

theater and in Washington recommended that it be withdrawn from action and that no more black units be assigned to a combat theater. Davis successfully defended the performance of the 99th before a top-level War Department committee. By war's end, his 332nd Group (which included the 99th), based in Italy and flying P-51s had completed more than 1,500 missions, destroyed at least 250 enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground, and achieved the unique distinction of never losing a bomber to enemy aircraft in some 200 escort missions. Colonel Davis, who insisted that his men respond to indignities with performance rather than protest led more missions than any other of his officers. The 332nd proved not only that its commander but that many other blacks as well could compete successfully with whites in the most technical of the military services.

Despite the record of Davis's group the Army—and its Air Forces—clung to a policy of racial segregation after the war. Both Ben Davis and his father attacked that policy before a board of general officers in 1945. The younger Davis continued to fight for racial integration with an argument that commanders understood—efficiency. Segregation made it impossible to fill shortages by transferring people among operational units that had been decimated by demobilization.

In 1948, the Air Force, assured by the achievements of Davis's fighter group and spurred on by the urgency of rebuilding a shattered combat force, announced an end to segregation. Three months later, President Truman directed equal opportunity, though not racial integration in the services. The other services moved slowly in the same direction as the Air Force and the country as a whole quickened its long painful march toward racial equality

Discrimination within the services did not end with integration. Until his retirement in 1970 as a lieutenant general, Ben Davis worked toward truly equal opportunity for all races based on ability and performance. On those criteria, he selected his subordinates in the integrated Air Force.

No man deserves more credit for narrowing the gap between a professed ideal and an imperfect reality than Benjamin O. Davis Jr. With dignity, intelligence, and measured judgment, he waged a courageous often lonely, campaign that helped change the character of America.

Thanks to Col. Alan Gropman for sharing this short biography of General Davis, Air Force Times March 1985

Best Regards,
San Hutchins 824 Sq.



Mr. Bud Markel, Editor
The Torretta Flyer

Dear Bud,

I just received the Fall-Winter '97 issue of the Flyer. All members of the 484th appreciate your continued efforts on behalf

of our organization.

It occurred to me that some of the members may remember the bombardier of our crew, Richard Hugo. I had not seen or heard from him since 1945 and about one year ago, a short note in the 15th Air Force magazine asked if anyone had any information on Richard Hugo. The request came from L. A. Murillo, a retired English Professor from the University of California, who was a gunner on the B17's in Foggia. He informed me that Richard Hugo became a famous poet and author and wanted to learn more about Hugo's tour in the 15th Air Force.

I ordered several of his books and the attached are excerpts from a book published ten years after his death by his wife and two of his former students. The essay Catch 22, Addendum recalls our 25th Mission on December 3, 1944, to Innsbruck. Also attached is a page from my diary on this 25th Mission.

Regards,
Ryan O'Brien 825th Sq.

Editors Note: Because "Catch 22 Addendum" is more of an essay than a letter, it appears in the story section of this Flyer, see page 15.



Clarksboro, NJ
Dear Bud:

I'm glad somebody finally located me after all these years. I immediately joined the Association in December of 1996. I made my first reunion in September of 1997. It was great to see the guys of the 484th after fifty plus years. I sent for all the back issues of the Torretta Flyer and thoroughly enjoyed reading them. I read with keen interest the accounts of the flight crews on their bombing missions. Those guys were truly heroes in my book.

I was a member of the ground crew mechanics assigned to aircraft #62, Vivacious Lady, which was shot down on a mission to Innsbruck on June 13th, 1944.

I came to the 484th by way of Stockton Field, Cal, Salt Lake City, Utah, Davis Monthan Field, AZ., Pocatello, Idaho, Mountain Home, Idaho, Harvard, NE., and finally to Camp Patrick Henry, VA. We shipped out of Newport News Naval Base in March, 1944. We sailed across the Atlantic on Liberty ship, USS Lucretia Mott. We spent twenty eight days on the old tub which did about eleven knots an hour when the screw was in the water. When the sea got rough the bow would go down and the stern would come out of the water and the prop would churn the air instead of the water.

The voyage was mostly uneventful except for an air attack on our convoy in the Mediterranean Sea by the German Luftwaffe. The next day the BBC reported that the Germans claimed they wiped out most of the convoy. The truth was that they did little or no damage. It was no more than a nuisance raid.

We landed in Brindisi, Italy the day before Easter. We were loaded on freight cars which looked like cattle cars. We were jammed in about 50 to each car and made the long bumpy ride to Cerignola. (Yes, it's true- Italian trains have square wheels.) We then made the final leg of the journey by truck to Torretta. We