie house, the Walt Whitman house, the Edgar Allan Poe house, the Patrick Henry house and the Governor Oliver Wilcott house were totally renovated with each house having a different color scheme. The interiors of the houses have also been altered in some cases to provide more spacious rooms and parlors. These homes now provide us with an exciting alternative to the more standard hotel room.

In 1959 and 1960 another style of accommodation was also introduced to the Dearborn Inn grounds. With 32 rooms in one and 21 rooms in another, the "Motor Houses" were built primarily for the traveling family who enjoy the easy access to their car.

THE DEARBORN INN, A MARRIOTT HOTEL

**Address: 20301 Oakwood
Boulevard
Dearborn, Michigan 48124**

**Reservation Phones:
313/272/2700
1/800/228/2700**

Introduction of New Members

Carlton L Cooley Sr 824 Sq

Carlton L Cooley Sr 824 Squadron and his wife Betty have joined the Association They are from Ocala, Florida. He worked as a refueler and was referred to us by J. Hollis in December 1990 but the address was not current. Charlie & Carm McKew were able to find him, resulting in his recent membership in April 1992 .



Carlton Cooley left and his brother George L Cooley at Torretta.



Left: Carlton L cooley, and Fred H Beetz of the refueling crew.



Photo above fom left to right: Harold A Saxe, R/O, Donald L Olson, U/G, and Eugene C Stamm , C/P. Kneeling from left to right: William H Hiller, E, and Marcus D Armfield, B/G. Taken during supply mission to Istres, France, September 26, 1994.

Donald L Olson 824 Squadron

Donald L Olson, 824 Squadron, from Arcadia, CA became a new member in July of 1992. He served as an amorer/gunner on William F Gaskill's crew. The other members of his crew are:

Marcus D Armfield-B/G, NC
Arnold M Bree (D)-B
Raymond Bush-N/G, Philadelphia, PA
William F Gaskill-P, Huntsville, AR, (Member)
William H Hiller-E, SC
Telsa I Johnson (D)-N, Berry Creek, CA, (Was member)
Donald L Olson-U/G, Arcadia, CA, (Member)
Marshall D Preston, G
Harold A Saxe-R/O, AR
Eugene C Stamm-C/P, San Franciso, CA,

(see above right for crew photo)

Charles H Gover 825 Squadron

Charles H Gover has joined the Association and has sent us the following photographs shown below.



Charles H Gover, right, shown with his dog Turbo, begging .



Charles H Gover, taken in Bari

Thomas J Bolt is a new member. His crew photo is shown below:



Standing from left: Thomas J Bolt, Lindale, TX, P, Quenton T Davis, C/P, Dwight R Pelton, Sharon, MA, N (Member) Edward Bogdan, Milwaukee, WI, B (Member), Front Row from left: Richard D Waite, B/G; Wilford B Kester, U/G Charles J Renfro, E; Vernon C Janke, Dekalb, IL, R/O (Member); Harry W Clark (D), T/G, Floyd W Suddreth, Lenoir, NC, N/G

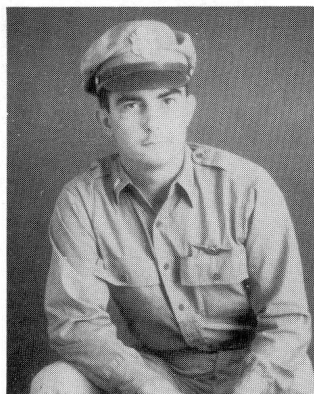
Bruce W Smith, 824 Sq.

I am delighted to be a full fledged member of a great organization, to which I hope I can make a worthwhile contribution from here on out. Your letter was most welcome, along with its enclosures.

Enclosed is a Foggia-photographed mug shot of yours truly. After you've made a negative, if you wish to use it, please return the print.

Also enclosed are a number of short extracts from my wartime diary which may fit somewhere in The Torretta Flyer. (see stories section) I will shortly get at my extensive notes from and about Capri, for your consideration.

Thanks for the Bernard Bossick address; I wrote him at once, but to date haven't had a reply.



Bruce W Smith

New members added to the rolls

Orrice A Barrett	826	Mechanic	"Miss Carriage"
William M Bloom	825	Gunner	"Pot Luck" #40
Thomas J Bolt	825	Pilot	
Robert L Boone	825	Pilot	
Carlton L Cooley Sr	824	Fueler	
Robert R Dalton	765	Gunner	"Round Robin"
Raymond P Davis	827	Medic	
Milton Day	765	Arm/Gunner	
Clarence L Deger	824	Radio Op.	Crew #25
James Denny	825	Pilot	
Robert J Dieker	824	Bombardier	
Jerome C Farber	826	Bombardier	B-24 H 42/95097 *55
Howard R Furrow	766	Arm/Gunner	
Robert F Heaney Sr	765	Turret and Armament specialist.	
Francis J Hoermann	765	Pilot	
George I Iubelt	767	Radio Operator	
David E A Johnson	765		



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CASUALTIES, MORALE and the COMBAT TOUR

From Micro Film Files

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Which has the more dangerous assignment the Air Force combat crewman or the Ground Force fighting man?

Increasingly, in recent months, as the progress of the U.S. and British infantry has been slowed by German resistance and counter-attack, the press has built up the impression in the public mind that U.S. Ground Forces have a higher casualty rate and face greater hazards than do American combat flyers. This has disturbed Air Force combat crews primarily because they do not believe it is true and secondly because they feel that the public, in its current deep concern about the infantry, has tended to forget that the Air Force also fights grim and bloody battles almost every day.

In an effort to obtain an unprejudiced answer to the question underscored above, a comparison has been made in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations between casualties suffered by Air Force combat personnel and the combat personnel of the Fifth Army during the 15 months from 9 September 1943 to 3 December 1944. Considered as casualties were men killed, wounded, missing in action and prisoners of war, both combat and non-combat. Strength figures used for the Air included all personnel on combat flying status, and for the Ground all Fifth Army infantry divisions, field artillery brigades and tank groups. No combat support organizations were included in the strength figures used in calculating the casualty rate.

On this basis the Ground Force casualty rate for 15 months examined was 6.33% per month. The Air Force rate for the same period was 7.69% per month.

Although these rates have a slight inaccuracy due to the fact that a small percentage of the casualties were among personnel in both Air and Ground Forces excluded from the personnel strength figures, the rates are representative and essentially correct. Comparative rates of this type will always be subject to criticism because of differences of opinion as to what ground personnel should be included. Nonetheless, the evi-

dence appears conclusive that the individual combat airman faces a greater peril than the ground fighter, when we consider only those who are subjected to enemy action.

This in no sense cries down the ardors endured by the infantryman nor is meant to deprecate their magnificent courage and accomplishment. Also, of course, it must not be forgotten that total Ground casualties far exceed total Air because the larger number of Ground soldiers involved. Yet, Air casualties also have been quantitatively heavy, 21,345 since the North African invasion and continue at a fairly constant rate as the detailed tabulation at the end of this paper reveals. The individual flyer's feeling of being neglected by the public is therefore readily understandable.

The public's attitude toward Air is also readily understandable. There is something about modern air bombardment that defeats comprehension by the average mind. Whereas almost any civilian can visualize the grim and gruesome agony of an infantry attack on enemy trenches, the equally terrific sensations of flying hundreds of miles into the heart of Germany in sub-zero cold, on oxygen, through forests of flak and shoals of enemy fighters, can only be dimly comprehended by those who have not experienced it. Also, of course, the fact that by February 1944 we had defeated the Luftwaffe and established our air supremacy everywhere in Europe has led the public automatically to the assumption that strategic bombing is now a relatively routine and "easy" operation. They fail to recognize that as the Luftwaffe has waned, German flak has waxed in scale and effectiveness.

The more Hitler's Europe is compressed by our invading armies the fewer become the vital targets left to air attack and the greater becomes the concentration of flak over them. More than 800 guns now guard the Brenner pass, 600 the oil refineries in Vienna, 500 the city of Munich. In a typical three-month period last Fall 90% of wounds to American flyers in MAAF were from flak and but 10% from bullets. Thus, though the

once deadly Focke-Wolf rarely attacks our formations today, the increased AA barrage has kept our casualty rates in the Mediterranean virtually unchanged since the days when the Luftwaffe was the major hazard. Aerial bombardment is not yet just a transport service with bombs as the cargo, but remains a grim, relentless struggle calling for all the qualities of steadfast bravery which our combat crews have always demonstrated.

That bravery has never faltered. If any fact is needed to prove it, the simple statement that U.S. Flyers have never once been turned away from their target by enemy opposition should suffice. Air Force morale has always been high and remains so today. Unquestionably one of the reasons for the zest for fighting which characterizes AAF combat crews has been the policy of the "combat tour".

Yet, here again, the public labors under some considerable misapprehensions about the Air war, for the fact is that the fixed combat tour in the Army Air Forces was abolished a year ago in February 1944.

The policy that upon completion of a fixed number of missions, air crews would be relieved from combat was instituted in England in 1942 and was subsequently adopted in the Mediterranean. In those early days when replacements were few and air battles were at their climax such a policy was indispensable for the maintenance of morale and fighting efficiency. But the number of missions that made up the combat tour was always thought of as a flexible thing. There was never any promise that once his tour was done, a flyer would never have to fight again — indeed, many of the B-29 crews now hitting Japan have already served one combat tour in Europe. But the idea began to get around, all the same, that completion of one operational tour meant that combat crews would not subsequently be sent back to an active theater. And so, in February 1944, with the Luftwaffe beaten down and Allied air supremacy won, the

(continued on next page)

(Continued from page 7)

fixed tour was ended and replaced by a variable one subject to local conditions in the unit concerned.

Loss rates for the B-24 are shown higher, but no explanation is given. There was only one B-17 Bomb Wing in the 15th Air Force as compared to six B-24 Bomb Wings.

Army Air Force Battle Casualties In the Mediterranean 8 November 1942 to 31 December 1944

Killed
3,536

Wounded
3586

MIA & POW
14,223

Total Casualties from all causes.
21,345

KIA & POW figures are net and

account for men who have returned to Allied Territory. Combat Crews Killed, Wounded and Missing in Action per 1,000 Pilot Sorties Flown (Moving six months average through current month in percentage).

	B-17	B-24
Sept. 1943	4.675	17.535
Oct. 4.	7.52	17.204
Nov. 6.	1.56	18.687
Dec. 1943	7.570	22.907
Jan. 1944	7.526	19.952
Feb.	11.326	20.200
Mar.	14.007	16.447
April	14.431	18.524
May	13.148	15.344
June	12.931	15.080
July	16.562	16.403
Aug	13.173	15.172
Sept.	12.112	14.190
Oct.	11.646	13.508
Nov.	11.560	13.634
Dec. 1944	11.721	14.221

old-style apartment house. The food is not bad and the French bread is wonderful. ALL THE NEWS Near Gioia de Colle on June 4, 1944: Cliff (Ball), the Texan, and I bought some good sweet cherries here yesterday. The price was the equivalent of 22 cents for the biggest pound I ever saw. The tiny old woman street vendor had no paper bags, so wrapped the fruit in an issue of the Chicago Tribune dated only five weeks before.

BRITISH STYLE On June 12, 1944, 12 of us went, by invitation, to a British tank corps camp west of Bari for a softball game and a little party. Most of the British soldiers were from South Africa. First, they hosted lunch at the British officers' club in Bari. Then, in borrowed shorts, we played seven innings on a diamond on the side of a hill. Afterwards, we had supper: Pea soup, salmon croquette, cold sausage, cold roast pork, and a cherry cream pudding. Also coffee, extremely hot, but, unfortunately, already creamed and sugared.

The End

More from Micro films

Mediterranean Theater Aircraft Losses for 1944

It appears from preliminary figures that the Strategic and Tactical Air Forces in the Mediterranean Theater lost some 1509 bombers and 698 fighters during 1944. Of the bombers the following tabulation is of interest:

Losses due to Enemy Aircraft:

Heavy bombers 572
Medium bombers 16

Anti Aircraft Fire:

Heavy Bomber 756
Medium bombers 165

Enemy anti aircraft accounted for 62% of all bombers lost to enemy action. Of the fighters, 60% were lost to anti aircraft.

The reverses on all fronts (1944), with the resultant smaller German area to be defended, released quantities of anti aircraft guns for relocation, thus the reason for the increased flak activity.

The Cerignola Story, and Torretta Tales

by Bruce W. Smith, 824 squadron

DOUBLE DUTY Our latrines are picturesque: They are oil barrels sunk halfway into the ground, with carved-for-comfort tops of wood. Their most picturesque characteristic is that they are set right out in the wheat fields and atop hills. This saves reading magazines, for there is so much landscape to see that reading material is unnecessary.

GUEST ARTIST Musical guest in Cerignola on July 3, 1944, was famed violinist Jascha Heifetz. The all-soldier audience was both quiet and responsive. When the Italian kids were raising holy hell rolling metal hoops on the brick street outside, Heifetz laughed the noise off by saying, "They're celebrating the Fourth of July a little early, whether they know it or not."

VARIETY SHOW Saw an excellent variety show at the Cerigonola Opera House on both August 24 and August 25, 1944. The headliners were two former stage and movie

stars, Bebe Daniels and Ben Lyon. She sang several songs ("When the Lights Go on Again," a British soldiers favorite, drew heavy applause) and wore three elegant long dresses.

PIECE OF CAKE Our September 2, 1944, mission was pleasant as combat missions can be, although, of course, it was long and cold - but then, it's always that way. The targets were the Smedrevo ferry slips on the Sava River in Yugoslavia, where the Germans were attempting to evacuate troops. The enemy opposition wasn't much at all, which was all right with us.

THEY WERE HERE From Istres le Tube in the Southern France county of Provence, September 24, 1944: The Germans lived in the very building we are sleeping in, not many weeks ago. Many of their pin-up pictures, newspapers from Germany, and pages torn from their notebooks are lying around. Our group took over a vacant

Big Creek School Pupils Honor WWII Fliers Who Died in Huntington Lake, California

By Charles Beal



Big Creek School 5th grade teacher Bob Crider (standing) beside the 5th grade class, reads the inscription on a plaque honoring the crew of the 461st Bomb Group B-24 that went down Dec 6, 1943.

A group of Big Creek Elementary School pupils have established a memorial to six World War II American airmen who died when their B-24 Liberator bomber, nicknamed the "Exterminator," crashed in Huntington Lake.

Teacher Bob Crider's fifth graders, most of them sons and daughters of Edison employees, recently held dedication ceremonies, complete with taps and a color guard, to unveil a bronze memorial plaque set in a rock. It's located at the John S. Eastwood Visitors Center at the lake entrance and bears the names of the crew of the bomber.

The tragedy occurred on Dec. 6, 1943, after the aircraft left old Hammer Field in Fresno and suffered complete hydraulic failure. Ironically, it was searching for another B-24 that had disappeared in the mountains. Mistaking the snow-covered lake for a meadow, the pilot tried to land on it after asking his crew to decide whether to stay aboard or bail out. Two parachuted to safety. The rest perished at the bottom of the lake.

Several former members of the Exterminator's 461st Bomb Group attended the memorial unveiling. Nearly a half-century earlier they, too, were stationed at Hammer, training for missions over Europe and the Pacific.

They remembered losing many buddies from training crashes that occurred as

the heavy, lumbering, prop-driven Liberators floundered in the swirling Sierra winter skies. The Exterminator was but one of three to go down in a 48-hour period.

Also attending the ceremony were Jeff McPheeters, Edison Northern Hydro manager, and other company employees. "What these kids have done is really heartwarming," McPheeters said. He recalled that the bodies of the crew were not recovered until 1955 even though extensive efforts were made to find them after the crash.

Former Sgt. George Barulic one of the pair who bailed out, and the only living survivor of the ill-fated plane, telephoned from his West Palm Beach home to thank the Big Creek School pupils.

The most you can do for anyone is give your life, and that is what these people did," he said. "Up to now, nobody had been interested in what happened at Huntington Lake. And for these young people to show this compassion is so touching."

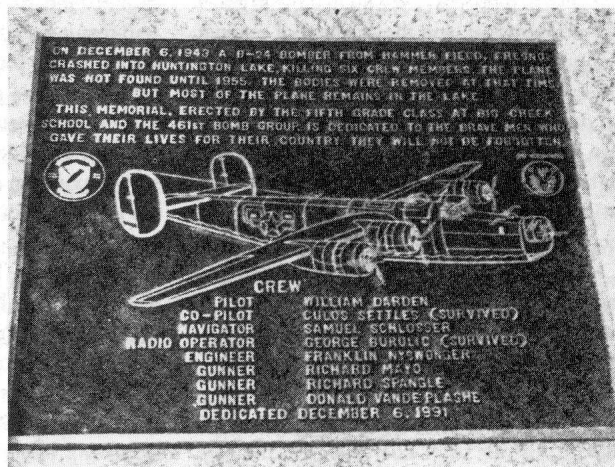
There has been interest, though, including several salvage attempts and abundant media cov-

erage. A wing and part of the fuselage of the plane, including the distinctive twin tails of the B-24, are still under water. McPheeters said another salvage project was begun last spring when the water level was lowered for dam repairs. But, unexpected rainfall during California's prolonged drought washed out those plans, he said.

The End

This story is reprinted from the Southern California Edison News

(See "Letters to the Editor" section for a letter from Big Creek school students).



Memorial to lost B-24 Crew

The Way it Looked to Me

By Rex Bennett, 824 Squadron

There are two ways to look at every event: the way a newspaper writes and you read about it, and the way it is from a participant's viewpoint. This holds true for a football game, a political rally, a murder, or a war. I'm going to give you the story as the newspapers gave it, and the story behind the news as I saw it, on combat missions with the Fifteenth Air Force. I'm going to tell you of mistakes made, a little about the personalities of the crew members, and a whole lot of the history of the 484th Bomb Group, 824 Squadron, the way it looked to me.

Our group, composed of four squadrons, was trained as a complete unit in the States. This included officers and enlisted men, both flying and non-flying, as well as the medical units for each squadron. Going overseas as a complete group had many advantages. The crews were all personally acquainted with their flight leaders, and the bonds of friendship provided a well-knit group of men with high morale and "esprit de corps". We all had the highest of confidence in, and the greatest of respect for, our commanding officers. We flew, as did each new group, several easy missions to condition the crews for combat. We went into combat supremely confident of our ability and extremely concerned about the future. As a seasoned group, we made a record of which I am justifiably proud.

On a day when newspapers carried this choice morsel of news, "American Liberators bombed German installations in northern France carrying the huge pre-invasion air offensive into its 18th consecutive day", our group was flying its third mission and many of us our first. The target for the day was Parma, Italy. The group base was located in the south eastern portion of Italy,

some forty miles from Bari, and the route for this mission took us west across Italy, out over the Mediterranean, and up along the west coast. We saw smoke on shore and many ships off shore which located the embattled Anzio beach head. I wondered then, as I did every time we flew past that



spot, if our flying by gave their morale a lift as they lay in their foxholes. Upon reaching a point opposite our target, we turned in-shore, crossed the coast and, just before reaching the target, we ran into the clouds. Clouds in the sky are exactly like fog on the ground and flying into them in formation will result inevitably in a collision of at least a few of the forty-two planes flying close formation. The group leader turned sharply to avoid this catastrophe and our squadron, flying the inside of the turn, was unable to stay in position and became separated from the group. Before we were able to rejoin the group, they had bombed the secondary target, La Spezia. The squadron leader, not to be thwarted on his first mission, started his own bombing run. Just short of the target, four large blooms of flak suddenly appeared before his nose and so disconcerted him that he turned away, the rest of us, six ships in all, following like sheep. He circled the target and then suddenly turned toward the target nosing his airplanes down as he made the

turn. This loss of altitude sent us hurtling across the target at a considerably higher than normal air speed. The squadron bombardier opened the bomb bay doors and, after a short interval, which gave us time to open ours, released his bombs, I know, without using his bombsight. We then "got the

hell out of there," as my bombardier later told the interrogation officer. To the surprise of all, pictures showed our bombs landing on a ship in the harbor and adjoining warehouses. So ended mission number one, forty-nine yet to go.

This amazing episode was followed two days later by a practice mission. On take-off, a pilot, who during training had collided with another ship and had killed the crew, raised his wheels too quick and settled back on the ground wrecking the airplane. The remainder of the group continued on the practice mission and an air collision resulted in the damaging of two planes, which, however, were able to land. The bombardier and navigator in one of the ships "bailed out" as soon as the collision occurred without waiting to determine the seriousness of the damage. The navigator had his life jacket on and was later picked up. The bombardier had left his life jacket in his tent and had to swim for an island nearby. After reaching the island nearly exhausted, he was forced back in the water because the island was used as the target for practice missions and another group was on a bombing run. He was the victim of much good natured kidding thereafter because, "the way you bombardiers bomb, the center of the island was the safest place to be".

The newspaper account, "Liberators and Flying Fortresses perhaps 500-750



strong hurled explosives into five Romanian cities today, slamming rail targets and an aircraft factory in a non-stop assault on the Balkans”, may have told what the other groups in the Fifteenth Air Force did and what our group was supposed to bomb, but this is what really happened. The group bombardier, upon whose shoulders rests the results of every mission, accidentally salvaged his bombs when he opened the bomb bay doors. All other ships are supposed to “toggle” on the lead ship and, as a result, bombs were strewn from the I. P. to the target. (My bombardier later said his exploded in a farmer’s yard). To take care of contingencies such as this, the group is supposed to drop with the deputy group leader who flies the group leader wing. A few of the planes held their bombs and dropped with the deputy leader on the target, the Ploesti railroad yards in Romania. Score? A farm, a few railroad yards in Romania, and a severe lecture from the Group Commander on the alertness of the bombardiers.

My co-pilot, the coolest man under fire on the crew, found, after this mission, that it was possible to light a cigarette at 20,000 feet. The air is very thin at 20,000 feet and the head of a match will scarcely burn. Immediately upon leaving the target area he would “light up”. This involved loosening his oxygen mask, taking a quick drag on the cigarette before the head of the match would burn out, and then replacing the mask in order to breathe the oxygen necessary to preserve life. It was also essential to keep a forced draft of air through the cigarette to keep it lit, and, as a result, he had to take a long drag on the cigarette, a few quick gasps

in the oxygen mask, another quick drag on the cigarette, and so on. The entire crew laughed, and relaxed, as the bombardier described how the co-pilot was “driving another nail.”

“100 American (Italy based) heavy bombers and fighters slammed approximately 1,200 tons of bombs on the railroad yards at Bucharest,” was the terse comment about our first well defended target. On every mission all planes in the group carried what we called window. This resembled the icicles you buy for Christmas trees and was made of tin foil. The window came in bundles and when over the target the bundles were torn open and the window scattered out the waist windows. Up to the present mission the anti aircraft defenses at the targets had not been too accurate and the window had been scattered in a rather languorous and desultory manner. I can still see how, after the flak started coming thick and close, the men began shoveling the window out the windows. The thicker the flak, the faster the spreading of the window. Some crews even started to throw out bundles of the stuff. This wasn’t funny at the time but we laughed about it after reaching home and many times thereafter.

The worst thing about these missions was the long period of time which had to be spent in the pilot’s seat immobilized by the tube of live preserving oxygen. “Top brass” thought up a new wrinkle for making our short missions long and our long missions longer. The missions inaugurating this new procedure, was described by the newspapers as being, “the greatest air armada ever mobilized over Italy”, and that the Fifteenth

Air Force, “is smashing this afternoon at German front and rear positions ahead of the Fifth and Eighth Armies battering towards Rome”. Italy missions were usually short and welcomed by everyone. The target for the day was a railroad yard at Via Reggio, but the route took us up the east coast side of Italy, then paralleled the front lines across Italy, out over the sea, up the coast, and into the target. We paralleled the front to boost the morale of the embattled infantry on their drive northward. If it raised their morale as much as it increased our discomfort, then we did a great deal of good and a major portion of the credit for the taking of Rome should be given to the Air Force. These out of the way trips didn’t hurt us, however, and I suppose the sight of 1000 planes flying overhead and the knowledge they were going to bomb the Germans, was a gratifying sight.

The newspapers at this time were condemning the Germans for their V-2 rocket and its inaccuracy and danger to civilians.

On radar missions our bombs were dropped in almost as inaccurate a manner. “U. S. heavy bombers struck into the Balkans today, bombing Ploesti in Romania and Belgrade and Nis in Yugoslavia,” makes no mention of our method of dropping bombs, but on this mission our target was Belgrade and cloud coverage over the target made it necessary to bomb by radar. For radar attempt, cities were chosen that suited the requirements of radar bombing. usually this meant one with a river flowing through the target area, because the rivers were well defined on the radar screen. It’s easy to

understand that flying a predetermined number of seconds in an established direction from the river and then dropping the bombs is not going to insure that the damage will be confined to industrial areas. We probably did our share of damage in residential portions of town, perhaps even to churches and hospitals. Radar missions were never run over France because of this. Our bombing accuracy by bombsight, however, was really remarkable considering the conditions under which we bombed.

"A mighty sky fleet of possibly 750 American Flying Fortresses and Liberators struck deep into southeastern France today to bomb and burn a half-dozen key railway targets from Riviera to Lyon", gives good news coverage of our longest mission. This mission covering 9:20 hours of flying time was at the extreme fringe of our range. To make matters worse, we flew along the Italian front for morale purposes. The smart pilots conserved gas as much as possible by keeping engine RPM as low and manifold pressure as high as engine temperatures would permit. There were some pilots who were forced to land on the Island of Corsica on the return trip from the target, Lyon, because of the shortage of gasoline. Most of us made it back, however, and the shot of "mission whiskey" tasted mighty good..

Mission Whiskey

I haven't mentioned "mission whiskey" before, but after each mission, every combat crew member received a two-ounce glass of rye whiskey. A roster was kept of the participants of the mission and, as the issue was made, the names were checked off. There were several different practices followed by the recipients. Some drank the issue on the spot. Others signed for theirs and gave it to a friend, (non-drinkers were cultivated for their friendship) and still others had a bottle to which they added the shot and, after a sufficient number of missions, had a celebration. Arrangements were made between friends as to who would inherit the bottle if the owner of a nearly full bottle of whiskey was unlucky enough to be shot down. None went to waste.

The mission on which our group achieved its best bombing accuracy did not elicit much of a comment from the newspapers. "More than 2,200 American heavy bombers and fighters fanned out over Europe in record strength for the third straight day" made no mention at all of the Fifteenth Air Force. Our group was selected to lead

the wing, consisting of five groups, on a mission to Wels, Austria. The weather over the target was perfectly clear, there was practically no opposition, the bombardier was able to zero in his bomb sight perfectly, and we really did a job. Our group commander received the Distinguished Flying Cross for leading this mission on which the target was totally destroyed with no losses, and we couldn't have been more conceited if we had all personally received the same.

The newspaper accounts "From 500 to 750 U.S. heavy bombers escorted by swarms of Mustangs and Lightnings struck from Italy at Ploesti and enveloped at least one major refinery with flames and smoke visible for many miles" merely outlines what really happened. Our squadron had received some replacement crews and the practice was to fly the first pilot of these crews as co-pilots with seasoned crews to give them experience. On this mission to Ploesti, I drew as co-pilot one of the aforementioned first pilots. It was his first mission and he really drew a "lulu". Ploesti was considered one of the toughest targets in Europe and, for us, it really upheld its reputation. I can still close my eyes and visualize the solid black cloud of flak as we approached the target and, when we reached the target area, how the big black balls with the vivid red centers ballooned all around. I can remember how the airplane bounced from the force of near misses and how we ducked as shells exploded in front of the ship and we flew through the smoke. I recall how two ships, in front of me, pulled out of formation trailing smoke and fire and the blossoming of chutes as the men jumped to safety and captivity. I remember seeing tall columns of smoke which reached above our level of flight, as we circled the target and headed for home. I recall my surprise at the sight of a hole the size of a dinner plate in the wing just two feet to my left. I still smile when I think of the terrified look the copilot had on his face and his question, "Are all of them like this?"

And his agonized expression when I replied, "That was an easy one, wait 'til we go to Vienna." He didn't know that I was just as scared as he was, maybe more so.

We had several missions that elicited no comment from the newspapers. Our group was the only one assigned to this mission, and the target was a Par River bridge. We carried three 1000 pound bombs for this trip, (our usual load was nine five hundred pound bombs) and the armament crew hung them on the lower bomb racks. After the bombs

were all loaded, they found it was impossible to close the bomb bay doors, because the fins were so big they extended below the track. The squadron armament officer, rather than change the bombs, ordered the tail fins bent to permit the closing of the doors. We went to the target, dropped our bombs together, and came home. The strike photos revealed that the bridge had been destroyed but they also showed isolated bomb explosions more than a mile from the target area. The photos disclosed holes in the bombing pattern of our squadron and before the day was over the Group Commander had the story. The bent fins had caused some of the bombs to go astray and from four miles up this meant quite an error. I didn't see the armament officer around the officer's club for a week after this happened.

The invasion of France and the break of the stalemate in Italy now provided enough news to fill the newspapers and the exploits of the Air Force were forgotten. The first mission we were attacked by fighters occurred just after dropping our bombs on an oil refinery near Ploesti. The first inkling I had of the attack was the sudden hammering of the nose and upper turrets. In a matter of seconds two planes were shot out of the high flight. Every plane closed up until we were flying wing to wing formation. I had to watch the plane flying in front and above me because every time the tail gunner fired his turret guns the empty cartridge cases would stream by overhead. I had to stay low-enough to let them clear the upper turret to avoid having the plexiglass dome broken. The gunners were also having their troubles. A cartridge belt broke on one of the guns in the tail turret, and the gunner thought he was running out of ammunition. The ball turret gunner became so terrified he wouldn't stay in the ball turret. The engineer, a fiery little tech, Sgt., from Kansas, threatened to shoot him. This kept him in the turret but he never fired a shot. (This was his last mission and his last day as a Sgt..) We were under attack for a period of twenty minutes which, to me, seemed like two hours. The group sustained heavy damage and lost five airplanes. There weren't many that passed up their "mission whiskey" after this mission.

One of the worst things that any combat crew could have done was violate group integrity. The thing uppermost in every first pilots' mind, when making a decision, should have been first the group and then his crew. We had several crews, mostly replacement crews, in every squadron, and I have nothing

but contempt for the type that aborted (turned back) on the slightest pretext if the target promised to be a tough one. Every plane that turned back out of a flight weakened it proportionally in fire power. The Germans were quick to jump either the high or low flight if they did not have their full complement of ships.

Our heaviest loss (for my tour of duty) occurred on a mission to Munich, Germany. again the newspaper was taken up with advances made on the ground or raids by the Eighth Air Force. This mission was bad from the start. Because of a friendly rivalry between us, one pilot took off with a booster pump inoperative rather than let me go a mission ahead of him. The intercom and radio went out on my ship shortly after take-off and it was necessary to devise signals in case of an emergency. The co-pilot passed the word back that a sharp movement of the tail would be the jump signal. Five ships aborted, leaving one flight with only five ships. Fighters jumped us over the target area and we lost seven ships; the flight of five ships and two others. One of these was the pilot with the defective booster pump. Without the pump he was unable to transfer gas from one of his tanks and, as a result, he ran out of gas and was forced to ditch in the Adriatic. Four of the crew members were killed when the plane broke in half; the other six, some critically injured, took to a life raft. They were later picked up by a German hospital ship, after their injuries were treated, the pilot talked the Captain into replacing them in the life raft. They were picked up by a Navy PB4Y airplane and in two days the pilot and co-pilot were back in the group ready to fly. The survivors received the Soldiers Medal for this exploit.

Vienna was the target most dreaded by all combat areas. It was considered the worst in Europe. Again the newspapers failed to comment on the Fifteenth Air Force. Every crew member feared that this might be his last. Five ships were seen shot out of the preceding group by the heavy and accurate flak over the target. Our flight path seemed to take us down a corridor upon which most of the guns couldn't bear and, as a result, only one flight suffered any flak damage and lost one ship. It was a relieved group of men that returned from the target.

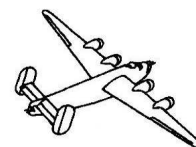
We, my crew and I, came nearest to death on a mission to Blechammer, Germany. The newspapers carried no comments on this mission because it was never completed. I was flying under the lead element

of the high flight, with a plane flying each wing. I had to fly looking up in order to maintain position and did not notice that the new pilot flying my right wing was having trouble staying in position. Perhaps he was worrying about the incendiary bombs we were carrying and had been cautioned not to land with under any conditions. We got as far as Lake Ballentine in Austria, when cloud conditions forced us to turn back. Our squadron was on the outside of the turn and we were unable to keep up. We all increased manifold pressure in order to catch up and, after getting back in position, throttled back with the exception of the green pilot on my wing. He over-ran and came up right under the nose of the plane. This was brought to my attention by a gentle tug on the controls by the co-pilot. (His quick thinking in this emergency saved our lives.) If he had made a sudden movement of the controls I would have instinctively cross-corrected and a collision would have resulted. The tug on the controls made me look down right at the tail gunner whose eyes were about to pop out of his head. His turret was just in front of the propellers as I pulled the airplane up and out of danger. We got back in position and continued toward home. We passed over ripe wheat fields, small cities, and other possible targets, but the group leader waited until we reached the Adriatic and then dumped his bombs into the sea. We followed suit, but I still believe even the wheat fields would have been a better place.

The newspapers remembered us on our next mission to Vienna and printed, "The Mediterranean Air Force yesterday flew 2,200 sorties the allied warplanes blasted rail-road bridges and supplies in northern Italy and his enemy oil plants, an airdrome, and railway facilities in the Balkans". This mission was viewed with the same misgivings as the last one, but again we were lucky. As we went over the target, another group made a run below us and they took all the anti-aircraft fire. We came through unharmed. Returning from the target, I heard a man's voice say, 'I've got fifty missions in and I'm on my way home and those S.O.B's sent me here'. When a crew neared their fifty missions that comprised a tour of duty, the practice was to send them on the easier missions to insure their returning home. Apparently it hadn't been done in this case and the voice on the radio, from someone some place in the Air Force, was letting off steam because he had made it anyhow. Two days after flying this mission, my crew was

ordered home for a thirty-day leave. We had completed forty missions and were to come back and fly the remainder as a flight leader crew. The war took a turn for the better before we returned and we stayed in the States. This is the story behind the news.

The End



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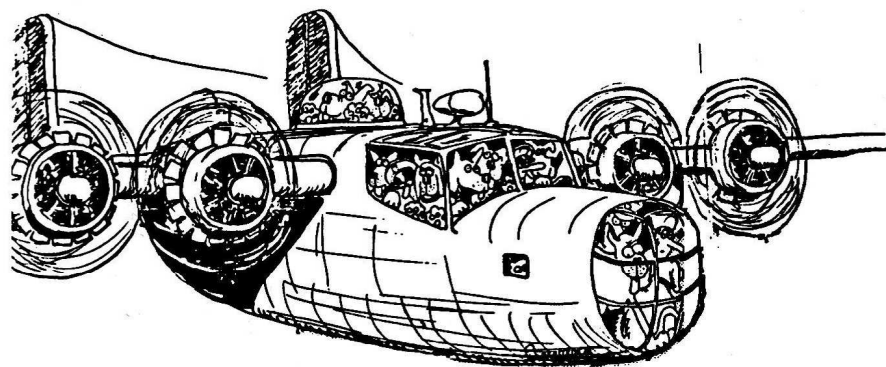
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Coming in on a Wing and a Paw

By Robert F Pease 826 Squadron



Robert F Pease is a writer now retired in Hyannis, Massachusetts. He was a radar navigator sometimes called a "Mickey operator" along with his best friend Carl Norquest and has 9 combat missions to his credit. If anyone from the group is nearby, he would welcome a visit.

In 1945 World War II was over and we began packing to go home. Group Headquarters was stripped. Documents and records were trucked away. All materiel around the flying field vanished, and the men, one or two crews at a time, left for deportation centers. My buddy Carl was among the first to leave. Then my two tent mates left, and I was alone in the shelter we called a hutch where we had lived through the winter between missions to Yugoslavia, Germany and Austria.

Some jokers took the canvas off my shelter, so that I had only the yard-high walls for protection. I slept in the open for five nights like that before moving into one of the squadron buildings that had a roof on it. During that time, I acquired Augie. Augie was a small mongrel bitch. She was black, brown and white, about ten inches high and smart in the way of all bastard offspring who grow up on their own in a world that gives them nothing without a fight. Augie was too small to be a very effective fighter, so she had learned to make a great show of ferocity, baring her white teeth and snarling and barking. She never closed those teeth on

anything bigger than a lizard, however. Augie was bowlegged, and her legs were not more than four inches long, but she could run and turn and jump like the combined rabbit and reptile she probably was. The only time I ever saw her get hurt was when she had eaten the remainder of a five-pound tin of peanut butter and was caught by the owners she licked her chops.

I was standing outside that hutch when I heard the disappointed howl of the man who had finagled the precious peanut butter. Then, I saw Augie coming through the window, but she got caught on a nail. She had already squirmed off the nail by the time her pursuer swung at her and tore his hand on the same spike. She had a bad leg for a week afterward, and I think the peanut butter must have sat heavy in her entrails, too, because she was not herself again for quite a spell.

Augie was one of the many misbegotten curs the squadron lightly adopted and then just as thoughtlessly abandoned. The pack was fat from eating Army garbage, and they were relatively tame. Augie attached herself to me when her previous owner left for the States. She came to live with me in the topless tent those first lonely nights, and her gentleness and her trust made it impossible for me to resist her.

That attachment, however, meant immediate complications for my trip home. When I learned who my pilot was going to be, I went to see him right away and told him I had a dog I intended to bring with me. Lerner was a tall, strong man with freckles. He stared at me for a long moment as if

thinking it over and then quietly announced that he had a dog, too, a little black fellow named Nate. Lerner was not leaving his dog behind either, but he could not take his and tell me to leave mine.

It might not have been a problem if it had ended there, but two days later, Lerner and I went to pick up the bombardier who had been assigned to come with us from another group. Hal met us outside his tent. He was one of those men you like immediately and want for a friend right from the start, but the first thing he said to us was, "Maybe you won't be happy to hear it, but I've got a dog, and his name is Moose."

We traveled by Army truck from Cerignola south to Gioia. A new B-24 was there waiting for us. Month after month we had gone into combat in battered and glued together clunkers, and when the war was over, they handed us a plane so bright and shiny and well-equipped we did not know how to operate half the instruments on it. Another passenger joined us there, a gunner who was going to Trinidad. He checked in with us the day we arrived. He was a lanky, awkward-looking, double-jointed man from somewhere back in the Blue Hills of Kentucky.

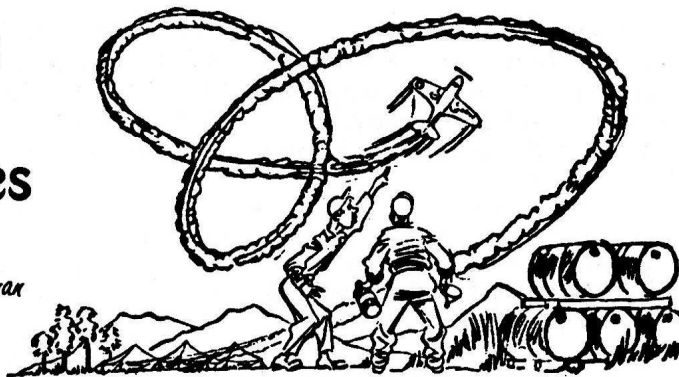
"Look, Cap'n," he told Lerner when he reported in, "I ain't asking but one favor, and this is it. I got me a dawg, and she got two pups, and they all are coming with me." There was nothing any of us could do about it. Probably we were all thinking that the other dogs would get lost somewhere along the way. But those crafty animals took no chances. They stuck close to us, and when we took off from Gioia, they were all on board. We did not lose any of them when we stopped to refuel in Marrakech either.

By the time we reached the Azores, we stopped holding our breath about our dogs, because we were confident then that we would get them into the States all right. It was fun to watch the ground crew as they came out to greet us there. They brought some bottles with them to welcome the returning heroes, but they stopped dead in their tracks when the bomb bays rolled open and Augie leaped out barking and Nate tumbled out after her and then Moose appeared followed by the fat old hunting dog with her two pups.

The End

Pranks and Pastimes

By Roger A Freeman



Regulations were a challenge to many people who appear to have derived great satisfaction from flouting them in some manner or other. With an average age of 21, youthful nature undoubtedly had some bearing on this behavior. There was rarely any malice in this action, but if something was forbidden there was always a temptation to attempt it. For example, rules were strict about the use of rifles and pistols issued to specified personnel for guard duty and personal protection; but this did not prevent Nissen hut barrack rooms being perforated by bullet holes, nor did it prevent hunting expeditions. If apprehended the punishment could be a period of confinement or substantial fine. Although the tell-tale shot would bring the military police, the temptation to pull a trigger was often too great, as Marvin Speidel tells: 'During the period of the cross-Channel invasion in early June, we were told to wear sidearms around the base as there was a possibility of paratroopers being dropped as a counter move by the Germans. There were warnings about misuse but the novelty was too much for some people to resist. One evening our ball turret gunner exhibited his marksmanship by blasting a rabbit seen near our barracks. Needless to say there wasn't much left of the bunny after it was hit by a .45 bullet. The shot must have been heard by an MP, for we soon got word that the Provost Marshal was heading our way. The remaining evidence was quickly hidden but the ball gunner couldn't locate any gun oil with which he might clean the signs that his weapon had been fired. In desperation he grabbed someone's bottle of Vitalis hair oil and swabbed the barrel with that.'

When the Provost arrived he demanded to inspect each gun and sniffed the barrels. When he came to the guilty one, he made an

exclamation and barked: "What the hell did you clean this piece with soldier?" The ball gunner feigned innocence and said he didn't know. The Provost must have had his suspicions but with no smell of cordite for corroboration he couldn't nail the culprit.

The constitutional right of the US citizen to carry arms was instrumental in the 'no big deal' attitude prevailing among US servicemen when it came to the use of guns. The weapon issued might be Government property and intended for use against the enemy, but a little illegal hunting or unauthorized target practice was not viewed as the serious offense it would be in the British or other Allied services. The US authorities did crack down on offenders, particularly to

For pilots, the ultimate snub to regulations was indulging in 'buzz jobs' -very low flying, often dangerously low, just above roof and tree-tops.

placate the civilian population of host countries who tended to be alarmed by the casual use of handguns and rifles. Bullets whistling around the countryside were not appreciated, even in the sandy wastes of North Africa, as Ted Newby discovered: 'While in

Tunis, en route, a couple of us went out into the desert with a rifle and some bullets and engaged in some target practice. We found some old AA shells with no projectile in them. There seemed to be a detonation cap at the rear end but we knew if we hit the cap it should blow up or something. 'We got back a "safe" distance and took turns firing at it. Fortunately no one hit the bull's-eye. Who knows what might have happened if we had.'

'After we spent quite a bit of time shooting out toward the desert, an Arab came running over the hill in front of us yelling and waving his arms. When he got up to us he did a little pantomime indicating bullets hitting around his feet. We got the message and retreated before we started an international incident.'

For pilots, the ultimate snub to regulations was indulging in 'buzz jobs' -very low flying, often dangerously low, just above roof and treetops. An exhilarating experience but a grounding offense if apprehended. Many commanding officers tended to turn a blind eye to this activity, feeling that it built pilot confidence, particularly with fighters that often had to fly at hedge-hopping heights in the course of operations.

There was, however, no justifiable reason why a high altitude B-17 or B-24 should be skipping over the countryside at hedgetop height frightening (or thrilling) the inhabitants and scaring livestock. Thus, apart from the exhilaration of 'fanning the foliage', there was the gamble of being caught in the act and identified. Al Jones, a 44th Bomb Group bombardier, offers the reason and example: 'I think we were typical of most combat crews when we first arrived in England. We knew we were going into a situation from which we might not return but looked at it from the standpoint that it would probably happen to the other guy. We were therefore a little cocky and looked for excitement before combat had sobered us down. A favorite way of letting off steam was buzzing. Popular "targets" were other airfields. On one local flight we decided to give some of our fighter friends a thrill. After all, they were always buzzing the bomber fields. We picked out a field with a mobile runway control vehicle at the end of the runway and turned in toward it as if we were on a landing approach. As Pete let down, we turned to the fighter airfield radio frequency and listened. Almost immediately the tower is screaming at us that we had our wheels up.

The screams got louder the closer we came in toward the runway. Then we saw the men in the control vehicle jump out and run. Pete takes the B-24 down to about three feet over the runway, flies the whole length at that height and climbs away. No doubt leaving some pretty mad runway control people.'

Such escapades took place on what were test or cross-country training flights that should properly have been conducted at altitudes of several thousand feet. Buzzing was a practice that practically all junior officers indulged in at some time or other. Bomber pilots in the MTO were no less inhibited, as B-24 nose gunner Harland Little confirms: 'We enjoyed the days we flew "training" missions. One of our favorite tricks was to buzz the tents of a different group down on the road to see if we could blow them down with our prop wash.

'Another favorite was buzzing small sailboats in the Adriatic, which made things a little rough for the fishermen. Sometimes we'd do a little "splash" target practice nearby. I guess we were far from popular with Italian fishermen.' Although buzzing and aerial extravagance by fighter pilots were indulged, there were limits to official acceptance, as Jack Ilfrey discovered; 'In mid-December 1942 we (the 94th Fighter Squadron) had to leave the mud at Youkles-Bains and move to hot, dry and very dusty Biskra. It was common practice for pilots who scored a victory to do a roll over the field upon return, provided the plane wasn't damaged to let the ground men know of the success. Of course, it was in my nature to have to try and do something more spectacular, so I made a habit of diving down, buzzing across the field, pull up, do my roll and then pull up into a half loop, rolling out at the top. The group CO, Lt Col Ralph Garman, didn't like this exhibition too much, even though he knew it was good for the ground crews' morale. 'The day I got a double victory and feeling my P-38 was in good shape, I was going balls-out on the deck, pulled up and did a double roll and on into a half loop when an engine quit. I had the plane on its back and was just starting to roll out; no airspeed to speak of, ground not

far below me; and I looked to have lost it. Well, I survived a really close shave. Even though I had just become his first ace, Garman was livid. Restricted me to quarters and cut off my liquor allowance. After a good reprimand and my promise not to do it again I was

back hunting Jerries. But, of course, I had to think up some other trick. Returning from a mission soon afterwards, I buzzed the Colonel's headquarters tent which was near some palm trees on the edge of the field. I must have been a little too low for, as I pulled up, I saw Garman run out, shake his fist and jump in his Jeep. As I landed and taxied in to park, the Colonel's Jeep got behind me and collected a lot of the dust my props were throwing up. By the time I'd got out and was about to jump off the wing to meet the stern faced Garman, I was pretty sure I was going to be grounded or transferred. At that moment a command car drove up and out jumped General Pete Quesada from 12th Air Force HQ. He was laughing up a storm! Instead of being chewed out, I was presented with a

fifth of scotch by the General (in appreciation of my knocking down five Jerries) while I listened to him reminding my Colonel how he, Garman, had pulled various stunts when as a Lieutenant he flew under Quesada's command back in the thirties. Despite my "free spirit", Ralph Garman later gave me the best letter of recommendation I ever received in the service.'

This was just one more example of what one of the regular pranksters termed 'the fooling' around syndrome'; more truly defined as an uninhibited zest for non-conformity. Much was of a fairly harmless nature, or a show of youthful exuberance like that noted by Barky Hovsepian: 'The gunners on my crew were 18 and 19 years old. Craving youthful excitement and a desire to aid in the war effort, they scoured the land for empty bottles - any variety. When they had collected a sufficient number, they put them on board our plane before an operational mission and later dropped them through the camera hatch, commencing at the IP. This produced a screaming whistle when the bottles reached terminal velocity. It was psychological warfare! I doubt if the enemy below heard them over the sound of sirens, anti-aircraft guns or the drone of all the bombers, but it did help our gunners psychologically.

'Another prank they had concocted was to steal the 100-pound dummy bomb that was used to indicate our 787th Bomb Squadron Orderly Room. They smuggled it on board and it too was dropped through the camera hatch at "bombs away". On our return, we heard that inquiries were made as to the whereabouts of the bomb/sign. Of course, the search proved fruitless and a new sign was installed.'

Most pranks were played on fellow soldiers or airmen. Sometimes this horseplay would develop into a rivalry between friends, each intent on outsmarting the other. Whitmal Hill and a fellow mechanic in the 441st Sub Depot had such an ongoing exchange:

'My friend Bobby and I continually played tricks on each other to the point that whatever happened one would blame the

Regulations

were a challenge to many people who appear to have derived great satisfaction from flouting them in some manner or other. With an average age of 21, youthful nature undoubtedly had some bearing on this behavior. There was rarely any malice in this action, but if something was forbidden there was always a temptation to attempt it.

other automatically to the amusement of the other men living in our barracks. The capers included welding knife, fork and spoon together, drilling holes under the handle of a mess cup so that it leaked as soon as it was filled, sewing up pockets and sleeves, and so on. Two other guys did the same sort of thing, but one trick boomeranged on the perpetrator. Gene nailed Gabby's shoes to the wood floor and when Gabby discovered this Gene expected retaliation. When Gabby wasn't around Gene put his own shoes under Gabby's bed and Gabby's under his. Sure enough when Gene wasn't around Gabby nailed down the shoes under Gene's bed. There was a lot of laughter from the other guys when he learned what he had done.'

Retaliation frequently featured in barrack pranks, the usual objective being to cause a high degree of discomfort or inconvenience to the victims. Royal Frey of the 20th Fighter Group:

'One time Altman and Lundin, who shared the first room inside the main entrance of our barracks, came back happy from an evening at the mess bar. The rest of us were already asleep but these two went from room to room waking people, joking, jostling and singing on the bed; good-natured kind of stuff and we all took it with a smile. Next day we got together to think up a trick to pay them back and somebody came up with a good idea. That evening when Altman and Lundin were kept entertained at the bar, the rest of us went back to the barracks and wheeled in the 35 bicycles which were parked outside. We piled these one on the other in Altman and Lundin's room. By the time we finished, the bikes were stacked to the ceiling and when the guy who had been holding the door open let go to close it, the bikes settled down behind. Altman and Lundin came back around 11pm and there was a lot of noise as they tried to get in their door. Eventually they succeeded and for the next three hours we could hear them giggling as they struggled to untangle and remove each bike. Their state of inebriation undoubtedly added to their difficulties.'

Youthful fooling in this man's world was not easily accepted by the more senior and serious. George Meshko encountered this disdain:

'Coming back from the "Fox and Hounds" one evening, we were fooling around playing airplanes on our bicycles, just kids' stuff I guess. I was an Me 109 and collided with a guy who was a P-47. Ended up on the road about a half block from the

base hospital. I got tangled up pretty badly and couldn't walk. Had to crawl to the hospital where they found I'd made a mess of my ligaments in one leg. They put me in bed, my leg in a cast, and elevated it. There I am for about a week with a dozen guys, most of whom have been shot up in combat. Towards the end of my stay a bunch of dignitaries arrive in the sick bay talking to patients. The guy in the next bed, who has his eyes all bandaged, gets a Purple Heart pinned on him. Then one of the officers turns to me and says: "What happened to you sergeant?"

'"I fell off a bike, sir."

'Boy, they didn't think that funny. Did I get the cold shoulder! Guess my feelings were kinda hurt. After all I'd flown 25 combat missions, which was more than any of the others had.'

Newcomers were inviting targets, as Bob Strobell found when he joined the 353rd Fighter Group at Metfield, England:

'In one Nissen hut, when a replacement pilot arrived he would find he had been assigned the bunk just inside the door. He was told by the other pilots in the hut that if he heard the air raid warning go off he was to scamper out that door as fast as he could and dive for cover into the ditch just outside. It was emphasized that if he didn't do this, he was likely to be trampled by a pack of pilots right on his heels, intent on getting out the same door. Air raid warnings were common, but rarely did any enemy activity develop around our base. The newcomer was not to know this and probably expected bombs to fall as soon as the siren went. Sure enough, it wasn't long before the air raid warning sounded one night and out the new replacement rushes, dives into the ditch and comes up covered in mud. And there, standing at the top of the ditch, was a group of pilots with silly grins advising him to get out of there because that was where they went at night when they didn't want to walk over to the latrines. The replacement pilot learned fast. Next night he moved down a couple of beds and waited for a new replacement.'

The newcomer was most susceptible to being duped when it came to the local scene away from the base. Here the 'old hands' could have great fun in bringing recent arrivals discomfort; and in the anecdote related by Whitmal Hill the discomfort probably included punishment for a late return to camp: "We were coming back to our base at Bassingbourn from a pass to London. At King's Cross station we encountered sev-

eral men from the B-17 group recently arrived at Nuthampstead, a new airfield a few miles away from Royston town on the opposite side to our base. These guys had obviously been on their first pass to London, for they were not sure which train they should catch. Anyway, they eventually got aboard and away we went. This was late at night and probably the last train. It stopped at several stations and when it pulled into one called Ashwell and Morden, villages a few miles south of Royston, the guy I was with Thornton, winks at me and says he's going to have some fun. As soon as the train stopped he stepped out on the platform and yells in a fake English accent: "All change for Royston." We guys from Bassingbourn knew that you didn't change. We could hear the doors slamming as all the Nuthampstead guys jumped off. The guard blew his whistle and the train moved off up the line to Royston. I expect the Nuthampstead guys are still looking for the jokers who gave them a mighty long walk.'

Practical joking among members of the crew was particularly marked, a relief from the rigors of combat flying, but also an unconscious bonding activity, much in the way a litter of cubs play. John Wilson, the navigator of a 96th Bomb Group B-17 crew, relates many amusing escapades such as the following:

'Our co-pilot, Charlie, came back from a bike ride in the country with six beautiful fresh eggs which he'd persuaded some farmer to sell him. Charlie was really excited about these eggs - they were the first we had seen in five months and kept talking about how he was going to have them cooked; no mention of sharing with the other guys in our hut. A little later Charlie had to go with our pilot out to the field to check the plane. Before he went he thought he had hidden his precious eggs where we wouldn't find them, but he was wrong. Next morning Charlie took the eggs to the mess sergeant and told him just how he wanted them cooked. So the mess sergeant gets a greased pan and carefully taps one of the eggs on the edge to break it. No luck. He taps again and still no yolk appears. He carefully looks at all the eggs and says: "Is this some kind of a joke Lieutenant? These eggs have been hard boiled." Charlie was more than a little mad at us; but, of course, we pleaded innocence.'

The End

From *Milora Film Files*

Captured American Airmen Speak

(The following is a condensed narrative of the experiences of eleven American airmen who were shot down and captured by the Germans during a Fifteenth Air Force attack on the marshalling yards at SALONIKA, GREECE, on 2nd September 1944. They were returned to ITALY on Christmas Day after escaping from their captors in YUGOSLAVIA.)

The formation encountered intense flak on the bomb run and immediately after "Bombs Away" one of the B-24's in the same combat box as the airmen's aircraft sustained a direct hit in the bomb bay and blew up. The explosion caused serious damage to their plane and the pilot gave the order to bail out. All nine men in the crew managed to leave the plane before it crashed into the ground and exploded a few miles North of SALONIKA.

The other two members of the escape party also bailed out of a B-24 which experienced a direct flak hit on the bomb run. They were of the opinion that they were the only survivors as the aircraft exploded immediately after they jumped.

The men hit the ground separately and in groups, but were taken into custody by German troops who were waiting for them to land. Two of the men were taken to the hospital for treatment for burns and subsequently removed to a political prison in SALONIKA where they were placed in solitary confinement.

The majority of the men were taken to a German military post at LANKADAS where they were forced to strip to their shorts and were searched for compasses and other escape aids. Individual interrogations were attempted by the Germans, most of the questions concerning personal and family background but the interrogations were abandoned when the Americans refused to divulge any information other than name, rank and serial number.

Two days later, the entire group was assembled, including the men who were being held at SALONIKA, and placed on an evacuation train destined for BUDAPEST. The train never got beyond BELGRADE, however, as the railroad had been cut by partisans. During the trip via SKOPLJE, MITROVICA and KRALJEVO, frequent halts were made while the locomotive was "borrowed" to move other trains with more important shipments. These delays sometimes lasted for two or three days at the end of which time the locomotive would return and the journey would be resumed.

Before they started on the train ride, the Americans were given some canned rations. This fare, supplemented by a watery soup, was the only food they had during the 20 day ride.

Unable to proceed beyond the Southern edge of BELGRADE, the train returned to MITROVICA where the captives detoured and were placed in a prison camp which had formerly been a school. The camp consisted of a group of buildings surrounded by a wire fence. The American prisoners were billeted in an unfurnished, insect infested building together with five British POW's.

The Germans provided only black bread and soup, and these in such small quantities that had it not been for Italian POW's who worked in the German supply dump and stole food for the Americans and British, the situation would have been extremely serious.

The Germans kept a close guard on the American prisoners and appeared to be afraid to give them any freedom, probably because of the extent of Partisan activity in the area. The Italian, Russian and Bulgarian POW's were allowed considerably more freedom.

On 5 November 1944, the Germans started evacuating the camp and making preparations to march on foot to Germany. The eleven Americans, together with one British POW, one Bulgarian officer and four

Russian airmen, left camp in a party guarded by 12 Germans and 12 Italian Fascist guards.

On the morning of the third day, about 37 kilometers Northwest of MITROVICA, Chetniks entered the temporary camp and demanded that they be given custody of the POW's. In the resulting skirmish the prisoners scattered but were rounded up by the Chetniks who also captured the German and Italian guards.

The Americans, British and Russians were taken to a Chetnik Corps Headquarters in the vicinity of POPOVGE where they remained until 24 November. During this period, the Chetniks, who were constantly engaged in attacking German troops and convoys, accorded them excellent treatment.

The party was subsequently taken by the Chetniks to Bulgarian Headquarters at LEPOSAVICI where arrangements were made to transport them to SOFIA. They arrived at SOFIA on 4 December where they lived at the American College until they were evacuated to BARI on 25 December.

COMMENTS: The experiences of these eleven Fifteenth Air Force airmen confirm some of the basic rules of escape training. It should particularly be noted that:

(1) Even when imprisoned and closely guarded by the German, opportunities for escape frequently arise.

(2) Patience is essential, and this combined with a full assessment of the situation with escape as the object, contributed largely to the escape of all the Americans. They were aware at all times of the presence of friendly forces in the vicinity and were prepared to make a break when the chance was afforded them.

(3) They bettered their living conditions by making friends with the Italian POW's who supplied them with food.

(4) In the BALKANS assistance can be expected from

the Chetniks as well as the Partisans.

(5) POW's can successfully refuse to give any information other than name, rank and serial number.

The End

The other two members of the escape party also bailed out of a B-24 which experienced a direct flak hit on the bomb run. They were of the opinion that they were the only survivors as the aircraft exploded immediately after they jumped.

Book Review

Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories

by
Ian McLachlan, and Russell J Zorn

Published by Patrick Stephens Limited, Sparkford, England
Zenith Books Osceola, WI 54020

Over the years, since the end of WWII, British writers have published scores of excellent books dealing with the activities of the United States Army Air Forces based in southeast England. These authors felt that a proper account of the traumatic events that took place on their soil must be recorded accurately. One of these authors is Ian McLachlan who has compiled 45 stories of eye-witness accounts of the tragedies and triumphs of Eighth Air Force bomber crews. He collaborated with the late Russell J Zorn an American photographer based in Britain during the war who provided the excellent photographs that illustrate much of the book. Bomber crews trained in the States under ideal conditions were quite unprepared for the realities of wartime conditions. Wartime loads often exceeded the design gross weight of the aircraft making the plane difficult to fly. It took considerable ability to maneuver the sluggish four engine bomber under many days of nasty weather into formation without hitting anyone else. Casualties were high. The realities of combat made men out of boys.

Green crews on their first combat mission were often awed by the sightseeing spectacle unfolding before their eyes. The rude awakening of the first exploding cannon shells penetrating their bomber was the initial step in their learning process. It was no longer fun and games, the enemy was shooting with real bullets. There is the sickening spectacle of a broken aircraft spilling men into space without parachutes clutching the air in desperate futility, one moment of misjudgment could bring tragedy to the whole crew. Ian McLachlan grew up in East Anglia where the United States Airforce was based, had a boyhood interest in aviation, and was witness to the air war that was happening all around him. This sparked his interest in gathering of the stories that make up this book.

"The Milk Run"

FOR S/SGT FRANK W. 'Bud' Buschmeier, 19 March 1944, started bleakly with the noisy arrival of unexpected guests. Returning from operations to find their own airfields weatherbound, RAF and RCAF aircrews landed elsewhere, including Frank's base at Thorpe Abbots. As they came in chattering to use the ominously large number of spare cots, their 2:30 a.m. arrival was barely appreciated. However, cheerful assertions that such lousy weather would give him a lie-in placated the sleepy

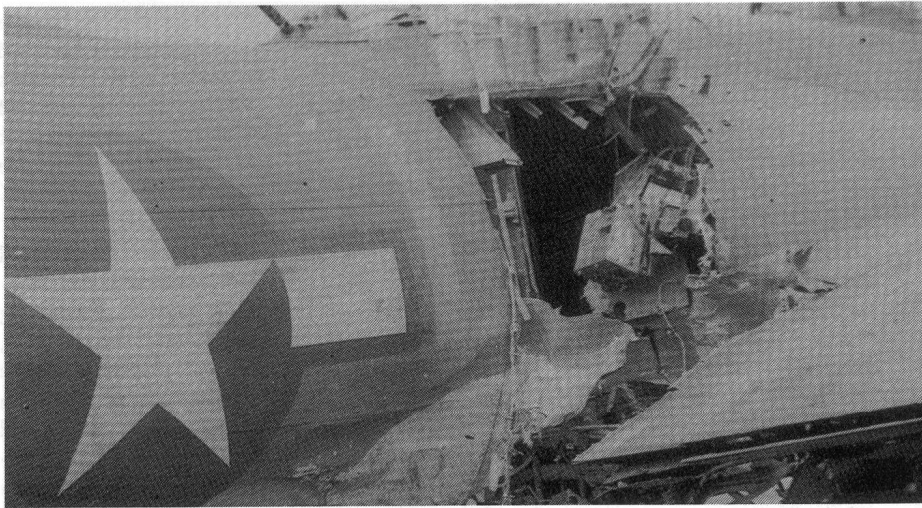


American. It seemed that Sunday would be a day of peace, but USAAF commanders deemed otherwise, and Frank returned from

church to find that an alert had been called. Two of Frank's four missions had been to Berlin, and vacant barrack beds symbolized losses suffered by the 100th BG. Today's late start precluded long-range targets and briefing officers promised a 'milk run'. Their target, a V-weapon site at Marquise Mimoyecques, meant that only eighteen minutes would be spent over enemy territory.

As Lt John P. Gibbons pre-flighted their B-17 *Miss Irish*, her crew busied themselves checking equipment and ensuring that personal 'lucky' rituals were followed, supporting the shamrock on their bomber's nose. At 3 p.m. *Miss Irish* was airborne with 64 other 3rd Division B-17s, and Bud could be forgiven for wishing that the RAF assurances given twelve hours earlier had been correct. Even a 'milk run' was poor consolation if you got hit. It was six minutes into France when Bud felt the B-17 jurch from the 'whuump' of a shell exploding below the nose. Moments later, another round detonated near the tail. The Fortress flew on unscathed, but Bud was uneasy. Peering anxiously from the left waist window he tensed, every instinct clamoring alarm, as the third shell hurtled towards them at 3,000 ft per second. There was a violent, terrifying roar, and the B-17 was punched more than 100 ft straight up. In those microseconds of bedlam, blast threw Bud backwards as shrapnel and pieces of radio-room equipment peppered his flak suit. Staggering to his feet,

he looked in horror to where the torn-off door of the radio compartment exposed a scene forever imprinted on his mind. Ed Walker, the radioman, had been blown on to his work table, and Bud saw that the young flier's legs were torn to shreds. Death must have been instantaneous - or was it? Even if *Miss Irish* was doomed, Bud had to help his



comrade. Jerking the quick-release tabs on his flak suit, Bud turned, grabbed his parachute, and started forward, clipping it on as he went. At that moment he was distracted by a piece of the radio-room door whipped off in the slipstream, which was bouncing along the fuselage towards him.

When he looked up, Ed had fallen from the table and, with increasing horror, Bud realized that his crewmate had been sucked through a gaping hole in the fuselage. Ball gunner Bernard L. Spragg watched, sickened and helpless, as Ed's body tumbled past his turret. Falling earthwards, the figure diminished until it was lost from view. Bud, peering into the radio-room, gaped at a hole 'a jeep could be driven through,' and realized the B-17 might break in two at any moment. Bud nervously called Lt Gibbons, and his report drew shocked disbelief from the pilot, who ordered engineer Ira Arnold aft to give an unexaggerated account. Bombs were jettisoned to ease airframe stress, but in his progress over the catwalk Ira discovered more troubles. One of the 500 Ib bombs had jammed in its shackles. This was frightening enough, but Ira's face showed real terror when he reached what was left of the radio room, where loose aluminum shrieked in the slipstream. Handing control to co-pilot Lt Robert Dykeman, John Gibbons came to see for himself, and Bud saw the pilot's eyes widen with disbelief.

To add to the mounting confusion, it was realized that several parachutes had been lost or damaged, and Ira's panic increased when he realized that his was missing. To placate his frightened crewman, John Gibbons courageously unclipped his

own parachute and passed it to the engineer before returning to the cockpit.

As armorer, it should have been Bud's task to deal with the hang-up, but access across the radio-room was impossible. Bud tried explaining to Ira how he could trigger the release mechanism manually using a screwdriver, but the badly-shaken engineer failed to comprehend. Finally, the bombardier, Sterling Blakeman, encouraged and helped Ira to release the bomb while Miss Irish circled gently over the Channel. Stretching from the narrow catwalk over a wind-screaming abyss demanded courage, and both men were exhausted when the bomb tumbled clear. While they struggled, further misfortune struck when one of the damaged parachutes opened and a stream of silk erupted through the gashed fuselage, threat-

ening to wrench off the weakened tail section. Leaning from the right waist window, Bernie Spragg caught and deflated the writhing nylon by holding it against the fuselage. The structural integrity of their B-17 was now so precarious that Gibbons abandoned thoughts of Thorpe Abbotts and searched for the nearest airfield. Darkness was subduing the landscape when they spotted the 358th Fighter-Group base at Raydon, in Suffolk. The pilot knew that their lives depended on the sweetest of touchdowns: a heavy landing might break the bomber in half with disastrous consequences.

Easing into the final approach, John called for gear down and welcomed the comforting green from the

instrument panel as they shed height. Once before, on a Stateside training flight, John had landed a B-17 on one main wheel, and his crew trusted him. However, no one could anticipate what would happen when the bomber's damaged spine suffered landing stresses. Gently, gently, John eased off the final inches and *Miss Irish* came softly in to land. Tires touched tarmac in gentle puffs of rubber and the bomber settled, her crew scarcely believing they were down as it rolled to a standstill. Within moments the battered B-17 became surrounded by admiring airmen as her crew spilled gratefully on to terra firma. Soon, two bottles of Scotch appeared as gifts to celebrate their amazing arrival. Nine weary survivors appreciated something strong to ease the tension of their so-called 'milk-run'.



Two views (above left and below right) of the radio compartment of "Miss Irish."

Book Review

The Desert Rats

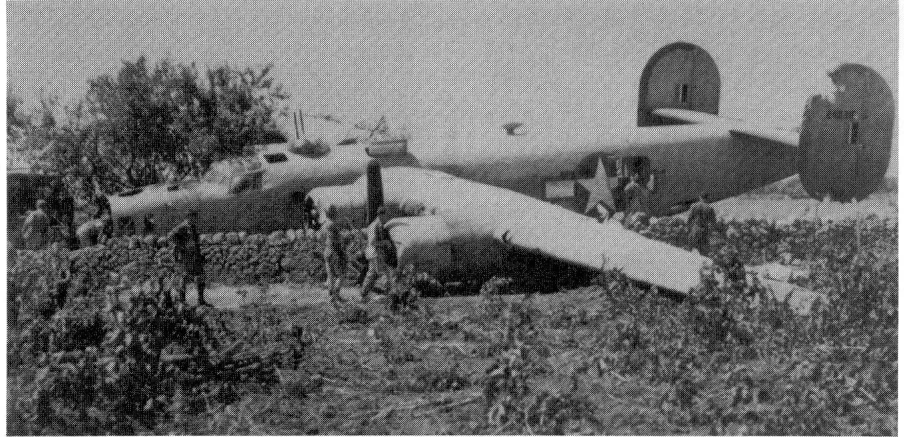
"98th Bomb Group and the August
1943 Ploesti Raid"

By Michael J Hill

Pictorial Histories Publishing Co,
Missoula, MT

Michael J Hill has put together a powerful history of the 98th Bomb Group's participation in the first low level mission of August 1, 1943. Combing through many sources he transports us back to those pre 15th Air Force days when the 9th Air Force was operating first from Ramat David in Palestine and ending up in Benina Main near Benghazi, North Africa. It was a most inhospitable place to stage a 2000 mile mission. The dust storms, the heat, and sand that seemed to get into everything as there was but meager shelter in the form of looseflapped tents. The sands were most brutal on the aircraft, especially the engines even with desert filters 60 hours was just about the maximum time one could expect before the engine had to be exchanged. There was no engine buildup facilities that existed in clean aired England with the 8th Air Force, instead bare engines were shipped 15th Air Force style. Chow didn't even come up to watery C rations reviled by so many of the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups crews at Torretta. At least the flight crews could get some relief from the oppressive weather, by flying a mission in the cold air of altitude, but the ground crews had to suffer through the whole time the 98th was based in North Africa.

In 1943 it was still true that an army moves on its stomach, but much of WWII armies also moved on petroleum as well. It



Snake Eyes bent and battered, but safe in Sicily.

was believed that if Ploesti refineries could be knocked out of action, the war could be shortened by six months. As a result of the Casablanca meeting between Roosevelt and Churchill the destruction of Ploesti was assigned to the 9th Air Force. After considering conventional daylight bombing from high altitude, the mission planners realized that it would take 1370 bomber sorties to insure that every structure was hit at least twice, and would take from four to six weeks to accomplish. Even if it was possible to assemble a large force, time was not on the side of the Allies. The most planes that could be mustered was about 200. The low level mission was proposed for several reasons, wastage of misdirected bombs would be reduced, German defenses could be defeated by flying under the radar screen, fuel burn out would be less, which was important for such a long range mission where flight time could reach 15 hours. A 400 gallon bomb bay tank brought the tankage up 3150 gallons. The plane selected for the mission was the B-24D, most were the light weight model (no ball turret) as it had the greatest range of American aircraft.

Hill's book is written in a tight 'you are there' style that brings the reader into the action that has been reconstructed in great detail as shown below from one excerpt.

"The second wave stared at the on-rushing complex. Ted Helin's Boilermaker II, on the far right, was in deep trouble. They had been hit and were on fire. Raymond Hubbard delivered the bombs into a cracking plant. Helin pulled the nose of Boilermaker II up just in time to miss a chimney. Ray Walaska threw his incendiaries into the smoke, and remembered it as a "wild ride." Harry Opp climbed down from the turret to yell into the pilot's ear. It was the only way

he could communicate with them since the intercom had been shot out. "We were hit bad. The bomb bay was full of smoke, then I saw fire come out of the wing tanks, #3 on fire and another vibrating like heck. I knew we weren't going to make it. If we stayed in the air we would have lost a wing."

Helin and co-pilot Charles Smith were literally flying for life. Boilermaker II had one good engine, no nosewheel, and little aileron control. They were still burning, but no longer carried the lethal tanks in the bomb bay. Harry Opp recalled what happened next. "We were about six or seven miles from the target. Happened to get a big enough cornfield and he (Helin) did a hell of a job sitting her down, just like a crate of eggs." Boilermaker II slid to a stop with her tail high in the air. The crew scrambled out. Ray Walaska dropped from the rear escape hatch and sprained his ankle. He remembered thinking, "I won't be playing much ball anymore." All who had watched the last few moments of Boilermaker's flight agreed that it would be a miracle if anyone got out alive. Pilot Ted Helin and Charles Smith had produced exactly that, a miracle. The entire crew escaped with minor injuries. They split up, the men in the nose going one way, the men from the tail going another. Just as they had agreed before take-off, it was every man for himself.

The air campaign against the oil fields including Ploesti cost the Air Force 286 aircraft lost, and 2829 crewmen killed or wounded. The low level mission of August 1, 1943 was the most cost effective in terms of destruction for the number of planes in the attack force.

Air Force veterans of World War Two will find much to identify with in this book.

The End

My Flights With The Wisemen

By

Claude M. Basler, 827 Squadron

By way of introduction my name is Claude M. Basler a radio operator and gunner, on Lt. John S. Wise's, crew the pilot of our B 24, heavy bomber, we affectionately called "Wiseman" no matter what aircraft we were assigned to. The crew consisted of 10 men. Our association started September 1, 1944 at Boise Air Field, Idaho. This is the place we received our pre combat training. Each day we flew a practice mission so that each crew member got experience and expertise at his particular combat assignment. As the pilot and commander of the plane, Lt. Wise was most seriously aware and concerned about all the details and functions of the plane and each crew member. He was a task maker of the first water, firm, but not in an offensive manner, always able to win everyone's whole hearted cooperation without any shape or form of resentment, having the great ability to adjust to changing situations and respected by all of his crew of fellow officers.

As a member of the 15th Air Force, 484 Bomb Group 827th Squadron based near Cerignola, Italy, we flew 19 combat missions. This included the last mission the day Hitler surrendered and the war was over (not the one to be on). The first mission we flew was in the last plane of the last formation over the target. This meant hundreds of planes had already gone by and they were getting good target practice. Not good. The last mission, Hitler's day of surrender, he was the lead plane (1st.) over the target. Since all the enemy forces were pulled back, it gave them a more intensive, accurate, effective attack and fighter planes.

In both the first and last mission, we lost exactly half of the planes sent up by our group.

A capsule review of our first mission should be titled a session in "Murphy's Law" or "Ignorance is Bliss". Here goes:

He had the hottest target, Leuz, Germany, in all Europe. (Heavy Flack, Heavy Fighters).

He had tail end Charlie position (lousy, misery loves company)

He was assigned the plane which had the most missions in the European theater. A record high command was very proud - and you were reminded.

The plane was also the slowest, so much so he had to jettison a 500 lb. bomb in the Adriatic Sea to keep up with the formation. Less courageous people would have turned back and gone back to base. This was acceptable by the High Command.

Finally got to the target and the bomb bay doors wouldn't open — had to be cranked down manually. Navigator became unconscious due to lack of oxygen during this procedure.

Shortly after, got a direct hit, plane dropped 500 to 1,000 ft. on the wing — gave

"Shortly after, we got a direct hit, plane dropped 500 to 1,000 ft. on the wing — "

signal to get ready to bail out. fought controls and finally got leveled out.

On the bomber run, which is at full throttle, it was like he was driving a model T at the Indy 500. By the time he finished and dropped bombs, there was no American plane to be seen. All you could see were clouds of smoke, planes on ground on fire, many.

He had 2 of his 4 engines knocked out, oil pouring and splashing back on the win-

dows, partially blocking the view.

A very lonely, desolate, desperate, defeated feeling as we flew over enemy airstrip, felt like a sitting duck.

Conversation over the intercom went like this. "Pilot to Navigator, how far is it to Switzerland"? (He had just about revived). Navigator, "Why, is there something wrong"? (We knew we were in trouble then). Pilot "****!***, I asked a specific question and I want a specific answer". Navigator "Gee, I don't know, my maps were blown off my table when the bomb bay doors opened". The real answer came in a couple seconds in the form of three enemy fighters planes.

We lucked out on the first 2 passes (breaking radio silence, only allowed in desperate situations, we gave our position and cried for fighter cover).

Just as the 3 enemy planes were making a run on our tail, 3 of our American P-38's came out of the clouds, each zeroing in on an enemy plane, blasting them out of the sky.

Incidentally, there were 3 black pilots — quickly they got in formation, did a roll over underneath our plane — all you could see were white scarves and teeth and a hand signal indicating they were going back up in the clouds and would escort us out of enemy territory. A greater scene, miracle, I have never seen or felt.

Just when luck seemed to be coming our way, fuel became a problem.

At one point "ditching" in the Adriatic Sea became a possibility. After many calculations, "crossing our fingers", his favorite expression, he decided to get back to our landing field, and he did.

Once that plane touched down on the runway, you never heard any better cheering at a football game.

Lt. Wise got a lot of pats on the back and hearty happy handshakes.

His serenity, courage, wisdom and stamina had been tested to the maximum and his confidence prevailed. He had completed his baptism of war — it was a serious, thankful crew that left that plane.

Incidentally, the plane ran out of fuel 200 yards after it touched down and had to be towed off the runway.

- Every mission "Murphy's Law" seemed to say hello but never like the first or last missions.

The End

War Diary

My Mission Record

by
Roy A Nichols, 825 Sq.

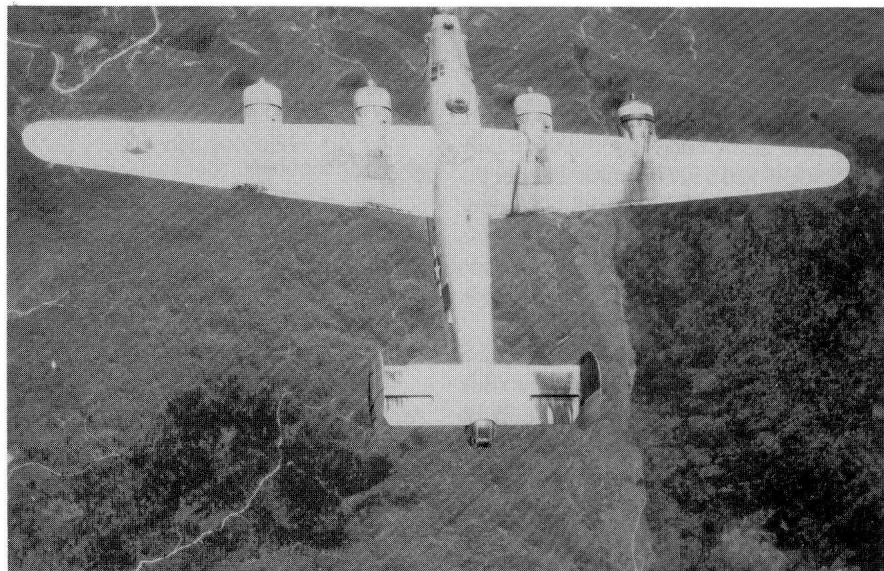
Our crew ferried a B-24H, (44-50200) from Hamilton Field near San Francisco, California August 26 1944, and arrived at Torretta Field, Cerignola, Italy, September 9, 1944 Our route was from San Francisco to Amarillo to Manchester, New Hampshire, to Presque Isle, Maine, to Gander Lake, Newfoundland, to Lagens Field, Terciera Island, Azores, We made landfall in North Africa, landing at Marrakech, Morocco, and then on to Tunis and across the Mediterranean Sea to Bari, Italy, finally arriving at Torretta Field, 12 Kilometers southwest of Cerignola, Italy.

Presque Isle was an unscheduled stop. Lt Dionne landed here for reasons unknown to me, and caught the radio operator off guard, as he was using the trailing antenna for transmission, and when we came in over the town on the final it sheared off including the fish (a 2*lead weight used to stretch the wire into line behind and below the plane). We stayed two nights there. Next day while playing baseball I sprained my ankle and on the following morning left for Gander Lake.

At Gander Lake the pilot Dionne contacted the Convair tech rep and protested the handling of our plane. Thereon we took an impromptu test flight. On getting airborne we discovered that our #3 engine oil tank was siphoning oil as the cap was not secured by the mechanics, causing a loss of almost all of the oil in number three tank in just one circle of the field.

In the Azores our navigator came up with an infected eye, and was hospitalized for four days. Our crew hopped the fence and went to town, and had a ball after meeting a Portuguese restaurant owner who had lived in New York for ten years. He treated us to champagne after we dined, to which we responded by buying more after which we found a horse and buggy, and took a drive to the beach. Beautiful white sand and no one but ourselves in sight...

The following was taken from personal notes recorded in my impromptu "note-book diary."



A 484th BG B-24 in distress. 1484th BG photo via W A Moncrief, 824 sq.

Mission No #1

August 13, 1944. Marshalling yards vicinity of Vienna, Austria. The flak was very heavy. Intelligence estimated that 450 A. A. guns protected the target, but we suspect there were a lot more, as the flak was really thick. Although we came through this with flak holes scattered through the forward end of the plane, and spent flak bruised the bombardier, and ripping through the co pilot's flight suit near his calf, our engines, flight controls, and flight surfaces were not damaged, and everything was normal when we peeled off for our base to line up for landing.

While waiting for our turn to land we saw a plane touch down hard on the runway. A 500 pound bomb, fully armed fell out of the bomb bay, bounced, and blew off the tail of the plane, causing it to roll end over end.

When we landed we passed the control tower and a mass of rubble in front of it, no tail, broken off props, hydraulic fluid, and flight jackets strewn all about. It was all that remained of Mickey ship#200, the same plane that our crew ferried from Hamilton Field to Torretta. We were not too happy when we found out that this plane was to be taken away from us and assigned to another crew.

Mission No #2

August, 24, 1944. Railroad. bridge, Ferrara, Italy. We lost number one engine a few minutes before reaching the IP.

I was in the bomb bay trying to change turbo amplifier when bomb bay doors opened on the bomb run. We were hit by heavy flak, Number 2 engine quit immediately and number 3 engine developed large plume of oil indicating a punctured oil tank siphoning it empty in three or so minutes leaving the plane with one full operating engine, (#1), which ran away, bomb doors stuck open, and one 1,000 pound bomb stuck on one hook in the bomb bay, which I toggled out. Also had indication of engine fire.

I was still in the bomb bay and out of contact by interphone when the Pilot, Henry Dionne, gave the order to bail out, we landed in a ten mile circle 45 miles north of Ancona in the middle of the Adriatic Sea. We lost our navigator, Garland A Hall, 2nd Lt. Ashville NC. He was never seen again after we plunged into the middle of the Adriatic Sea. We assumed he hit a bulkhead on bailout. and was knocked out.

At about dusk we were picked up and taken to an English Army hospital in Ancona, Italy, where we were housed for about four days, and then sent by British hospital ship to Bari, Italy. (15th Air Force headquarters) from where we were sent to our home base, except Ervan Hestad, tail gunner, who was hospitalized after we were discharged. He was pulled from the sea six hours later, in total darkness in very poor condition, due to exposure in the sea. He rejoined us later.

Mission No# 3

September 1, 1944. The target was again the railroad bridge at Ferrara, Italy.

This time we flew north by the Tyrrhenian Sea and across Northern Italy to the target, whereas on the first Ferrara mission we flew both north and south over the Adriatic. While over the mountains of Northern Italy pilot Dionne had a nerve attack and put the plane into a steep left bank and out of formation causing me to believe I would have another bailout for the same target. Our copilot, and the successor as 1st pilot took over.

Lt. Robert Fritts, co-pilot at that time pulled the plane back into control and back into formation. After that time he did all the flying of the aircraft from the co-pilot position. After our 17th mission Bob Fritts became our first pilot and Lt. Dionne was sent to the ferry command and flew non-combat only.

Mission #4.

September 3, 1944 Railroad ferry slips on the Danube river at Smederevo, Yugoslavia.

We were flying planes delivered to us from the 8th air force. They were much heavier than our own planes and flew awkwardly due to tons of armor bucket seats and flat armor around the flight deck. Thus, when power was decreased the momentum carried them (drifted) forward and the only control for speed was to slow down by raising the nose, which sometimes was impossible, due to the position in the formation to which it was assigned (we could have rammed the plane above us, which could be fatal to both planes, and possibly others close by).

One of the planes in our group flying brownnose position in this type of plane was caught in a drift on the bomb run. Being under the lead plane he couldn't slow by lifting his nose (risk of collision of 2 planes). At this moment the time came for bombs away and an unarmed 500 pound fell on his nose just forward of flight deck, crushing the control cables and pulleys and disabling the plane, which fell off in a tight spin into a 90 degree bank (wing tip down) generating an overwhelming spinning force pinning against anyone inside and their effort of escaping and bailing out. Because of this the plane fell over into a tight spin and disappeared into the clouds below. We saw no parachutes, no flak. All assumed dead.

Mission No #5.

September 11, 1944. Flew a round trip supply mission to Lyon, France in support of the invasion of Southern, France.

Mission No #6.

September 13, 1944. Flew a round trip supply mission to Lyon, France in support of the invasion of Southern, France.

Mission No #7, 8, and 9.

September 14 to October 10, 1944. Moved to Aix En Provence. Before the war this was a French Air Force cadet training field. We were supplying fighter squadrons with bombs and fuel because the Germans had destroyed bridges and highways. We got credit for three missions at 1/3 mission per ferry trip. Spent my 20th birthday in France.

Mission No#10.

October 13, 1944. Returned to combat missions. Target motor works factory at Vienna, Austria.

Mission #11.

October 20, 1944. Romeo armament works, Milan, Italy

Mission #12.

November 8, 1944. Marshalling yards at Villa Fontana, Italy

Mission #13

November 20 1944. Marshalling yards at Prerov, Czechoslovakia.

Mission #14

December 17, 1944. Oil refineries, Odertal, Germany

Mission #15

December 19, 1944. Oil refineries, Blecheimer, Germany. Saw several planes including a P-38, which turned onto its wingtip, split into two parts lengthwise at center of fuselage one side on fire and go down during the attack by three 109s.

Mission #16

December 27, 1944 . railroad bridge Vicenza, Italy.

Mission #17

December 29, 1944. Marshalling yards, Passau, Germany. It was clouded in over most of Southern Germany.. After much circling looking for a hole in the clouds to attack our target, we gave up, as the winds had forced us over Switzerland, so we held our bombs and flew east to clear that country. The weather forcing us to climb up to 28,500' over the Brenner Pass. On way to Italy, where we stumbled into a hot nest of 88 mm A.A. guns at Udine, Italy (N.E. Corner, near Yugoslavia).The Germans could see us clearly and peppered us with their 150 or more 88mm. A.A. guns, which were falling into the position of the box we were leading. The pilot took our box and lead us over to the opposite side of the formation, as we were taking many hits, one of which punctured our left main landing gear tire.

The flight leader instructed all planes to take their bombs home if they had enough gas to carry them. When our pilot called me, as engineer, I replied that we never would have enough gas to carry our bombs home and land, a decision I made when I recalled what happened to the plane we ferried from San Francisco when a live bomb dropped out of the airplane blowing off the tail.

Some days you can do no wrong.. My policy turned out to be a wise decision, as it saved Uncle Sam several insurance policy payoffs that day. I still have a piece of that policy. To our surprise we found when we had slowed to about 85 M.P.H. the pull of a flat left hand main gear tire was forcing us left approximately into the path of plane mentioned in previous page toward control tower. In spite of steering right, braking right, the drag was pulling us left toward the tower and we were completely off the runway, and all the men in the tower were trying to abandon it as we bore down on it. Our pilot said to the copilot: "hit the main switch", who replied "I can't" I'm too busy. Then I jumped across the copilot to reach the bar switch, killing all power. Remember, as engineer it was my job to assist the pilots. We ended the crash landing without touching the control tower, and without further damage to the airplane, with 10 happy air-crew members and seven or eight men from the control tower who could have stepped out onto the wing tip where we stopped, about ten feet from a drainage ditch leading from the runway past the tower. Some of the men had not made it to the ladder and off the

tower by the time we stopped. If I had been a drinking man, it would have been a night for that sort of celebration.. Lucky us!! Lucky them !!

Mission #18

January 15, 1945. Marshalling yards, Vienna, Austria.

Mission #19

January 20, 1945. Marshalling yards, Linz, Austria.

Mission #20

January 31, 1945. Oil refineries, Moosebierbaum, Austria.

Mission #21

February 8, 1945. Central repair shops (Loco), Vienna, Austria.

Mission #22

February 16, 1945. Marshalling yards, Rosenheim, Austria.

Mission #23

February 19, 1945. Marshalling yards, Graz, Austria.

Mission #24

February 22, 1945. Marshalling yards, Danauworth, Germany.

Mission #25

February 25, 1945. Marshalling yards, Linz, Austria, North Main.

Mission #26

February 28, 1945. Marshalling yards, Bressanone, Italy.

Mission #27

March 4, 1945. Marshalling yards, Graz, Austria.

Mission #28

March 12, 1945. Marshalling yards, Vienna, Austria.

Mission #29

March 14, 1945. Marshalling yards, Weiner Neustadt, Germany.

Mission #30

March 16, 1945. Marshalling yards, MBM, Amstettin, Austria

Mission #31

March 20, 1945. Marshalling yards, Wels, Austria

Mission #32

March 21, 1945. Marshalling yards (Villack) Bruck, Austria.

Mission #33

March 22, 1945 Oil refineries, Vienna, Austria. Took near misses, several 88 mm shells over Vienna on last mission, knocking out our #1 & #2 engines, our hydraulic system.

Flew to Hungary on the right engines, crabbing all the way...Not all of the shells were misses.. I cranked down the landing gear by hand, and kicked out nose gear, tied my chute and harness to waist gun mount to stop the plane on the ground at the Russian airbase, Kecskemet, Hungary.

Total combat time:255 hours

Mission No # Go Home

After my return from Hungary, and with my pilot and assigned co-pilot, we test hopped planes at Torretta, aimed at ferrying them to U.S.A. They were to be used in Pacific war eventually.

I was assigned as engineer of B-24L for return to the (ZI) U.S.A. We left Gioa Field, June 19, 1945 to arrive in Tunis, June 20, 1945, then on to Marrekech, June 21, 1945.

We arrived at Dakar, June 22, 1945 and took the big hop over to Fortaleza, Brazil, and on to Georgetown, British Gianna. On June 24, 1945 we arrived at San Juan, Puerto Rico, and finally hit stateside June 25, 1945 at Savannah, Georgia. We flew a total distance of 8590 miles., the end of our ferry assignment. I was sent to Charleston, South Carolina. by C-54., 11 months from the date we took off from Hamilton Field, California.

Went by train to Beale Air Base, Marysville, California in 7 days in a chair

car. It was pulled by a dirty coal burner from Savannah across Carolina, Tennessee, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and Colorado.

We were in Denver for 20 hours, and given permission to leave the depot for a maximum of two hours when we asked, but had to report back at the end of this period, so we couldn't get any distance from the troop train, which was waiting for the next train west to hitch hike a pull.

From there we went to Utah, Nevada, and finally to California. Never again..so dirty, we all threw away our filthy khaki uniforms.

The crew on the last mission included eleven members as follows:

Pilot, Robert E Fritts

Co/Pilot, Alva M Schick or James Calvert,

Bombardier, Robert C. Mills,

Ball turret gunner, Emilio Marchese, Engineer, Roy A Nichols.

Tail gunner, Ervan Hestad.

Waist gunner ,Gerald Roach,

Radio operator, Vernon Oldfield.

Nose gunner, David L Leap

The End

Authors Note:

On page 21, left column, of the Torretta Flyer 10, reference is made to Alva M Schick, whose aircraft was shot down 7 February, 1945.

He crashed and walked out when shot down on a mission to the Florodorf refinery, near Vienna.

Above was written by W.M. (Milo) Henderson, 824th squadron. Lt. Schick filled in as co-pilot on our crew for a few missions after Lt. Dianne was taken off combat and transferred to C-54's. Our pilot was Robert E Fritts from that point to end of our tour.

Letters to the Editor

Big Creek School
Big Creek, California

Editor Torretta Flyer

Dear Mr Markel

Our names are Robert Martin and Sydney Belanger. We are in the fourth grade at Big Creek School We are doing a research project about the B-24 bomber that crashed into Hester Lake on December 5, 1943. We are trying to learn about all the men in the 461st Bomb Group that died while they were stationed at Hammer Field, Fresno, California. If you have anymore information on the enclosed, please let us know.

767 Squadron Crew 61, Hammer Field

Bush, L.G.-Pilot
Graham, S.A.-Co-Pilot
Higgins, D.C.-Navigator
McCrary, E.L.-Bomb
Jackson, D.W.-Eng
Bryson, H.S.-Gun
Johnson, C.W.-Nose
Novotny, Billy H. KLOD, Fresno 1-8-44
Atz, John F.

765 Squadron Others on the Turvey Crew

Williams, W.H.-Gun
Charrette-Gun
Warner, R.C. -Nose KIA 1944
Alexander, R. -Tail

765 Squadron Crew 35

Armory, Clement G. KLOD Fresno 1-8-44
Grimm, W.J. -Pilot
Waster, R.G.-Co-Pilot
Simeroth-Nav
Ahadi, Abe -Bomb
Williams, M.D.-Eng
Duchingshy, L.F.-Radio
James, Jack B. -Top Gunner 1989
Small, J.W.-Nose
Stevenson, E. -Tail

Hester Lake Plane

Turvey, Charles W. -0682921
Hester, Robert M. -0755344
Cronin, William T-0691961
Fish, Ellis H. -0752711
Burse, Robert O. -1084894
Wendtke, Howard A. -15354576

Crew 31

Tribe, R.V.-Pilot, KLOD Fresno
Drucker, E.J.-Co-Pilot, KLOD 11-22-43
Stewart, E.C.-Nav
Ekdaahl-Bomb
Berends, C.J. -Eng, KIA '44
McCray, J.G. -Radio
Masters-Top
Holliday, D.E.-Bottom, 1982
Kline, J.W.-Nose 1985
Metzger, -Tail

Thank you.

Robert Martin
Sydney Belanger

◇◇◇◇◇

Valley Streaan, NY
Dear Beatrice and Bud

Enjoyed the winter edition of the Torretta Flyer and the story comparing the B-17 with the B-24. Enclosed is another man's opinion, which happens to be mine also.

On the February 21, 1945 mission to Vienna we came off the target with only number one engine left. We all bailed out 90 miles south of Vienna at Oberart, and not one of us received a scratch. Admittedly we were very lucky, but my precious B-24 saw to it on this mission that all ten men got out alive. The argument as to what plane was superior will never be settled, but as for me I'll take the B-24.

"In praise of the B-24. Having trained in both the B-17 and the B-24 and then completing 57 combat missions in the B-24, I offer the following comments. Both were great airplanes; however, the B-24, being developed three years later than the B-17, was certainly the superior machine. The B-24 was produced in greater numbers, 18,900

B-24s to 12,400 B-17s. The B-24 saw action in every war theater. It could carry a heavier bomb load farther and faster than the B-17. It not only was used for high-altitude bombardment, but had the versatility to work at lower altitudes for ground support, including mine laying, and also served as an excellent platform for submarine patrol."

Joseph M. Kovalcik 464th Bomb
Group Via Ken Hubertz, 824 Sq

◇◇◇◇◇

Tempe, Arizona
Dear Bud:

In response to your inquiry, I do not recall any particular rivalry between the 8th and the 15th AF.

I queried my brother, who was a bombardier with the 8th and he said the same and that he was aware of the 15th.

Saturday I met an attorney in Tucson who had been with the 8th AF before the 15th was active. He recalled that the 8th had furnished some personnel to the 15th at the time of its activation. The enclosed photo is of Floyd Creasman

Robert Cole, 484th BG Hq



Floyd Creasman, Pilot 826 sq. Robert Cole photo 826 sq.

El Toro, California
Bud Markel
Editor "The Torretta Flyer"

Dear Bud

The following are my comments re. B-17 vs B-24....

Comparing the two aircraft is like comparing apples & oranges.

By WWII standards the B-17 was designed as a high altitude machine. By the same standard the B-24 with its very efficient "Davis Wing" and the resulting high wing loading (higher than any other U.S. aircraft except possibly the Martin B-26) could only be considered as a medium altitude aircraft. A command decision sent it to the European Theater and by the same decision it was deployed as a high altitude aircraft. Emphasize, it was by direction, not by design, that caused it to be compared with the B-17 on similar missions.

There are other facts to be considered. The B-24 was equipped with far superior engines, the Pratt & Whitney, compared to the B-17's Wright engines. I am well aware of the performance of the Wright having accumulated approximately 2000 hours in the Wright equipped B-25. The missions planned for bomb releases at such altitudes forced the high wing loaded B-24 into the corner of stall or buffet. Many times we had to crack wing flaps to maintain any semblance of a reasonable bombing platform.

In the final analysis the B-17 was a better aircraft for the European Theater. By the same token the B-24 was far superior to the B-17 when operating in the aerodynamic envelope that it was basically designed for.

Hank Hewett
484th Bomb Group



Tallahassee, Florida
Dear Bud:

I hope this letter finds you and your wife, Bea, well. Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed reading through the interesting articles and notes in T/F No. 21. Brought back a lot of memories. Particularly enjoyed your summary of your most recent visit to England. My wife Lynn and I plan to travel to England in August, probably with the 97th Bomb Group returnees, and I plan to take along the information in your article

for use during our visit there.

The friendly rival account by Kenneth P. Werrell certainly made some interesting points that will certainly draw a wide variety of comments. I hope our bombing, especially non-visual bombing, was a lot more accurate than he indicates. In the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey Summary, page 17, appears an account of impressive improvements in operational techniques in early 1944 based on P-51 long range escort and OBOE and H2X, radio direction devices, that made precision bombing possible through clouds and at night. Since I was radar-navigator-bombardier, I prefer the U. S. Summary version, which is more in line with my recollection of events on missions with the 97th Bomb Group out of Foggia. On the issue of loyalty to B-17 or B-24 groups, I feel a strong attachment to both since the radar equipped B-17 we took from Langley Field to San Pancrazio was initially based with the 515th Bomb Squadron 376th Bomb Group., where I met some great B-24 crews, including one Yugoslavian crew flying with the Group from that base, Also remember meeting Norman Appold at that base but it wasn't until much later, when reading James Dugan's account of the low level Ploesti raid out of North Africa, that I realized Norman Appold took part in that raid. A skeleton B-17 crew would be flown to the B-24 base to take the radar B-17 up to Foggia for missions out from there. We went to Sofia on 3/30/44, Budapest on 2 April /44, Bucharest on 4 April /44 and Ploesti on 5 April/44. On my flight record, those missions are certified to by Royal J. Brock, Operations Officer, 376th Bomb Group. On April 9, 1944, my B-17, and myself, were transferred to the 414th Bomb Squadron, 97th Bomb Group. I went to Fischamend Market on 4/12/44, Ploesti 4/15/44, and Weiner Neustadt on 4/3/44. The commanding officer at the 97th Bomb Group then was Col.(now General) Jacob Edward Smart. Although he did not take part in the actual low level B-24 mission to Ploesti out of North Africa he was very much involved in the planning of that mission (Ploesti-James Dugan).

As a result of damage sustained on the bomb run on 23 April 44 at Weiner Neustadt, part of the crew bailed out in the vicinity of Zagreb. Fortunately, we made contact with the Partisans there and in a few days five of us from the B-17 crew were joined by nine members from the 449th Bomb Group who crash landed their B-24 following their raid

on Schwechat on 23 April 44. The pilot of the B-24 was M.S. Rouse (on his 50th mission) and the co-pilot was Robert M Miller (on his first mission checkout). Naturally, we called them Alpha and Omega. They were a very interesting group as the original crew had about 20 missions out of England before coming to Italy to season new B-24 groups arriving in Italy. We all got along very well together in the Partisan infantry; and I can't remember much discussion about the relative merits -of the B-17 and the B-24, or their crews. With the gracious help of the Partisans, lots of walking, and considerable luck, we all made it to a British mission near Bos Petrovac and caught a C-47 (which serviced the mission and flew wounded partisans to and from the hospitals in Italy - particularly Bari). The literal name of that field is Honey Field and it was sweet to us. The Partisans have erected some World War II monuments at that location, including an old transport that was previously used to evacuate wounded Partisans.

B-24 Crew

Robert B. Bicher - Navigator
Joseph S. Beaulieu - Nose Turret
Robert M. Miller - Co-Pilot
J S. Walters, waist Gunner
Byron F. Erwin - Ball Turret
Clarence L. Mezo - Tail Gunner
James S. Thomas - Bombardier
M.S. Rouse - Pilot
T.N Nilson (D) .Flight Engineer (Zeke)
(Widow Rosa Nilson, San Leandro, California

I recently saw General Smart ,and Al Willing at the 97th Bomb Group reunion in Omaha, Nebraska., September 1991; and in October, 1991, Bob and Ellen Miller, Joe and Christine Beaulieu, Tom and Lynn Carroll, and Rosa Nilson and her brother Ernest Spivey, who accompanied her, had a mini reunion in Ormond Beach, Fl. and had a great time. If any of the others listed above are still operating we will enjoy hearing from them. I plan to attend the AFEES reunion in Savannah, Georgia., April, 9, 1992.

It really was a friendly rivalry. None of us were asked our preference on what plane we would serve in; but we were all obliged to do the best we could with what we had, and I think we did that.

Sincerely
Tom Carroll

Wheaton Silver Springs, Maryland

Dear Bud:

I am enclosing several photos #1 Our crew taken Harvard , Nebraska March 1944, #2 Puss 'n Boots Ship No.64 S/N 41-28835 , and #3 From left: Robert Nichols, Dave Ward, and Carl Voss showing the Puss'N Boots painted jackets.

With Best wishes,
Barrow F Neale,
826 Sq.



Photo #1. Kneeling from left: Robert R Nichols (D)-P, Barrow F Neale-C/P, Carl H Voss -N, and David R Ward-B. Standing left to right: Thomas E Key (KIA)-E, Alvin F Petrillo-R/O, Archie Williamson Jr-G, John Hicks- N/G , Albert L Krapf-U/G, and William J Dowling (D)-T/G.



Photo #2# Puss 'n Boots ship #64 S/N 41-28835



Photo #3. From left: Robert Nichols, Dave Ward, and Carl Voss. Note the jackets painted with the "Puss'N Boots" nose art.

Duarte, California
Dear Bud:

It was nice to meet you in Kansas City last year. I was in the communications section. M/Sgt Raymond L Snyder was the section chief. Upon discharge from active duty in October, 1945, I remained in the reserve and was recalled to active duty during the Korean War. My wife Helen of 44 years passed away in 1988. I have 10 children and 14 grandchildren. I retired from Bank of America in 1978, but continue to work at Santa Anita race track. The enclosed picture was taken in Italy, 1944.

Sincerely,
Frank Mossbarger, 826 Squadron



Frank Mossbarger, 826 sq

East Sparta, Ohio

Thank you for all the work you and Bea are doing for the 461st & 484th Bomb Groups organization.

In response to Ernest R Stedman's letter stating that he believed he and his brother Everett were the only twin gunners in the 15th Air Force. My twin brother and I were also aerial gunners on Stanley Forster's crew, 826 Bomb Squadron. Roy was a nose gunner and I was the ball gunner. While in Rome, Italy a record was made of my brother and I called "Double Trouble," The record along with a letter was sent back home to our mother. This was also played over a Canton, Ohio radio station. Enclosed is a copy of the letter.

(Continued next page)

(Continued from previous page)

15th AAF In Italy

Dishing out double trouble to the Nazis these days are the Humrighouse twins, Sergeants Harry and Roy, from Uhrichsville, Ohio, aerial gunners on a B-24 Liberator in the Fifteenth Air Force in Italy.

With Harry in the ball turret and Roy at the nose position, the twins enjoy a sweeping view of the skies as they fly over enemy territory.

Together since their school days, they entered the army on the same date, and are aiming their one-two punch right at Herr Hitler's chin every time they take to the skies.

Separated for the first time in their lives at the induction center at Fort Hayes, Ohio, it took the intervention of their mother, Mrs. Bessie Humrighouse, to bring them together again in the army. She wrote a letter to Washington asking that her sons be kept together in the army, which resulted in their being brought together again shortly before they left for overseas service.

As combat men in a veteran Liberator group, the twins have been authorized to wear the Distinguished Unit Badge as members of a heavy bombardment group which was cited by the War Department for "outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy."

Graduating from Uhrichsville high school in 1941, they were employed by the Westinghouse Electric Company in Canton, prior to entering the service in November, 1943. --30--

Certified Passed By
Field Press Censor

Harry F Humrighouse,
826 Squadron.

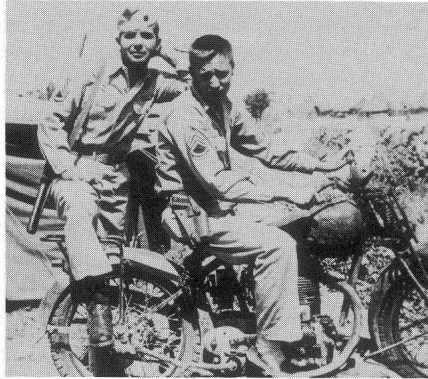


Ringgold, Georgia
Dear Bud & Bea:

Sorry I couldn't be at the KC reunion as my wife's health is poor and I must spend most of the time caring for her. I enjoy reading the Torretta Flyer and all the news from the past. I especially enjoyed the article written by my pilot Capt. Willie Kitchen. How well I remember that mission and the events that day (Torretta Flyer No 20). And

in Torretta Flyer No. 15. Our CO, Major Haldeman was a great leader and was respected by all. Our plane was named "Hot Rocks" No #70. In the photograph enclosed (below) T/Sgt Marvin Watson, engineer, and S/Sgt Patrick M Layne Jr. tail gunner on Willie Kitchens' crew. We used the English Enfield motorcycle for transportation around the base and into town.

Patrick M Layne Jr., 827 Squadron



T/Sgt Marvin Watson (left) and S/Sgt Patrick M Layne Jr. P. Layne photo.

Dear Bud;

Because of our bomb sight we lost our beautiful B-24 J to another squadron. Here is how it happened. The crew: Pilot-Lloyd J. Breisch; Co/pilot- H. O. McAllister; Navigator-Alexander Sobelewski; Bombardier: Lesley L. Seyler; Engineer- Leroy Smith; Nose Gunner-John R. Brennan; Radio Operator-Edward J. Fahey; Waist Gunner-Richard K. Rutledge; Ball Gunner- Louis H. Heimbruch; Tail Gunner-Elbert Wallace

We were ordered from Tonopah to Hamilton Field, California, in early May 1944, and we were assigned to a brand new (Convair built B-24 J and ordered to fly to West Palm Beach, FL. At West Palm Beach we were given sealed orders with the following on outside of the envelope, "Proceed on a heading of 180 degrees for one hour, then open this envelope and proceed as directed." As soon as the wheels were up, the Navigator opened the envelope. The orders directed us to proceed via the "southern route" to Djida, Tunisia and report to "responsible representative of the 15th Air Force." We proceeded to Tunisia with stops at Trinidad, Forteleza, Brazil, Dakar, Marakech and Algiers. On arrival at Djida, discovered the 15th AF HQ had moved to Foggia, Italy. Proceeded to Foggia and re-

ceived assignment to 484th BG based at Torretta, near Cerignola. Arrived there approximately May 3, 1944. The crew was assigned to 827th Squadron, but the plane was assigned to another group because it had Norden bombsight and the 827th used Sperry bombsights. The new plane was named 'The Eunuch'. Derivation of the name is now unknown. I wonder if anyone remembers seeing it?

Sincerely
Lesley L. Seyler



North Andover, Massachusetts
Dear Bud:

On a recent visit to Las Vegas, I stopped to see the show where my wartime buddy Marty Allen (824 squadron and Association member) is performing. The accompanying photo is the result of that meeting.

Charles McKew, 824 Squadron.



Charles McKew (left) and Marty Allen

Riverdale, Illinois
Dear Bud:

Thank you for another interesting issue of the Torretta Flyer.

The Italian students' responses to the scholarship awards are very heartwarming and it's an activity that the association can be proud of.

I recently read, "The Muster Raid," by Ian Hawkins, your trip to England and the airfields of East Anglia reminded me of it. The "Bloody 100th BG and 95th BG took a terrible beating on those raids. It reminded me again to be thankful I was in the 15th Air Force.

A comment about issue #21 of the

(Continued on Next page)

(Continued from previous page)

Flyer regarding the controversy of the B-24 vs the B-17, didn't mention what I still consider one of the most important points in favor of the B-24 and that was the tricycle landing gear. Myself and some other pilots I knew came to recognize early that we were really not natural aviators and didn't have the feel for making consistent good landing on conventional gear which required stalling in from a well judged height. The B-24s tricycle gear made it possible for me to stay in business.

I wonder if some knowledgeable source could be found for a future write up about flak such as "Purple flak," "the airman's" version of the "purple shaft" is what veteran airmen used to warn new crews when they checked in. On some sorties against heavily defended targets such as Bleckhammer, Linz, etc. We experienced black puffs, (88s), big gray puffs (155s), smaller white puffs which we understood to be phosphorous, white puffs that blew smoke rings, and so on.

Again thanks, Bea and Bud,
Bob Kelliher, 765 Squadron



Austin, Texas
Dear Bud;

I could not resist sending you a photograph of me in front of the "All American" when it was in Kansas City.

Best regards to all,
Lowell K Davis, 824 sq.



Lowell K Davis at Kansas City, LK Davis photo

Minot, North Dakota
Dear Bud & Beatrice,

On 11 December 44, our crew flew plane #83 (Shown below under repair) on a mission to Vienna. Edmund J. McLaughlin was the pilot. We bombed a freight yard in Vienna and an 88 mm shell went through the right wing and exploded above us. We lost all of the fuel from the right auxiliary tank. We shut that line off and manifolded the other gas tanks to the number 3 & 4 engines. The # 4 turbo-charger impeller was also knocked out. We didn't have to shut down the number 4 engine as we still were drawing 25" Hg. at 2400 RPM.

We were alone on our way home and another B-24 with the Red Ball marking and I think it was numbered 51, came up under us. McLaughlin pulled the craft sharply up and we stalled out and did a two turn spin. He was able to pull out of the spin and we

made it back with no further problems. Mac checked with Intelligence and they said that the plane that nearly rammed us was no longer on inventory and was presumed to be flown by Germans. They immediately wheeled around and headed north after they sent us into the spin. I thought that you might like to have this photo for your collection. See you in Dearborn.

This is Aircraft # 83 of the 827th Bomb Squadron. The man sitting on the wing between No 3 & 4 Engines gave me this photo and I believe his name is Frankel. I don't think that he was a member of the 827th. A person told me that they thought that he was from a repair or some such Squadron stationed near us.

Best wishes,
Charles B. Lowell

Editors Note: The 496th Service Squadron based at Torretta was charged with heavy repairs that could not be accomplished overnight by the line crew. Frankel is obviously a sheet metal mechanic.



Frankel

Willmette, IL
Hi Bud:

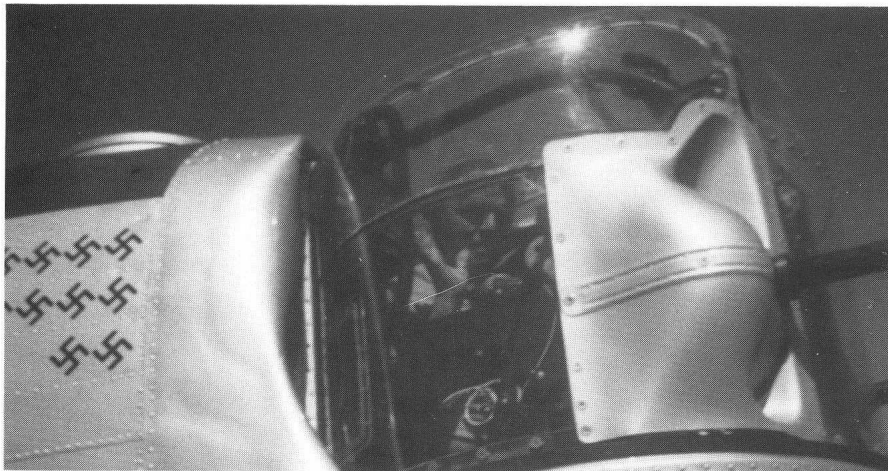
Thought you might enjoy having the enclosed pictures, Photo #1) Me back in the nose turret of the "All American," and #2) Me and Lois. Thanks again for all your efforts on behalf of all of us. Outstanding !

Best to you both,

Emmett Goff, 825
Squadron



Emmett and Lois Goff at Kansas City, Goff photo.



Emmett Goff in the nose turret of the "All American" at the KC reunion, Goff photo.

New Britain, Connecticut

Dear Bud:

In rummaging around in my old files I found this photograph that was taken in Lyon, France during the fall of 1944, when we were supplying Patton's army with bombs and fuel. Actually these supplies were for the tactical air force fighters attacking the Germans opposing Patton.

I became a POW and Rollo Richmond was KIA sometime after this photo was taken. Charles A Marshall was our pilot.

Bob Powers 825 Sq



From left standing; Bob Powers, Rollo Richmond, and John Gross. The man in the middle is unidentified. Bob Powers 825 sq. photo

Martinez, California

Mr. Bud Markel

Dear Bud:

As usual the Torretta Flyer continues to excel in quality and content and provides many more hours of great reminiscing.

You had a letter from Bud Pressel requesting a picture of "01' 45" from the 825th Squadron. I was the ground armorer on Col. Joel Moe's last three airplanes but I don't remember who the armorer was on 45. I snapped this picture of 45 showing fellow armorers, Curtis Robinson of Ohio (later California) and Raymond Lee of New York (now deceased). I can't make out the number on the tail but it looks like it could be the one provided by John Beitling.

Also I am enclosing a picture of a B-17 model my grandson gave me before he was even school age. I had fun with it after assembling it by painting the 484 marking on the tail. Now at age 12, my grandson is a walking encyclopedia of military aircraft of all vintages.

We had a Christmas card from our section chief, Leo Matranga, who has recently moved to Playa Del Rey, CA. I hope to contact him soon .

Best of luck, Bud, and thanks again for all the great memories.

John Grimm, 825 Sq.



B-17 Model, John Grimm 825 sq. photo



Photo 2 Ground armorers Curtis Robinson, and Raymond Lee. John Grimm 825 sq. photo.

Spokane, Washington
Dear Bea and Bud:

Thanks again for another great get together. Keep Seattle in mind for a future reunion, lots to see there. glad to see the

large number of first timers. We should all try to locate the missing members of our own crews. I have enclosed a photo taken at the Kansas City Reunion.

Ed & Dorothy Kabasa, 824 Squadron



Top row from left: Stan Hutchins, Ken Hubertz, Bob Dean, ?, and Hank Ronson
Bottom row: Dick Brown, Harold Fischbein, and Dick Calkins.



Salt Lake City, Utah
Dear Bud:

I am enclosing a photograph of the men I flew with. The picture was taken stateside as you can see by the concrete hardstand. We arrived in Torretta in October of 1944 and flew till the end of the war

in May of 1945 when I had completed 31 missions. We ferried a B-24L called "Sweet Revenge," from the states to the squadron. Richard Vance was our pilot.

Sincerely, Charles K Laver 826 Sq.

(See opposite page for ship photo).

Clearwater, Florida
Dear Bud:

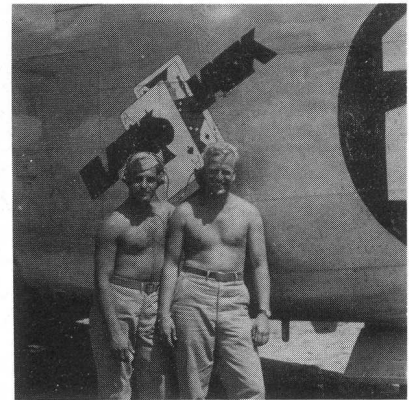
In response to your letter of May 14, 1991, kindly accept the following: The most vivid experience I remember is when about 10 -100 lb. bombs got tangled in the bomb bay, and the flight engineer and I had to walk out to untangle them.

Enclosed are some originals of the photos requested. Please return when through, and be advised that I would be pleased to pay any reproduction costs.

Our mission of March 16, 1945, to Moosbierbaum was one of our toughest runs. We counted 57 flak holes after we landed. I do not recall much about the ship "Black Jack II" except that we used same for a few missions.

I will show you the leather patch of the "Painted Lady" at the convention. Thank you. (see facing page for crew photo)

Sincerely,
Leonard A. Nucero, 824 Sq.



Leonard Nucero (left) and Frank J Taylor. Leonard A Nucero photo 824 sq.



Orville Moore-Bombardier Leonard A Nucero photo 824 sq.



Leonard Nucero crew photo. Standing left to right: Vincent G DeMaio-P, Ira Kessler-C/P, Moore-B, and Gary Lloyd-N. Kneeling left to right: Joseph Pastelak-E, Joseph W Seeley-R/O, Ormond V Schusterick-B/G, Frank J Taylor-N/G, Leonard A Nucero-G, and Jack D Messersmith-T/G.

Vienna, Virginia
Dear Bud:

In digging around in an old footlocker I found some old photographs that I thought you might like. I had some copies made for the Association's collection.

Take Care,

Joseph Shugrue
827 Squadron

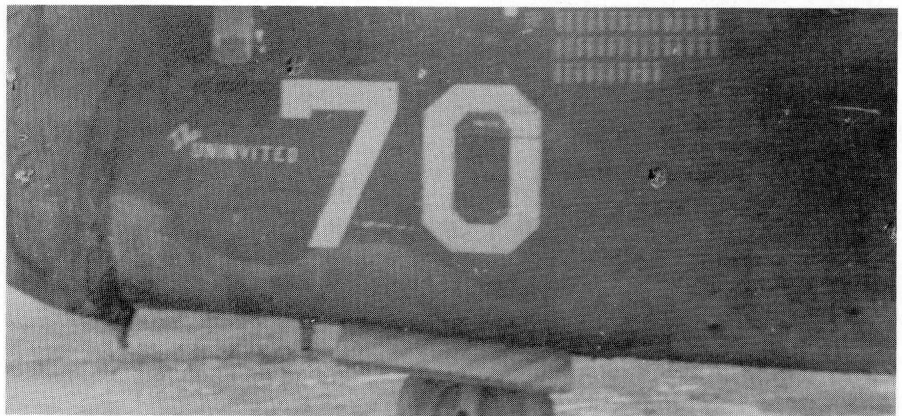
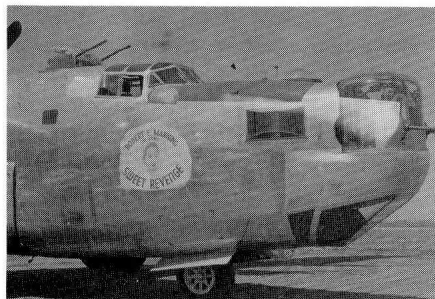


Photo #1: ship 70, "The Uninvited". Joseph Shugrue photo.



Plane flown by Richard Vance's crew .
via Charles Laver 826Sq.



Photo #2 : 827 Squadron Headquarters building 1944-45, Briefing room (open door) and mail shack was at left and the chow hall was on the right side.
Joseph Shugrue photo.

The Last Mission

Wyatt L Busbee

Wyatt L Busbee 68, 767 Squadron, a nose gunner on Robert J Roswurn's crew passed away recently. He had resided in Albany, Georgia since 1948,



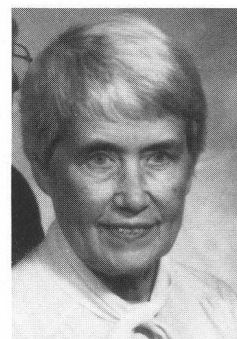
and was owner of Busbee Floor Finishing Co. A veteran of World War II, he was a member of Albany Gospel Chapel Dougherty Masonic lodge 591, and was a charter member of the Home Builders Association of Albany, Georgia. Survivors include his wife Doris, daughter Becky B. Phelps of Albany, a son Wyatt L. Busbee Jr. of Albany; two brothers, and three grandchildren.



The members of Robert J Roswurn's crew 767 squadron included, Charles T Lomax-C/P, Howard R Sossamon-N, Ross Young-B, Cohongain E, Chapman-R/O, Wyatt L Busbee (D)-N/G, Eisenberg-T/G, Denny Moore-U/G, and Johnson-B/G

Henrietta S. Ennis

Henrietta S. Ennis 69, wife of Association Member, Franklin S Ennis, 824 Squadron, died March 1, 1992, of cancer. She lived in Delaware most of her life. A graduate of the Delaware Hospital School of Nursing in 1944, Mrs. Ennis entered the Army Nurse Corps in 1945 and served as a Second Lt. in New Jersey, Hawaii, Okinawa and Japan before being discharged in March, 1946.



Mrs. Ennis was a volunteer with the American Cancer Society, conducting anti-smoking seminars for schools and businesses. She attended eight reunions with husband Franklin Ennis, and enjoyed them all, making many friends over the years. She is survived by her husband of 43 years, Franklin Ennis, four daughters: Nancy E. Torres, Rebecca E. Unione, Margaret E. Hanel, Dr. Laura E. Brenner; her mother, Helen S. Evans, and a brother, Walter Sartin, and 10 grandchildren.

Thomas Robert Harper



Thomas Robert Harper, 824 squadron was born in Brooklyn, New York, on March 7, 1914, and died on January 1, 1991. He was a resident of Brooklyn, New York all his life. He was the son of the late Thomas Robert and Anna B. Harper. He was the husband of the late Ethel M. Harper, and is survived by his son Thomas Robert Harper, a brother George William Harper and a sister Doris Marie Harper.

Thomas served in the Army Air Force as a radar mechanic during World War II and was among the troops visited by the late President Franklin D. Roosevelt while serving in Africa.

Francis J "Frank" Riley

Francis J "Frank" Riley, a pilot with the 767 squadron has passed away. He retired from the service in January of 1965. He was very proud of his Air Force service to the country, and was accorded a full military funeral. He was completely bedridden for 4 months which devastated him as he was a very active person.

He and wife Janie attended reunions in 1982, 1983, and 1984.



Photo above, Francis "Frank" Riley

Charles L Walling, 826 Sq.

Charles L Walling, 826 Squadron, passed away January 11, 1992, from a massive heart attack. He and his wife, Evelyn were married for 48 years.



Charles L Walling



Photo 2 above, Riley's crew :Standing from left: Crossson, Nelson, Hunter, and Abriatis. Sitting from left: Southerland, Hansen, Hudson, May, and Watkins

Raymond C Lung Jr 767 Sq.

Raymond C Lung Jr-767 Top turret gunner on Ralph Newton's crew passed away. On a mission September 26, 1944, he was reported MIA on Mission #107 September 25, 1944, to Athens Greece to attack submarine installations. He was returned to duty October 20, 1944

He never quite recovered from an automobile accident in 1985 when his son was killed.

He and his wife Glenda were able to celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary last November (1991) when they restated their wedding vows.

Other members of his crew

were: Dwaine Vaughn-C/P; John Erdman-B; Edward Grimstead-N; Bernard Gessner-R/O; Ray Bushing-T/G; Robert Crawford-N/G; and Ed Boushell-B/G.



Armand D. Bottiglia

Armand D. Bottiglia, 72 Navigator, 767 squadron, died the first part of last year. He was born in Bernardsville, New Jersey, where he lived until he joined the Army in February 1942 and then transferred to the Air Corps in October 1942 to become a Navigator.

He flew with Pilot Robert Luebke's crew based in Italy, 767th Squadron, 461st Bomb Group, together with crew members Jack "Mac" McCauley, Co-Pilot, Miles Amos, Bombardier, George Iubelt, Radio Operator, Graydon Dahlen, Top Turret Gunner, Herb Weber, Tail Gunner, George Hart, Nose/Gunner Don Hilgart Engineer, and Lee Fitzpatrick, Ball Gunner. This truly outstanding crew flew 35 Heavy Bombardment missions together to Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Greece, the Northern Appenines, and the Balkans. Armand was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, 2 Air Medals (one with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters), the EAME Theater Ribbon, and the American Theater Ribbon.

He was discharged from the Air Corps with the rank of Captain and returned to his home town where he worked for 35 years as the

Production manager for U.S. Radium, which manufactured X-Ray screens for both medical and non-medical use.

He devoted his free time as an Elder in his Church served as master of his home town Masonic Lodge, loved plant life, classical music, and was an ardent golfer winning many trophies. He married in 1961, wanted to travel but increasing responsibilities at work necessitated staying close to home until poor health forced him into early retirement.

He devoted most of his time and energies during the last 5 years of his life trying to locate all the members of his Air Force crew and succeeded in finding all but 2.

He is survived by his wife, Anne., two brother and two sisters.

Lawrence P Weakley, 824 Sq.

Lawrence P Weakley, 824 Squadron, Bombardier, has died from fibrosis of the lungs, a condition that is believed to be caused by too many hours of hard oxygen breathing from the 400 combat hours at high altitude he endured during WWII and Korea. He had suffered from prostate cancer some twelve years prior to his death, but the intervention of radiation therapy resulted in cancer negative tests since then.

Among his many decorations are: The (DFC) Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, and the WWII Victory Medal.

He had written a letter to me that was sent to me by his wife after his death:

Quote:

"Please excuse the delay in responding to the picture and short note regarding the Tailender

No #18 in the spring 1986 Flyer. The origin of the name refers to our departure from ZI (Zone of the Interior-Good Old USA) and not to any particular position in flight formation. The reason for the late departure from Lincoln, Nebraska was a bad

tooth, I know because the tooth was mine. The base dentist required an extra day to fashion 2 removable bridges so I could bite my nails in case of Me109s or flak getting too close.

The following day (approximately April Fool's day) we departed from West Palm Beach but only after digging out the left main landing gear which had managed to find a soft place in the taxi strip.

The 'Jackass' painting was the work of a sergeant based at Fortaleza, Brazil. His artistic skill may have been subject to question, but his work adequately expressed our feelings regarding the delays.

Incidentally the dental masterpiece which made us late was so uncomfortable that it resides under several fathoms of Caribbean water.

Our crew flew all but one mission in 'Tailender.' It, too, like us was rotated back to the States for much needed R&R after the European war was over. The photographer credited with the photo of No #18 was Forest Nance who had been designated as the original pilot of our crew when it was formed at Gowen Field, Idaho, according to Special Order No 335 dated December 1, 1943 which transferred eight crews to Harvard, Nebraska."

(Crew photo above right)



Photo above); Standing left to right: Yvon R Lemay-E; William B Taylor-B/G; Fred W Allen-R/O; Louis A Eimer-U/G; and Peter J McMahon-N/G. Kneeling left to right: George G Gilpin-P; Delmer L Conner-C/P; Don L Kavanaugh-N and Lawrence P Weakley-B. Not shown William P Dunn-T/G who joined the crew at Torretta.



Lawrence P Weakley.

Members Reported Deceased Since the Kansas City Reunion

Name	Unit	Duty	Name of Pilot
Armand Bottiglia	767	N	Robert Loubke
Morris B Burk Jr	824	U/G	Hilton W Goodwyn Jr
Wyatt L Busbee	767	N/G	Robert Woswurn
John J Connelly	824		
Marford Dannall	824		
George Dutcher	824		
John F Hahn	824	E	Robert E Bedwell
Tom Harper	824		
Arthur R Hotalen	825	B/G	Stevenson B Porter
Carlton B Jewett	766	C/P	John C Bontempo
Frank Johnson	824	R/O	Ed Nesheim
Raymond C Lung	767	U/G	Ralph Newton
Harold C Lynch	824	C/C	Crew Chief
Clement Martin	827	B/G	Samuel J Howes Jr
Eugene C McCarty	824	ORD	Ed Nesheim
Ralph Moore	824		
Leo Prone	824	L/B	
Dana L Rattray	827		
Francis J Riley	767		
James H Sullivan	826	C/P	James E Kennedy
Charles L Walling	826	G/C	
Herbert W Wingo	824		
Lawrence P Weakley	824	B	George R Gilpin

Carlton B Jewett.

Falls Church,
VA 22046.

It is with a great deal of regret and a deep sense of loss, that I inform you and our organization, of the loss of my Co-Pilot Carlton B Jewett. (shown at right) He was a fellow member of the 766th Squadron, 461st Bomb Group from Jan of 1945 thru the end of the conflict.



Carlton B Jewett.

He had suffered from cancer for some six years, and in spite of a variety of treatments & surgery, he relapsed into a coma & peacefully passed away on 6 April 1991.

Carlton joined my crew in Lincoln Nebraska in August of 1944. We then underwent combat crew training at Mountain Home, Idaho, and embarked for our overseas assignment aboard a brand new B-24L, SSN# 44-49674, from Topeka Kansas in December of 1944. We were fortunate that foul weather covering the Northern Route necessitated a change of plans and we were re-routed, via the Southern Route, by way of South America, Ascension Island, Africa and into Torretta. Upon arrival, the crew was assigned to the 766th Squadron and the aircraft was assigned to the 765th Squadron. We completed a partial tour of combat, flying 17 to 21 missions by war's end. We returned to the U.S. ferrying a B-24 from the Gioia Depot.

Upon our return, Carlton separated from the service, returning to his home town of Pittsburgh PA to run the family food brokerage business.

Carlton was a fine gentleman, excellent pilot, devoted father and husband. His tour of duty with our crew was a very special time in his life and he will be missed by all who were fortunate enough to have known him, worked with him or count him among their friends.

He is survived by his Wife of some 48 years, Mary Louise, a daughter Debbie a registered Nurse and his son Bud who was graduated with honors from the USNA at Annapolis, with the class of 1976. Bud is currently serving as a commander & executive officer of an A-6 squadron aboard the USS Eisenhower. He is also survived by 5 grandchildren.

Reported by
John C Bontempo

Harold C Lynch

Charles McKew, 824 squadron has notified us that Harold C Lynch, 824 squadron, has passed away. His widow supplied the accompanying photos.

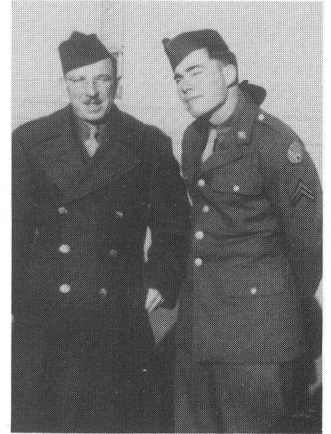
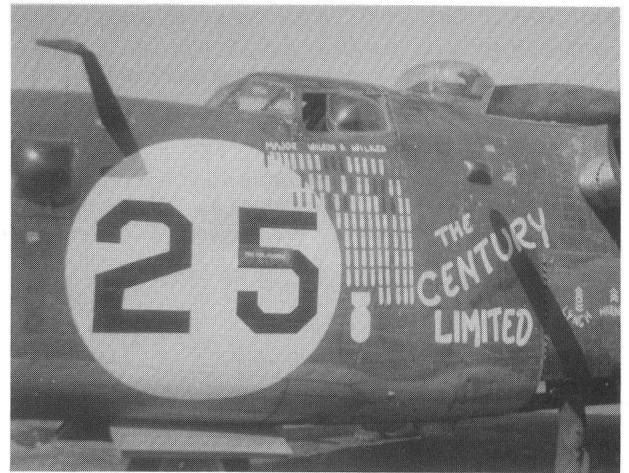


Photo at right, From left: Reginald A Dunkee and Harold C Lynch both of the 824 Sq.



Harold C Lynch was the crew chief of "The Century Limited", Wilson B Wilkes pilot.



The crew of John C Bontempo 766 Squadron top from left to right: Charles P Davis-B; Lloyd J Klein-N; Carlton B Jewett Jr-C/P; and John C Bontempo-P. Front row kneeling: David M Cutcheon Jr-E; William H Mc Morarty-U/G; Herbert G Miller-B/G; Stanley W Hoogeveen-T/G; Joseph B Ecklels R/O, and Garel E Smith-N/G. Photos via John C Bontempo.

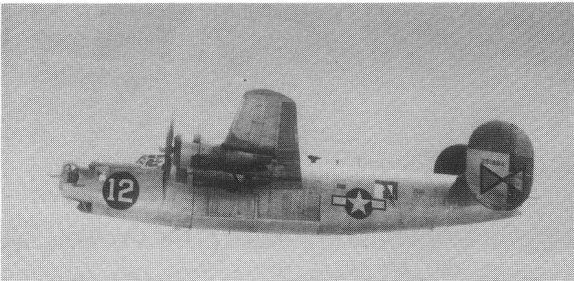


Torretta, Italy. Gen Lee CO 49th Wing (left) and Gen Twining CO of the 15th Air Force shake hands after the first Presidential Unit citation awards. 484th Bomb Group. 484th BG photo via Joel Moe (D) 825 Sq.



Col Keese, second from left assisted by Jerry Dufour, first from left presents medals to 484th Bomb Group crewmen. Photo taken at Torretta, Summer 1944. 484th BG photo via Joel Moe (D).

Photo Page 1



A Ford built B-24J #41-51884 of the 824 Sq. 484th BG. 484th BG Photo via William A Moncrief, 824 Sq.



From left: General Lee 49 Wing CO greets General Spatz and General Twining 15th Air Force CO, as the latter two arrive for presentation of the Presidential Unit Citation Summer 1944. 484th BG photo via Harold Meshel



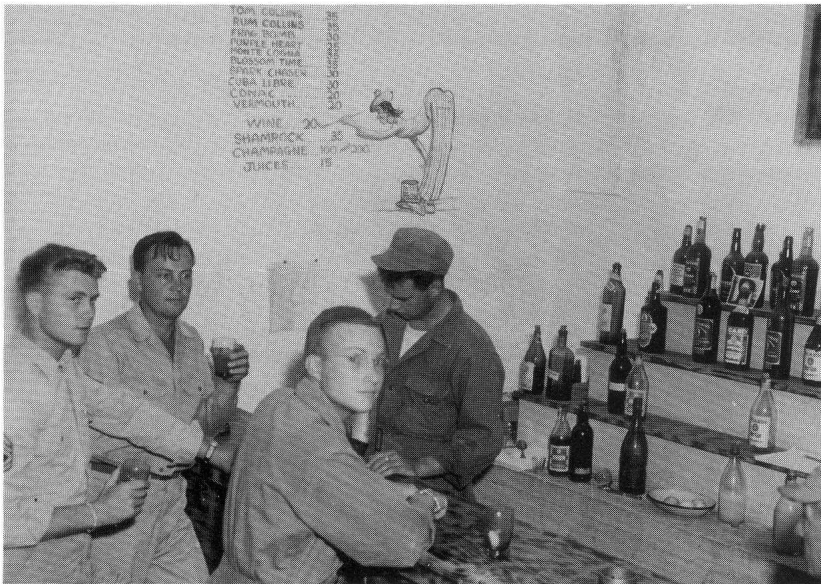
This may be a B-24H of the 824 sq. Can anyone tell us more about it? Harold Meshel photo.



A Douglas Tulsa built B-24J-5 S/N42-51381 of the 825 squadron with the late model plexiglass waist window cover. 484th BG photo via William Moncrief 824 sq.



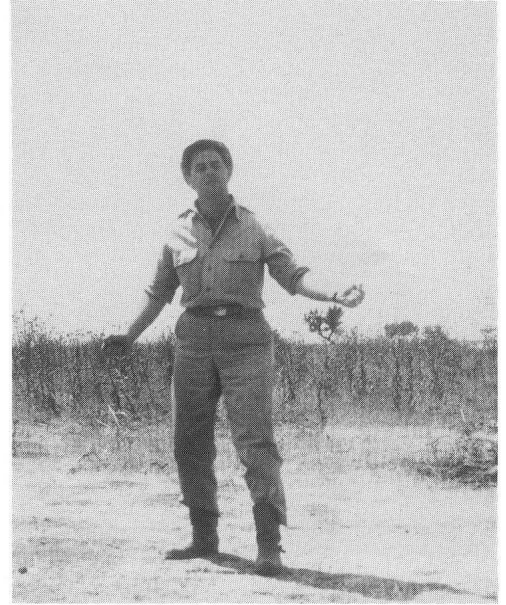
Eugene E La Pierre (D) 824 sqadron sent this this photo in. Did this happen at Torretta ?



The bar at 484th BG headquarters, Stock was a little low when this photo was taken 29 August, 1944. Note the prices in Italian Lira . Payment was made in military currency. A military currency bill of 100 Lira was equal in size and value to a US One Dollar note. 484th BG photo via John P Morgan 48th BG.



A tent in the 826 squadron area about to be blown over spring 44 (Note :tent walls have yet to be built). 484th BG photo via Claude Trotter (D) 484 BG



Lt Henshell of the 825th squadron armament section stands near what looks like a mortar, is in fact a stationary relief tube. Joel Moe 825 sq. (D) photo.

Photo Page 2



Removing injured crewmen from the crashed B-24 as shown on the front cover. See Roy Nichols Story starting on page 23. 484th BG photo via Robert A Harrison- 825 sq.



Vernell Packard 827 squadron armorer installs a nose fuse in a 500 pound general purpose bomb. 484th BG Photo via Vernell Packard



The Red Top Drive In sponsored by the American Red Cross at Torretta Field. That is Ellie Mae, center. Joe Mente photo, Special Service Officer 461st Bomb Group.



From left: Arthur C Barkley, Howard D Truitt, and presumably Charles M Jones all of the 827 squadron pose in front of "Broad Abroad." Photo via Richard Warrington 827 sq.



"O" Club party 484th Bomb Group. 484th BG photo via Claude Trotter (D).

**461st & 484th Bomb Groups Association
1122 Ysabel St.
Redondo Beach, CA 90277**

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