



The 461st

Liberaider



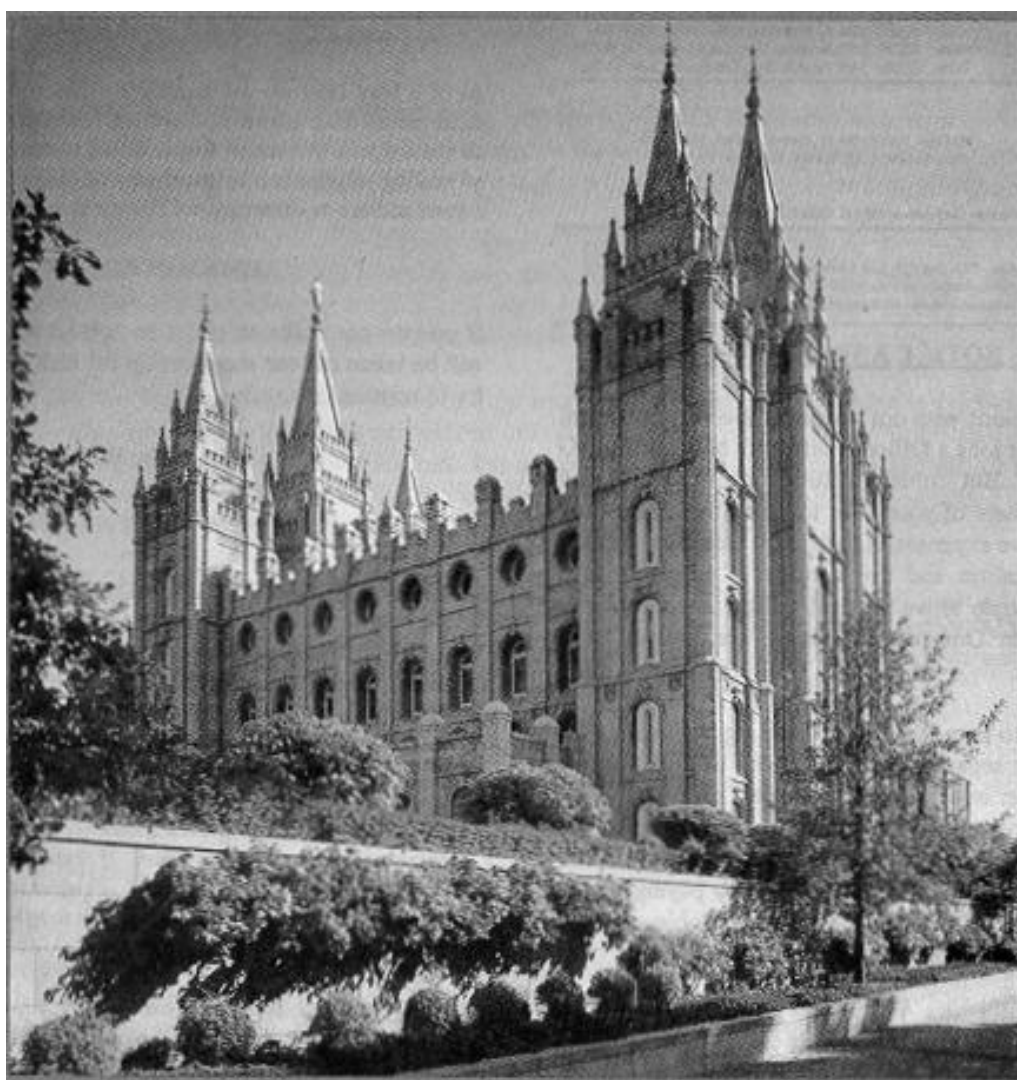
Vol. 13, No. 2

December 1996

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

REUNION 1996

Salt Lake City, Utah



THE MORMON TEMPLE

The Church of Jesus Christ of Later-Day Saints

The 461st LIBERAIDER
461st Bombardment Group (H)
Activated: 1 July 1943
Inactivated: 27 August 1945
Incorporated: 15 November 1985

CORPORATE HDQRS: 1407 W. 4th St. P.O. Box 5160, Spencer, IA 51301

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"Liberaider"

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The "Liberaider" is published twice a year on behalf of the members of the organization. Permission is granted to use articles provided source is given.

DUES NOTICE AND INFORMATION

Communications with our members is a very important aspect of our jobs as Officers/Directors of the 461st BG Association. But communications are expensive and require payment of your dues to cover these and other administrative expenses. As we grow older the shape of our organization and the number of members in it changes. People move without telling us and we lose track of them. Our communications are returned to us at extra cost.

In an effort to save the costs of printing and mailing the dues notices separately, we are going to print them in the December issue of the "Liberaider" each year. This, however, presents a problem since the only members that get the newsletter are those that have paid their dues or have become Life Members by paying a one-time fee of \$50.00. To overcome this problem we are going to do the following on a one-time basis.

We will send the December 1996 issue of the "Liberaider" to every member of the 461st Bomb Group for whom we have an address, either old or new. We realize we will get many of these returned to us (at additional cost) because we never had the

correct address or people moved without telling us. We will then assign the responsibility for future membership in the association directly to those who received a copy of the newsletter. You must take one of the following steps:

- If you are a Life Member, you can smile and do nothing but gloat.
- Mail your check for \$50.00 made out to the 461st Bomb Group (H) to Gail Peterson, Treasurer, whose address is shown in the upper left corner of this page. Request Life Membership.
- Mail your annual dues check for \$4.61 made out to the 461st Bomb Group (H) to Gail Peterson, Treasurer.
- Write to Gail Peterson and inform him that you are not interested in being a member of the association.

As of 1 May 1997 we will purge our membership list of all those names from whom we have not received a reply. The choice is yours. We can no longer afford to pay the expenses of mailing information to members for whom we have no correct address or whom are not interested in the association.

REMEMBER!!!

If you do not make an effort to contact us your name will be taken off our membership list and we will never try to contact you again.

By Vote of the Board of Directors

* * * * *

YOUR EDITOR IS GOING TO RETIRE!!!

I have tried to find a volunteer to take over the "Liberaider" without success. I honestly feel it's time to try something new and it appears that the only way I can do it is to resign. Therefore, I am giving a years notice of my intent to let go of the reins and let the harness rub in a different place.

I will publish the June and December 1997 issues of the "Liberaider" before stepping down. If some member of the Group should decide to try the job, I am more than willing to use the next year to work with that person to ease him into the Editorship.

My tour of duty has been educational, interesting and rewarding but I have to let go before it becomes a burden instead of a challenge.

George Dickie, Editor

461st BOMB GROUP REUNION

September 25-29, 1996 Salt Lake City, Utah

The weather was perfect, the fall colors were at their peak, and the hotel was located within easy walking distance of a huge covered shopping mall, Temple Square and excellent restaurants. Add several hundred congenial people and it all added up to a terrific 1996 reunion of the 461st Bomb Group at the Red Lion Hotel in downtown Salt Lake City.

Beginning at noon on Wednesday, arrivals were greeted with packets of information with details of coming events and were welcomed to refreshments in the hospitality room set aside for our use.

The first evening's dinner took place in the beautifully refurbished Lion House, one of Brigham Young's homes near the massive Eagle Gate, originally the entrance to his private farm. There we were treated to a delicious dinner of lightly sauced chicken breast and the largest, tastiest, fresh-baked rolls ever. Afterward, we were entertained by a member of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir who gave us the scoop on choir member's selection and activities.

On Thursday, we were off to the mountains to Park City (6900 feet), originally established as a silver mining town but now a year-round recreational area, a popular winter destination for skiers. It will be the venue for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games. Many will find the name familiar because it is also where the Sundance Film Festival is held in January of each year.

After cruising the many gift and craft shops, relaxing in quaint eateries and enjoying the picturesque community, we returned to the comfortable Red Lion for a bit of rest (or department store shopping and sightseeing) before the evening's Squadron Dinners at the hotel. Director's and alternates were nominated and elected at the dinners.

The following day, we were given the opportunity to view more than sixty indoor and outdoor exhibits at the Hill Aerospace Museum near Ogden. Well-informed retired military men were volunteers who acted as our guides in showing us around and answered our many questions. The museum is adjacent to the mammoth Hill Air Force Base but instead of attempting to tour that busy facility, we were bussed en masse to Antelope Island, a three by seven mile expanse somewhere in the Great Salt Lake.

The excursion to Antelope Island entailed a drive over the 7.2 mile causeway built on an earthen dike. As we passed huge flocks of birds were feeding on brine shrimp which are very prolific in the lake. Although the 28,000 acre island had been both privately and by the Mormon Church for cattle and sheep, it has been taken over as a state park to rescue it from severe overgrazing. It is the home to elk, deer, antelope, etc., but principally bison.

We were treated to buffalo burgers and all the trimmings at a rustic beachside lodge. Afterwards, the assistant administrator of the island presented a very interesting discussion of the management of the bison herd (held to about 550 head) while preserving the ecology of the area.

Friday afternoon's general business meeting was well attended. A summary of the business meeting follows this reunion report.

Not all members took part in all the tours offered. Many took advantage of the opportunity to find their roots at the Family Search Center and the Joseph Smith Memorial Building where a helpful staff and over 200 computers are available. Others took some of the free tours at Temple Square, attended an organ recital at the Tabernacle, watched an IMAX presentation of the Mormon migration, visited the copper mine about 20 miles out of town or visited heritage Centennial Park at the mouth of Emigration Canyon. The touching monument there commemorates the Mormon's entrance into the valley and the place Brigham Young said, "This is The Place" (we've been looking for).

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One of the tours took us to the Beehive House, Brigham Young's official residence which he occupied as Governor of the Territory and president of the Mormon Church. The stories told to us of each of the well-restored rooms would take pages to tell. It was called the Beehive House because the bee was considered very industrious and hardworking as were the Mormons. An original low wall (though moved closer to the house to make more room for the street) still stands. It was built not only to enclose the garden, but to provide work for newly arrived men seeking work so that no one had to ask for or accept a handout. The gardens, many authentic to the past, are beautifully maintained and a major attraction to many. There was much to see.

Saturday evening featured good food and music at the Annual Banquet and Dance, and more lively conversation.

While each person attending the reunion would select their own "highlight", many would agree that Sunday's agenda was tops. The Memorial Service, in memory of the departed, was touching and culminated with a very stirring hymn.

After an appetizing buffet breakfast, we adjourned to the 6500 seat Tabernacle in Temple Square, home of the famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir and its 11,623 pipe organ. The 325 choir members are all unpaid volunteers between the ages of 30 and 60, serving a maximum of 20 years in the choir. We watched as they rehearsed, took a few minutes break and then returned to their positions for the Sunday morning television broadcast. It was fascinating to see the movements of the TV cameras and the resulting pictures on the huge screens flanking the dias. This was an experience to remember, but the day had just begun!

Our busses took us into the foothills to an 18th century French chateau, LaCaille at Quail Run. Just past the ornate gates were all kinds of animals and peacocks in an attractively landscaped setting. Inside the chateau, we enjoyed a four course "continental" breakfast like none we've ever encountered "on the Continent" or elsewhere. To say it was beautifully served is an understatement ... It's one of those things you had to experience to fully appreciate.

All too soon we had to leave the chateau for our ride through the colorful fall foliage in the canyons and up to the premier ski resort Snowbird. We all rode the tram up 2900' to the top of 11,000' Hidden Peak with its 360 degree view of Utah's mountain ranges and valleys. We tore ourselves away to complete the half-hour drive back to the hotel, some to leave that afternoon and many to stay one more night before starting for home on Monday.

A most successful 10th Annual Reunion of the 461st Bomb Group!!!

* * * * *



*Have a Holy and Joyous
Holiday Season
And a
Happy and Healthy New Year*

REPORT OF GENERAL MEETING

461st Bomb Group September 26, 1996

Well over 100 members were present at 6:00 p.m. when the General Meeting of the 461st Bomb Group was called to order by President Frank O'Bannon at the Red Lion Hotel, Salt Lake City, Utah.

As the first order of business, Ed Chan gave a favorable report of the audit of the Group's financial records and also gave a summation of the income and expenses of the organization.

Ed also urged those present to actively assist in locating others who served in the 461st. He asked that flight crews compile a list of their members and if any have not yet been contacted by the Group, that crew member's names and any information (such as colleges/hometowns) be sent to him.

Frank announced that John Underwood, 764th Squadron, would pursue the purchase of more large screen television sets for veteran's homes with visually impaired residents. In the past, three of these TVs have been donated by the 461st Bomb Group.

George Dickie, editor and publisher of the "Liberaider", explained the need for the nine-digit zip code as a way to save on mailing costs. He said that a few more cents per issue could be saved with bar coding but the cost of necessary computer software to accomplish this would outweigh any savings at this point.

He also said he needed relief from his job that he's held for the past eight or nine years. He noted that little original writing is required since members have been very helpful in sending him articles of the 1943-1945 actions of various crews. The reunion recaps are written by representatives of each squadron on a rotating basis. He urgently requested anyone who has an interest in taking over this position to contact him as soon as possible.

President O'Bannon noted that the "liberaider" contained all the information needed to keep abreast of dues and coming events. Because of the expense and labor involved, there will be no more separate mailings of dues slips, reunion information and registration forms. He said there will be a dues slip in an upcoming issue of the "Liberaider" with an explanation that Life Members need not respond. It was noted that there's a one time charge of \$50 for life membership.

There was some discussion of the location for the September 1997 reunion. It was generally agreed that the central part of the country would provide the most convenient location for most members. Based on that assumption, both Nashville and New Orleans are being considered. It was mentioned that each have a number of attractions that would be of interest to members as well as have easy access. An informal vote taken of the members' preference resulted in a tie. Therefore, the decision will be based on the availability of a suitable hotel in September of 1997. It was suggested a shorter reunion period might be preferred by some attendees. There was no further discussion of the latter point.

By unanimous vote, the present President, Vice-President and Secretary/Treasurer were re-elected. Considerable applause followed this announcement, underscoring the unanimity and enthusiasm of the members present.

It was announced that each squadron had duly elected a director and alternate director at Thursday evening's Squadron Dinners. Names of the individuals elected will be reported in the December "Liberaider".

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Editor's note: These reports were written by Grace and Len Cole of the Headquarters Staff. We thank them for the excellent summary of the reunion events.

MAIL CALL



Dear George,

David White's letter on pages 8 and 9 of the June '96 "Liberaider" brought back a few memories. First he wrote about the "small plane" flying through the open hanger at Torretta Field and I sure remember that aircraft buzzing around the flight line after it was assembled by members of the 767th ground crew. We bomber pilots were itching to try it out but they were very selective about who got to fly it. I don't remember it going through a hanger but I do recall that all of a sudden it was grounded and dismantled. A hanger episode such as David described would explain why the May '89 "Liberaider" published a copy of the April 1945 "Liberaider" in which the "small plane" is pictured being torn down and is captioned "Fin-eesh Line Taxi". For some reason it sticks in my mind that the aircraft was a Bennie Howard DGA four passenger high wing monoplane. During WWII the US Army purchased a number of different makes of small commercial planes for liaison work. The Howard DGA was regarded as one of the best due to its performance at the 1935 Cleveland Air Race. There, one of them, "Mr. Mulligan" by name, won the cross-country Bendix Trophy (LA to Cleveland) followed that up by winning the Thompson Trophy closed pylon race. No other aircraft, especially a commercial one, ever accomplished anything equaling that.

FIN-EESH, LINE TAXI!



Fin-eesh Line Taxi! The 767th ground personnel ruefully cart away to salvage the remnants of their spare-time hobby. For several months last fall, the pride of the line, this unauthorized aircraft was put together by enthusiasts from odd parts and left-over parts gleamed from British airfields. The RAF swapped a section of fuselage for an American baseball bat.

I have two pictures of the P-40 buzz job David mentioned. After the war they were given to me by one of

my crewmembers and as the photos are quite small the fighter shows up only as a minute blob. The following is based on a letter I wrote home on 18 Feb 1945: From time to time our camp would be buzzed by most anything that flew from light spotter planes to B-24s. Nobody thought much about it and besides there were no aviation authority to which they could be reported. Out 461st BG had a P-40 fighter which had been used by the Group C.O. to insure that the bombers were in tight formation when setting off on a mission. By 1945 when the threat of enemy fighters was reduced and our formation flying was vastly improved, this fighter was used very little. Around the middle of February we had several days of bad weather and to liven things up Capt. Ed Veiluva, the 764th Squadron Operations Officer, made several low passes over our living area in that P-40. I was in our crew's enlisted men's tent when he made the first pass and I ran out just in time to see him flash behind the operations building and climb away. Thinking the show was finished I walked over and entered our tent. All of a sudden those of us inside could hear him diving on us at high speed so we rushed out. We were met by the roar of his engine as he pulled into a climb. For an instant the smoke coming from the stove of a nearby tent exhibited a gap which started at the very top of the stovepipe and went up for a distance roughly equal to the diameter of the P-40's propeller. The occupants exited on the run and were mad as hornets for the prop's downwash had filled their tent with smoke and soot. They were even madder when they learned it had been our Operations Officer and there was nothing they could do about it. I'll never know how Capt. Veiluva flew that close to the tent without hitting something other than smoke.

Clair Alexander
461st BG, 764th BS
Oct 1944 thru May 1945

Editor's note: Can anyone on the 764th flight line verify and/or embellish the "line taxi" story?

* * * * *

George,

August 24, 1996

This is directed to David R. White who wrote in about a picture of the aircraft flying through the unfinished hanger at the Service Squadron. My revetment was across the taxiway from where it hap-

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pened. It had been so long since I'd heard anyone even mention the episode that I had begun to think it was a figment of my imagination, but now I know that isn't true. As I recall: it was a British pilot and plane. He and the plane had been there several days, because he'd made an emergency landing there and the plane had had some work done on it. The men in the Service Squadron had teased him about the plane, which was normal, and he told them if they'd take down the cable that was hanging in the middle of the hanger that he'd fly the airplane through the "bloody-hanger"!!! Well the cable was removed and the pilot fired-up his airplane and took off. He made a couple of passes down by the hanger and then flew right through the hanger, wiggled his wings and was off into the wild blue yonder.

I'm sorry I didn't take a picture of it, but I feel sure there must have been someone else who got a picture or two. I'm just happy that David clarified the picture I've had in my mind all these years!!!

Henry A. Jones
5188 White River Street
Greenwood, IN 46143-8359

* * * * *

Dear George,

August 24, 1996

I have greatly enjoyed the "461st Liberaider" during your editorship after you took over in 1988 from O'Bannon. You have done a stupendous job!

Quite a number of letters and articles have concerned missions, incidents and the like to which I could personally closely relate, the latest being the P-47 crash into a B-24 at Lyon, France. I looked up in time to see the P-47 scooting across the fields. The pilot jumped out jauntily seemingly unhurt before I could get to the plane. I looked into the cockpit; it was totally intact. What a well-built fighter.

The first day at Lyon/Bron Airdrome (Sept. 10) was indeed a very wild day.

On the rather famous Oct. 4, '44 raid on the Munich marshalling yards our plane was one of the numerous

ones shot down by flak (Mission #108) - see July '87 issue and the June '94 issue, bottom p 38—article from Thomas Yates's "Had to go to War". I corresponded with Yates after I saw his article in the "Liberaider". Yates was in the same squadron we were on the Munich mission.

A Personal Note: I was a navigator. We ground looped at the end of the runway on our first mission "takeoff" - right tire blew at about 100 indicated. I watched the right wheel assembly pull right out of the wing. When I saw that Glenn Stemple was the Treasurer of the 461st BG Association, I wrote him because he was the armament officer who had to disarm the bombs. One bomb dropped off the front shackle and the long fuse (14") was dragged on the runway and was turned into a "U" shape. Another dropped off both shackles and the fuse was driven through the bulkhead. Stemple wrote back, "I have a picture of the plane you ground looped and I won't forget defusing of the bombs and removal of same."

Then as noted above our plane was shot down on the Oct. 4, '44 Munich sortie; we bailed out near Gorizia in northern Italy. We were near the Yugoslavia border. We crossed over into Yugoslavia with the Partisans to make our way back. Upon returning to our base after being MIA for 22 days, I flew another 23 combat sorties, including the last mission flown by the 461st HBG April 26, '45 to Linz, Austria. During those 23 missions we were forced to land on the Island of Vis a couple of times. One plane we had to leave there, but we managed to get a flight back to the base. On that last mission to Linz, I passed out from pneumonia and tubercular effusions on the way back home and was unloaded onto an ambulance after we landed. (I was in and out of the TB sanatoria for the next 12 years. I was retired in 1948.

So I think you can appreciate how I have enjoyed the "Liberaider" over the years. I really have never felt very far away from those combat days in Italy in '44-'45. In 1950 while in the sanatorium between surgeries I made a rough draft of my wartome experiences but I wasn't psychologically able to read it for the next 25 years. Even then it made me so upset I was not able to clean it up. Finally in 1992 I was able to handle it emotionally and included it in my, "An Autobiographical Sketch to Age 31". The bio is really dominated by my service in the Air Force during World War II.

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I wish you well and thanks again for the pleasure your efforts have provided me.

William Bruce Black, Ph.D.
1st Lt. USAF, Ret., 766th BS
2300 N. Whaley Avenue
Pensacola, FL 32503-4972
E-mail brblk@aol.com

Editor's note: Bill, if your biographical sketch is something you would like to see in the "Liberaider", send it along and we'll take a look.

* * * * *

George,

September 19, 1996

I assume you are taking mail, I believe a new editor is being sought.

The enclosed pages are from a book on wartime France, "An Uncertain Hour" by Ted Morgan, William Morrow & Co. It describes things that happened at Bron Airport just a short time before the 461st flew supply missions to the airport near Lyon. The shallow graves as mentioned were seen by 461st crews. From the pages I take August 17, 1944 as the massacre, the 24th as the time the Germans leave Montluc and September 1 as the time the Germans left the area. I have a note on my copy that DeGaulle was at the airport on September 4th. I believe the 461st flew the supply missions from Sept. 10 to the 22nd.

Ray Grew, 764th BS
28124 Hamden Lane
Escondido, CA 92026

Editor's note: The following text is copied from pages 308 and 309 of the book "An Uncertain Hour" by Ted Morgan. Our missions 80 through 83 were flown to soften up the area of Southern France for the invasion on August 15, see page 17 of the June 1995 "Liberaider". See pages 19 and 20 of the June 1996 "Liberaider" for the summaries of the supply missions to Lyon, France (Missions No. 99 through 105).

Once the role call was taken on August 11, 629 in-

mates were herded into trucks and driven to the Per-rache railroad station, where the train was waiting.

On August 13 Lyon was bombed again; one of the targets was the Bron Airport. Two days later came Operation Anvil, the Allied landing in the Provence (Editor: The invasion of Southern France, our Mission No. 83). In Lyon Barbie and his men were destroying archives. Time was running out and they also had to do something about the remaining prisoners in Montluc so they would not be able to tell what had gone on there. The train that left on August 11 had gotten rid of 629 people, but there were no more trains, and still several thousand inmates.

On August 17 fifty Jews were removed from the Baraque aux juifs. They were told they were being assigned to a work detail at the Bron airport to fill bomb craters from the August 13 bombardment. When they got to Bron they were given shovels, and a truck arrived with a load of soil. Otto Huber, an Alsatian, was detached from the city hall of Décines, the closest town, to act as interpreter. Huber saw a Jew with bandages on both arms, and said to Adjutant Brau, the noncom in charge, "This man can't work." Brau replied, "Tonight he won't feel a thing."

At 6 p.m. Brau asked for twenty volunteers among the guards to accompany the prisoners, presumably back to Montluc. Otto Huber was surprised by the guards' reaction. They volunteered with enthusiasm, laughing and talking about 'making some music'. He went home at that point, but the next day he overheard a conversation between Adjutant Brau and a sergeant. Brau mimed the actions of a man who has been hit and whose body turns before falling. Otto Huber understood from the conversation that the fifty Jews from Montluc had been pushed into unfilled bomb craters and machine gunned. Then a few shovelfuls of dirt had been thrown over their bodies. Adjutant Brau then mimed standing on the edge of a crater and kicking a little dirt in with the side of his foot.

On August 21 Joseph Bouellat, a Bron airport supervisor, was in Hanger 68 with his work crew repairing one of the planes damaged in the August 13 bombing when a truck and a Citroen drove up. A few minutes later he heard the sounds of automatic gunfire, and one of the men in his crew said, "Look boss, they're shooting people." Bouellat went to the open hanger

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door and saw eight men being pulled out of the truck by their hair and jackets, and thrown into a crater, where they were gunned down. Then some dirt was thrown over the bodies. Bouellat looked no more and went back to his work. Soon a German sentry came over to the hanger, wanting to chat. "It's terrible what they are doing, killing them like that," Bouellat said. "It's nothing," replied the sentry, "it's only Jews, good to make sausage for dogs." Bouellat saw the same thing several times after that. The car and the truck heading in reverse toward Hanger 68, the soldiers standing around a bomb crater, firing their weapons.

After liberation of Lyon on September 2, a resistance team found the mass grave at Bron airport. Then it was up to the police to identify the badly decomposed remains and notify the families.

* * * * *

Editor's note: Sorry, I can't find the reference that tells me where I got this article. It appears to be part of a larger article or book.

Now they had the Nazis on the run. They had to keep operating, but they needed supplies of rations, ammunition and gasoline, needed them badly.

The ground forces couldn't be called upon for aid. They were having their own headaches keeping their own units supplied. From the beachhead it was a 3 ½ day turn-around by truck. And the roads had about reached their capacity.

So for once, instead of helping the bombers, the fighters and light attack planes called upon the bombers to help them. And help arrived without delay.

From the 15th Air Force first came a fleet of B-24s. Shifted from strategic bombing missions, they were assigned to fly the gasoline and supplies from their Italian bases to the Tactical Command men in southern and central France.

Each B-24 was fitted to carry empty gasoline drums in the rear section, unfused 500 pounders were hung in the bomb bays, while many cases of .50 caliber

ammunition and food supplies were distributed in whatever storage space was left. In addition, each plane made the short flight with a full load of fuel in every available tank.

In tight formations they flew to airdromes that but a week before had been targets for the new occupants. Many of the crewmembers of the B-24s were ground men who were making their first mission to help with the unloading. They were astonished at the destruction the AAF had wrought upon the targets they passed over.

All the townsfolk, who by then were accustomed to diving for the nearest shelter whenever big bombers passed overhead—flocked out to the airdromes like children at a circus. They watched as the aircraft turned onto the apron that ran in a large semi-circle around the field. They saw the bomb bay doors open and the bombs come gently down guided by careful hands. They waved and cheered as the engines revved up and the empty planes took off to return the next day and the next with still more bombs, ammunition, gasoline and other supplies for the fighters.

But even the efforts of the B-24s were not enough. The drive to the north was in full swing again, this time for Belfort Gap, gateway to Germany. It was decided to add a fleet of A-20s and whatever C-47s were available; for these smaller planes could get into the forward fields where the B-24s couldn't land. There was such a demand for the cargo now that the A-20s and C-47s often taxied to within hose distance of the combat P-47s. The ground men pumped the gasoline from one plane to another like a blood transfusion. They lifted the bombs down from the bomber's bay, fused them, and rehung them on the Thunderbolts.

A small indication of what the Thunderbolts did with these supplies may be gained from their score on a single day's operation. On that day they nailed 43 locomotives, destroying 34 of them, leaving 9 damaged. In addition, they damaged or destroyed 29 railroad cars carrying German troops and supplies to the Belfort Gap. Of 125,000 rounds of ammunition flown in on one day, a P-47 group fired 90,000 rounds into enemy convoys in the Belfort Gap area.

Gradually, the race to keep the fighters supplied was being won. The reserve of material was mounting with each delivery by the ingenious Combat Express.

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Indeed, the delivery of surplus gasoline began to pose a problem. It was easy to store rations, ammunition and bombs, but high octane gasoline could not be poured on a field, when no more storage tanks were available. A lieutenant at one field came up with an answer. Finding four wine tank cars nearby he secured permission from the French authorities to have the cars moved to a siding on the airfield. This done, the cars were thoroughly cleaned, and 25,000 gallons of the precious fuel found storage space.

By this time, the front had become more stabilized. As the ground forces moved in to stand before the Belfort Gap, the moves from Airdrome to airdrome became less frequent, and Brig. Gen. Gordon P. Saville happily announced that his 12th Tactical Air Command was in swell shape—they had several days' supply of necessary materiel.

With the reestablishment of the railroad lines, the emergency was over, and the Combat Express made its last supply run. The B-24s went back to delivering bombs on strategic targets, the A-20s returned to flying their errands of ill-will, and the C-47s flew on to meet other demands.

The 7th Army was readying itself for the Battle of Belfort Gap. Thanks to their big friends and the supplies they had brought, the 12th Tactical Air Command was ready to take its place, the place up front.

* * * * *

Editor's note: The following is presented in response to the letter from David White, printed on pages 8 and 9 of the June 1996 issue of the "Liberaider". It is a combination of information taken from a letter from Dan Levin, 767th Bomb Squadron and a subsequent telephone conversation with Dan.

Dan was the "Mickey" navigator on Ernie Parsonson's crew, 14-3 of the 764th Bomb Squadron. The war was winding down and in May of 1945 their crew was scheduled to fly home in their familiar friend B-24 Number 19, a "Mickey" equipped aircraft. The Squadron Commander, Major John Trommershauser, was to fly with them back to the United States. As a "parting shot" the CO executed the buzz job on squadron headquarters mentioned by David White.

Eight of the original crew of ten men were on the plane. Two of the crew had been shot down while flying as replacement crewmen on other aircraft.

San said that No. 19 made it through the war in great shape. The only serious problem was the loss of all hydraulic power on one of her missions but she struggled home. She was last seen at Hunter Field, Savannah, GA after her trip back to the States. She is seen again here as she rests at Dakar, North Africa on her way home.

Thanks Dan for the story behind the buzz job at the 764th Bomb Squadron.

(Continued on page 11)



(Continued from page 10)

Gentlemen,

21 August 1996

Just received the June 1996 issue of the "Liberaider". You can imagine my surprise when I read the page listing those who had recently passed away and read my very own name.

Believe me, I am still very much alive, and happy that I can report that. Guess I will have to quick write the fellows of my B-24 crew (we still keep in touch) and inform them that I am still enjoying the good life.

Very truly yours,
Patrick Reithofer, 766th BS

Editor's note: That's good news! We're just trying to see if you're all awake out there.

* * * * *

George,

4 August 1996

Thanks for the copy of your June 1996 "Liberaider" newsletter which I received on 8/3/1996. I went from cover to cover and then over again. You do a nice job and it is too bad you must give up doing this. You might want to make note of an 'error' I made in the BIG FENCE story on your page 22. I later found out that there were two Castel del Monte's in Italy. I am enclosing a map that shows where each is located as I did not realize this when doing the story.

Also, on your page 9 under the article titled CHAFF you list all the B-24 groups during WWII. Two other groups not listed in the 15th Air Force were B-17 outfits, the 2nd BG and 99th BG. I was in the 2nd BG for a short time.

Enclosed is a copy of our Summer 1996 newsletter that you might not have received. I will see that you are on the mailing list.

Have a great reunion in Salk Lake City.

John Devney
Editor
459th BG—Pathfinder

Editor's note: The following map shows the proper location of "BIG FENCE" as west of Bari not north of Foggia.

Thanks John for your comments and interest. I don't see how you can put out four "Pathfinders" per year. I can hardly handle two "Liberaiders". I'm also glad the 15th Air Force could help train two Groups of B-17s in strategic bombing.



* * * * *

Dear George,

October 4, 1996

I have just received some good news for a change. I wrote to the National Archives at College Park in Maryland and asked if they knew anything about my crew. I just received the good news that all members of the crew returned to duty. As I have mentioned before, I have been in contact with Mel Tenhaken, R. R. Wakefield, Tom Byers and Russ MacDonald. I am still trying to contact Tom Merkouris, Ken Merry, Jesse Palmer, and Charles Mundy. I know that Lee P. Ward and Harry Dunham are deceased.

Until I got this information from the archives, none of us knew what happened to Tom Merkouris and Charles Mundy. The last report that we received was from Lee Ward, and he said that Tom Merkouris was still on the plane when we jumped. He made no mention of Charles Mundy at all.

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

I am asking that you please put an article in the "Liberaider", requesting that if any of them are still around to please get in touch with me as I have obtained some interesting pictures from Ljubljana, have found out where we bailed out and where our plane crashed. I have great contacts in Slovenia who are cooperating with all my requests.

I also have another request and that is a real memory taxer. I am trying to find out who the crewmen were in the 766th Mess Hall in December 1944 that were talking about the navigator nicknamed "The Blade" and what happened to him and his crew. His name was Bob Liebe or Lieb and he always carried a hunting knife with him. He took his OUT with us in Tucson, in July, August, 1944 but got transferred to another crew that was further along in training than ours, who needed a navigator. He had previously flown in the Pacific. The Archives have no information on him.

I am in contact with a college professor who is writing a book about Allied POWs in Europe. If anyone is interested in having their story told, please drop me a line.

Thanks for all the help you have been to me in the past George, and good luck to you and yours.

Paul T. Haggerty, 766th BS
12 Fischer Drive
North Kingstown, RI 02852
(401) 885-9609

Editor's note: Paul asked some questions about the person who supposedly rigged explosives in the nose wheel well so that B-24s would blow up on takeoff. This subject has been researched many time over the last 50 years and to my knowledge there has never been a shred of evidence brought forward to support his story. As far as the "Liberaider" is concerned, this is a closed issued unless someone can produce US Air Force documented proof that such event(s) actually happened.

* * * * *

George,

October 6, 1996

If you are on the "net" check this one out!

<http://www.mach3ww.com/B24/guestbook.html>

Here is a sample entry:

Welcome to the Guestbook

Thank you for visiting our pages. We would love it if you would Add to this guestbook we are keeping!

=====

My dad is Ralph. He is not on line so I gave my address here in Connecticut. He was in Italy from 1942-45 with the 451st 726th squadron. He is very excited to have found this site. My son works for a publisher that does a magazine called FLIGHT and he told us about the site.

Ralph A. Chiavelli <finewood@nai.net>

Lakehurst, NJ USA—Saturday, October 05, 1996 at 09:59:48 (CDT)

=====

Lyman M. Delameter, 764th BS
42103 Agena
Temecula, CA 92592
<del@pe.net>

* * * * *

BOMBARDIERS, INC. **CLOSES THEIR DOORS**

Dear Sir,

August 23, 1996

Please be advised that Colonel E.C. "Ned" Humphreys died on April 22, 1996. Please remove Bombardiers, Inc. from your mailing list. We are in the process of closing the office and preparing all of our records for the archives at Maxwell Air Force Base.

We have enjoyed the years of exchanging information with your group.

All the best to all those in your group, may you have many more years to record your history.

Sincerely,
Seminole "Sam" Street

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

Editor's note: The following letter contains an interesting story about the first of our supply missions to Lyon, France and a visit from General Patton. Since the story sounds somewhat implausible, I called George Hart for confirmation. George confirmed that the meeting took place but was not in the immediate vicinity of the conversation. He said he was sitting in the open hatch on the flight deck and observed the meeting. The pilot was furious and the conversation was very animated but there were no crew witnesses to verify the content of the discussion. The story is repeated here because it is a good story and we all like to fantasize about telling off one of our superiors. Your editor smiled when he read it but does not vouch for its authenticity.

Dear George,

September 3, 1996

I would hate to not get the next issue of the Liberaider. I certainly look forward to reading every line. I hope I have included all that is necessary in the above address. I certainly am looking forward to our reunion in Salt Lake City. We missed the cruise last year because my wife gets very ill on the water, which she did on the one cruise we took some years ago into the Bahamas.

Somehow I missed the issue or failed to read the request for information concerning the missions to Lyon, France, ferrying gasoline to General Patton after he was stalled because of not having any gas to run their tanks, etc.

A couple of years ago when I visited the nose gunner on our crew, he told me at that time what he remembered from our first mission to Lyon, France. Bob Leubke was our pilot. Bob died in a crash landing in the Azores after the war ferrying a B-29 back to the States. I was the radio operator and made the flight to Lyon. As everyone has indicated, I remember the plane being stripped of all armament and all extra weight, and only a skeleton crew making the flight. Here is where my story begins:

According to George Hart, who flew engineer on this mission in place of Don Hilgart who was our regular engineer, we were the first plane to land at Lyon. The field was an absolute mess. The runway had

been repaired for the planes coming in, but most of the buildings had been destroyed, including the control tower. After we landed, George says our plane was used as a control tower for other planes who were landing after us. We were grossly overweight, some 10,000 pounds more or less, according to George. When we landed, Bob Leubke had to ride the brakes hard to get stopped in the length of the runway. Now here is the interesting part of the story. At the end of the runway was General Patton in his command car welcoming the first plane, which was us. Bob Leubke had a hard enough time getting the plane stopped, and had to worry about the possibility of not getting it stopped in time to keep from running into General Patton. When we taxied off of the runway and parked on the hardstand, General Patton came to welcome us. Bob Leubke read General Patton the riot act in language only General Patton would understand, for jeopardizing not only himself, but the plane and crew and the load of gasoline. General Patton did apologize, very briefly, and turned and left without saying any more.

If you want to verify the story you may contact George Hart, 211 Wiley Ave., York, South Carolina 29745-1817 or call (803) 684-4533.

George also told me he became a friend of Col. Glantzberg after the war. George was in the banking business in York and Glantzberg was in the banking business in Savannah, GA. They often met and talked about Torretta, as well as how to make money. Glantzberg came to York to visit George a time or two after meetings were completed in Charlotte, N. Carolina. York, S. Carolina is just a few miles south of Charlotte.

Now, I have another story to tell. You say you are always looking for stories from "over there", so here goes another.

Like many other crews, we were sent to Capri to calm our nerves and to get ready for the second half of our missions. We had a beautiful time and enjoyed so many things there, including our visit to the Blue Grotto.

One day, all of the enlisted men in our crew went to the beach and rented Kayaks. We had no idea how far it was around the Isle of Capri, but decided to row around the Isle and become the first crew ever to do it. Let me mention that we were a very cocky

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(Continued from page 13)

crew and having survived the infamous mission to Linz and others, we felt sort of indestructible. The man who rented us the Kayaks told us not to go far for they would become water logged and sink. We paid little attention to him and we started off. Somehow I got out ahead of the rest of the guys and rounded a corner of the Isle. I kept looking back for the others but they never came. I thought they would come into view so I kept going. Soon the Kayak started to take water, and little by little it began sinking. Finally I had to abandoned it. The shoreline was a cliff, practically straight up and down. I began swimming to the cliff, pulling the Kayak because the man who rented them to us told us that if we destroyed it, we would have to pay for it. Finally though, to save myself, I let the Kayak go. As I neared the cliff I saw a ledge some 3 or 4 feet above the water line. I scrambled up and began waiting for the Red Cross boat that I hoped would show up and I could get their attention and would be picked up. Unfortunately, no boat came around and the water began to rise. First to my feet, then to my knees, then to my waist. Only thing I could think of was, "Here we came to the Isle of Capri for a rest and I am going to drown out there." The only thing left for me to do was to attempt to scale the cliff. Fortunately I was able to do this but when I got to the top I was bleeding from my shoulders down. I found myself in Upper Capri, much higher then Capri where we were visiting. I was able to communicate a little and was able to hire someone to take me down to the hotel where we were staying. When I found my crew-mates, they were around the bar enjoying Italian Cognac. I was quite upset that they left me, but they didn't seem worried at all. "After all", they said, "we knew you could swim." Needless to say I was quite angry at them for not coming back to check on me. By the way, a Red Cross boat did show up and picked up the Kayak so I did not have to pay for it. End of a true story.

See you in Salt Lake, good Lord willing and the creek don't rise.

Sincerely,
George Iubelt
RR1 Box 96A
Tamaroa, IL 62888-9737
(618) 496-3225

THE PX IS GOING OUT OF BUSINESS

Due to the fact that we are not finding many new members and PX sales have dropped off significantly over the past few years, the Board of Directors has made the decision to close up the PX following the 1997 Reunion. The current list of available items is shown on the order form below. Items may be purchased from Wally Robinson by mail any time during the year and at the next reunion. After that the doors will close.

For those of you that have not seen the pins listed, they are very attractive and make a great addition to any memorabilia you have from your service in the Air Force. They are in color, show the various insignia and are little less than an inch in diameter.

Order Form

Name _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

| Pins | Price | Qty | Total |
|---------------------------------|--------|-------|-------|
| 15th Air Force | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| 461st Group Headquarters | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| 764th Squadron | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| 765th Squadron | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| 766th Squadron | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| 767th Squadron | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| B-24 | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| Shoulder Patches | | | |
| 15th Air Force | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| 461st Group | \$3.00 | _____ | _____ |
| Decal | | | |
| Lightning/Bomb on Shield | \$2.00 | _____ | _____ |
| Caps | | | |
| Men's | \$6.50 | _____ | _____ |
| Women's | \$6.50 | _____ | _____ |
| Total Order (includes shipping) | | | _____ |

Make checks payable to: 461st BG 43-45 Inc.

Send to: Wally Robinson
3 E. Cardott Street
Ridgeway, PA 15853

CHAFF

B-17 DEDICATION ANNOUNCED

Colorado Springs, CO—August 22, 1997 has been set for the official dedication of the B-17 Monumental Bronze Memorial in the distinguished “Study Hall” Sculpture Garden on the USAF Academy Honor Court, beginning at 10:00 a.m. The monumental bronze replica of the famous aircraft will join four other warbirds already in place at the Academy, including the P-38, P-40, P-47, and P-51. These bronze monuments will forever capture the distinctive legacy of those who so unselfishly sacrificed to defeat a great threat to this nation, which they defended so well.

The creator of the sculpture Garden, Robert Henderson, has dedicated his art over the past decade to crafting planes from the WWII era. “It is an honor to recreate these magnificent aircraft while representing the men and women who designed, maintained, and flew them,” Henderson said. “Thanks to the sacrifice made by them and others during WWII, I have the privilege of doing what I love to do.”

The B-17 sculpture will have an approximate wing span of 19 feet and sit upon a beautifully polished granite base. Together, the plane and base will weigh approximately 3 tons. The wooden model of the B-17 used as a mold for the final sculpture may be donated to the Eighth Air Force Museum in Savannah, Georgia or one of several other locations currently under consideration.

Editor’s note: I guess the B-24 is next. We deserve to be there. For more information call 1-800-305-1738.

* * * * *

The Isle of Vis

The Isle of Vis was a haven for crippled bombers and fighters that could not make it to Italy from bombing targets in Austria, Hungary and the Balkans. It is one of the three most western Dalmatian islands in the Adriatic Sea, nestled between Bisevo and Susac. Vis is, a rock island, had no fresh water

but boasted of a natural and protected harbor for ships. The runway was gravel and only 3500 feet long located in a valley. The island was a junkyard of wrecked B-24s, B-17s, B-25s and other types of aircraft. They had been bulldozed off the runway and stripped of usable spare parts and equipment. Some of the airplanes were repaired and flown back to their bases. On occasion, there would not be room for a crippled bomber to land and the crew was asked to bail out over the airfield and let the airplane crash in the sea. In the early stages of our combat, the island was frequently bombed by German Stukas. To invade the island would have been very costly for the Germans, thus it provided a safe emergency landing space for the Allied airplanes. While at Vis, downed flyers feasted on Yugoslavian wine and Spam until their transportation back home arrived which was a small high-speed supply boat or a C-47

From the Cerignola Connection, the newsletter of the 455th Bomb Group

* * * * *

On May 8, 1944 the name of “Liberaiders” was selected for the Group. This name was submitted in a contest by co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Paavo A. Koistinen of the 767th Squadron. Presently, this name appeared in large yellow letters on a blue background centrally located at the top of the map of Europe in the briefing room. Still later it appeared on highway signs leading to Group Headquarters and on all of the motor vehicles of the Group.

* * * * *

Target Ploesti: View from a Bombsight

This book written by LeRoy “Ted” Newby went out of print in 1986. By popular demand, the book will be reissued by the Military Book Club as the November “Battle Classics” selection at \$17.95.

If you are interested in more information about the book or how to order one call toll-free (800) 321-7323.

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(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

We have a sincere and dedicated leader who is proud of the accomplishments of the 461st Bomb Group and the 15th Air Force of which we were a part. In a recent letter to an 8th Air Force organization he added the following post script: We do extend our thanks to the 8th Air Force for their efforts in assisting the 15th Air Force in winning the war.

* * * * *

A "WARTIMES DIARIES" QUOTE

In his "WARTIMES DIARIES", the Reich Minister for Armaments and War Production, Albert Speer, second only to Adolph Hitler, Chancellor of the Third Reich writes:

The real importance of the air war consisted in the fact that it opened a second front long before the invasion of Europe. That front was the skies over Germany. The fleets of bombers might appear at any time over any large German city or important factory. The unpredictability of the attacks made this front gigantic; every square meter of the territory we controlled was a kind of front line. Defense against air attacks required production of thousands of anti-aircraft guns, the stockpiling of tremendous quantities of ammunition all over the country, and holding in readiness hundreds of thousands of soldiers, who in addition had to stay in position by their guns, often totally inactive, for months at a time.

As far as I can judge from the accounts I have read, no one has yet seen that this was the greatest lost battle on the German side. The losses from the retreats in Russia or from the surrender of Stalingrad were consistently less. Moreover, the nearly 20,000 anti-aircraft guns stationed in the homeland could almost have doubled the anti-tank defenses on the Eastern front. In the territory of the Reich those guns were virtually useless. Over the attacked cities they did little more than provide a kind of reassuring fireworks display for the population. By that time bombers were operating from such altitudes that the shells of the 8.8 centimeter flak guns reached the planes at too slow a speed.

From the newsletter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society.

IS THERE ANY WONDER?

In the "Ocala Today" is a story of our Robert Kilmark. The title of the story is "W.W. II Crusader". In two paragraphs we have this. In 43 of his missions, five of his planes crashed, 40 crewmembers were killed, and he had to make it back to his home base on two of four engines on at least six occasions. He eventually was grounded for combat fatigue and returned home with a Distinguished Fly Cross, a Silver Star, 8 air medals, and 5 battle ribbons, as well as a Purple Heart.

Copied from the July 1944 issue of the 463rd Bomb Group Newsletter.

* * * * *

Veterans Administration Records Discovered

The Veterans Administration has discovered some 10 million duplicates of 20th century military records thought to have been destroyed in their 1973 fire. If you have been told the records you wanted had been in that fire, you may want to write again: National Personnel Records Center, GSA, 9700 Page Boulevard, St. Louis, MO 63132. Put "RESTORATION UNIT" on the envelope and the upper right corner of your letter.

* * * * *

HELP IN OBTAINING MISSING MEDALS

In regard to a newspaper article concerning missing medals, perhaps the following will be of assistance to members of the 461st Bomb Group.

As WWII came to an end, large numbers of service members were transferred, discharged, etc. with their service records apparently being closed out some time later. In many cases they returned to civilian life unaware of medals and decorations being authorized after the fact and never awarded or presented to them.

I, recently, had the satisfaction of requesting my father's medals and awards on behalf of my mother as his next of kin. The pride and emotion she felt when she received them was very heartwarming. The Secretary of the Army sent a Citation certificate awarding the Bronze Star (45 years after discharge) along with six medals, combat Infantryman Badge, Unit

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(Continued from page 16)

Citation, qualification badges and Honorable Discharge pin. It was most impressive as none of us knew that he was awarded anything but a Campaign Medal and CIB.

This was accomplished by submitting a standard form SF-180 request to the National Personnel Records Center along with a cover letter, discharge certificate and a notarized "next-of-kin" statement. The minimal paperwork effort and few months wait was well worth the results! The procedure supposedly applies to all veterans and next of kin for missing or replacement medals through the Civil War to the present.

P.S. For those interested: Medals of America—1929 AH Fairview Road, Fountain In, SC 29644 supplied a booklet of directions, forms, correct phraseology and sample cover letters as well as a catalog of medals and decorations available.

To obtain a Standard Form SF-180 write to the following:

**National Personnel Records Center
(Military Personnel Records)
9700 Page Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63132**

From the "Briefing". Newsletter of the B-24 Liberator Club

Editor's note: I have received several letters requesting information on how to obtain the WWII Greek Commemorative Medal. Read the articles in the December 1995 and June 1996 issues of the "Liberaider". The documents you need are listed in these articles. If you don't have copies of the documents required, write to the Nation Personnel Records Center (address shown at the end of the article above). Make sure you list the documents that you need copies of and they should be able to handle your request. Once you have the proper documents follow the directions shown in the "Liberaider" for applying for the medal.

* * * * *

HUMOR

Editor's note: Uriah R. Tate, an aircraft engineer with the 764th Squadron, died in 1976. I wonder if any of these were relatives of his.

There is Dic TATE who wants to run everything while Ro TATE tries to change everything. Their brother Agi TATE stirs up trouble with his son, Irri TATE. Whenever new projects are suggested, Hesi TATE and his nephew, Vege TATE, want to wait until next year. There is Aunt Imi TATE who wants to be like all the rest of the wives while Devas TATE provides doom and gloom. Grandpa Facili TATE is quite helpful in family matters and Poten TATE likes to be in charge of everything. Cousins Cogi TATE and Medi TATE always like to think things over, then lend a helpful, steadying hand. Then, of course, there is the black sheep of the family Ampu TATE, who has completely cut himself off from the world.

Editor: Does this make you want to Regurgi TATE? No offense meant Uriah.

QUICKIES

Thomas Alva Edison was a brilliant inventor. His favorite invention was the phonograph. He only invented the light bulb to see where to place the needle on the record.

How come an educational system that put so much emphasis on penmanship produced so many doctors?

On a lonely, moonlit country road as the car engine coughed and came to a halt, the following conversation took place.

"That's funny," said the young man. "I wonder what that knocking was?"

"Well, I can tell you one thing for sure," the girld answered icily. "It wasn't opportunity."

A key chain is a handy device that makes it possible to lose all your keys at once.

My wife says I never listen to her. At least that's what I think she said.

It's hard to be nostalgic when you can't remember anything.

The Wright Brothers were just plane folks.

(Continued on page 18)

(Continued from page 17)

Kingman Army Air Force Base

WARBIRDS SWANSONG. Taken from May 1947 Arizona Highways by Jerry McLain.

After WWII more than 7,000 retired army bombers, fighters, and training planes were left standing row on row at the Kingman Army Airfield five miles east of Kingman, Arizona, now Storage Depot 41 of the War Assets Corp. It was the world's greatest concentration of aircraft in one area at one time, covering five square miles. Kingman Army Airfield was a flexible gunnery base which had once had an army population of 17,000 officers and men. 5,437 of the planes, offered for competitive bidding with the provisions that they would not be used for flight purposes since they were not adaptable for civilian use, were purchased for \$2,780,000 by Martin Wunderlich, a Jefferson City Missouri Contractor. (It is rumored that the fuel drained from these planes was sold for more than the purchase price of the planes.

But so outstanding was the Kingman depot's safety record that in the delivery of 7,000 planes involving an estimated 21,000 flying men, there wasn't a fatal

accident. Only planes with low flying time were "pickled", yet Kingman soon had 1,100 such B-24s standing wing tip to wing tip.

At one time last summer the Kingman storage records showed 2,567 B-24 Liberators, 1,832 Flying Fortresses, 478 of the P-38 Lightnings, another 200 of the P-38 photo planes, 37 of the B-29 Superforts, not to mention 141 B-25 Billy Mitchell medium bombers and hundreds of P-47 Thunderbolts, P-40s of Flying Tiger fame and the A-26s, then America's newest and fastest medium bombers.

The depot sold B-17s at \$13,750 and B-25s at \$8,250. Prices asked on other types of aircraft included the A-26 at \$2,000 each, P-61, \$6,000, P-47, \$3,500 each, P-40, \$1,250 each, and A-24, \$1,650 each.

None but American citizens could purchase planes at Kingman, and before being offered for sale the ships were stripped of all confidential equipment such as bomb sights, radar and some radio installations.

Mohave Museum of History and Arts, Kingman, AZ copies from the 463rd BG newsletter, July, 1994.



Sometimes a generation pays with more than \$\$\$

By
Charlotte Grimes
St. Louis Post-Dispatch

WASHINGTON—In a recent joint House and Senate session of poignant reminiscences and stirring patriotism, Democrats and Republicans alike paid tribute to the military veterans and home front supporters who won World War II.

"We may be a little bent over, slightly overweight, and we walk with a limp - but our heads are high with the pride of serving our country," said Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, a Mississippi Democrat and a decorated combat veteran.

Not far away in another House office building, police hauled away a rowdy few of that generation from a congressional hearing room. They'd come to protest an overhaul of Medicare. Inside the room, Democrats and Republicans snarled at each other over the plan to cap Medicare's spending and nudge the program toward the private insurance market.

As I work to sort out what the debate over Medicare means for the nation - I keep thinking of someone else.

My father is coming for a visit, his first trip to Washington. At 72, he is more deeply rooted to his small farm than the oaks that Hurricane Opal blew down around his home recently. So here I am, dividing my thoughts between keeping up with Congress and getting ready for my father's arrival.

Time to call the airline. Confirm his flight. Be sure he's got a guide through unfamiliar, chaotic Atlanta airport to change planes. "I've made up my mind," he told me. "I'm going to fly one more time in my life." As an 18-year-old, my father flew a lot: 72 bombing missions over Europe in World War II in a B-26 Marauder. He has not had a taste for flying since.

Statistics are mind-boggling and are ammunition for both parties and every faction. A few of them: Medicare covers 33 million Americans 65 and older and 4 million of the disabled. For the elderly, it pays about half their medical bills. They or their families - pay the rest. It does not cover many of the things they need, such as prescriptions, eyeglasses, hearing aids, long-term care in a nursing home. And it is expensive for the Treasury.

Medicare's costs are now about 11 percent of the federal budget. Its expenses are rising at about 10 percent a year. Without additional money, its hospital trust fund will go broke in seven years. By then Medicare would account for

15 percent of the budget.

On my office wall, I hang my favorite picture of my father. It's a grainy old thing, black and white. It shows the fuselage of his plane, the "Fightin' Cock," and its crew of six. My father is the youngest, kneeling on the right. His cap is set at a jaunty angle, and he wears a devil-may-care grin. He was the plane's aerial engineer, fixing whatever broke on a bombing mission, and the top-turret gunner. Of his training class of 13, only he and one other survived the war.

Beside it, I put another smaller frame. Lined with white velvet that I hiked at lunch one day to find. On the velvet, I've pinned what he let me play with as a childhood jewel: his Distinguished Flying Cross.

To control that growth - and remake the program - the politicians have proposed saving \$270 billion from Medicare's expected spending over the next seven years. The savings will also help balance the budget. Some charge, and some deny, that it will also help pay for a \$245 billion tax cut they've proposed for wealthier Americans.

As the argument about all of that has gone on, it has touched something basic in the country's conscience: What is our responsibility to different generations? As those who worry about the deficit note, today's Medicare beneficiaries will get the equivalent (for an average working couple) of \$117,000 more in benefits than they paid in taxes. Today's children will pay just about that much each as their share of the national debt. When my generation retires, starting in 2010, our children won't be able to afford the taxes for so many of us baby bombers.

To pay for us baby bombers, more and more analysts agree that Medicare will have to change fundamentally. But as we try to sort out what's going on in Congress, it might be worth remembering something else. Sometimes a generation pays its share in more than dollars.

At the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum, there's the fuselage of a B-26, "Flak-Bait." I've visited it often, trying to imagine myself in my father's place, edging up into his little glass turret to face the enemy fighters.

In a strange way, this becomes the heart of my father's visit, our reaching out to each other through the shell of a World War II plane. His memories. My search to understand them. It wasn't an easy moment for either of us. But it was a priceless one.

Copied from the Spring 1996 Issue of Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society Newsletter "Communications."

THE REST OF THE STORY

Editor's Note: In February 1991 the fourth grade class of the Big Creek Elementary School near Fresno, California decided to conduct a class project that would research the crash of a B-24 aircraft in nearby Huntington Lake on December 6, 1943. The plane was flown by Capt. William H. Darden of the 461st Bomb Group. The results of this project were reported in the June 1992 "Liberaider". Additional material was presented in the centerfold of the December 1991 issue. Capt. Darden's plane was on a search mission to locate another 461 st aircraft that was lost in the mountains on the previous day.

As a follow-up, the 1992 fourth grade class decided they would like to learn more about the plane lost on December 5, 1943 and the men that were flying her. The two classes combined the material they had gathered during their projects and wrote a booklet dedicated to the memory of the men of the 461st Bomb Group who died while training at Hammer Field in Fresno, California.

It should be noted that in addition to the two crews that were lost. The booklet recognizes the loss of three other enlisted men that died during their training at Hammer Field. They were Sgt. Billy Novotny, Sgt. John Atz and Sgt. Clement Amory. These three aerial gunners died due to loss of oxygen during practice missions at high altitudes.

The following are excerpts from the booklet summarizing the loss of the aircraft on December 5, 1943. Brief biographies of each of the flyers are provided in the booklet but are not reprinted here.

On December 5, 1943 a B-24 piloted by 2nd Lt. Charles W. Turvey, disappeared over the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The crew included the co-pilot 2nd Lt. Robert M. Hester; the navigator, 2nd Lt. William T. Cronin; the bombardier, 2nd Lt. Ellis H. Fish; the engineer, S/Sgt. Robert O. Bursey; and the radio operator, Sgt. Howard A. Wandtke.

The B-24 hit the mountain peak taking off the right wing and sliding the airplane into a spin over a small lake. The plane was not found; all were thought to be lost.

Bobby Hester's dad was from Los Angeles. Every

summer for 17 years Clint Hester went up to the Kings Canyon National Park looking for the plane and his son. Late one night in February 1959, Clint Hester died at the age of 63. His last words were, "Now I'll finally know what happened to Bobby."

On July 17, 1960, two geologists were walking their way up a stream in Kings Canyon National Park.

First they found a piece of plywood and the wing zipper that looked like it had come from a flight suit.

When they reached the lake, they found a yellow colored object in the lake. One of the geologists dove in and got it. It was an aviation oxygen bottle with markings that indicated that it had come from a B-24 bomber.

When the geologist dove in he spotted an aviator's boot and on another dive he got it. Inside there were bones of a human foot.

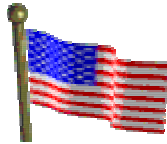
They found more pieces of wreckage on the north bank of the lake and with the shadows just right they could see more pieces in the lake.

The wreckage turned out to be the lost B-24 bomber, serial number 41-28463 that was lost on December 5, 1943.

The following is an excerpt of an article written by William D. Landsford for "Stag Magazine" in July 1961.

By August 4th, the military divers had searched the lake, examined the crumpled fuselage and recovered all that would ever be found of Bob Hester, Charles Turvey, and their crew. The 600-yard-long lake was found to be up to 110 feet deep, and the intense cold made recovery very difficult. All that was found was a lower torso and miscellaneous bits of flesh and bones. The portion that could be definitely identified belonged to Sgt. Bob Bursey, but there was enough evidence to indicate that all aboard had died instantly.

A week after recovery all that remained of the crew was buried in the mass grave at Arlington Cemetery. Only the identifiable remains of Sgt. Bursey were given a separate burial. The family attended, and Bob Hester's sister, Janet, was there on behalf of Clint.



Group Burial Arlington National Cemetery

Editor's Note: It should be mentioned that a great deal of the credit for the success of the projects of both fourth grade classes is due to the motivation and support provided by their teacher Bob Crider. The members of the 461st Bomb Group wish to express their thanks to Bob and the students for searching out the details of these two incidents which are so much a part of our history.

It should also be mentioned that the unknown and unnamed small lake up in the mountains now carries the name Hester Lake. I believe this was done to honor Clint Hester for his 17 years of searching the mountains in the area for his son Bob.

But this is not the end of the story. The fourth grade class of 1992 is now the eighth grade class of 1996. When as eighth graders they were scheduled for a trip to Washington, DC, they remembered the mass grave site at Arlington National Cemetery that held the remains of five of the six victims of that fatal crash in 1943. They decided to place a wreath on the grave and conduct a short memorial service. Several of the students prepared eulogies that they read at the service. They placed a wreath on the grave and a

military bugler from the National Cemetery played taps.

Although this ends their story as of now, the story and their contributions to it will remain in the minds of the students for the rest of their lives. Let us end this article with a picture of the students at the gravesite with the bugler and one of the eulogies presented at the memorial service. I regret that I cannot give credit to the unknown student who prepared and presented it.



"Today we pay tribute to the six men of the 461st Bomb Group who died in the plane crash on December 5, 1943. The plane went down in Kings Canyon National Park while on a training mission from Hammer Field, Fresno, California. The plane was not found until 1962.

Five of the bodies are buried here. They are: William Cronin, Ellis Fish, Robert Hester, Charles Turvey, and Howard Wandtke. The sixth, Robert Bursey, is buried in Rutland, Vermont.

During the time we studied about these men we talked to many of their relatives and to members of the 461st Bomb Group. Through conversations and letters we learned about them and their lives. We feel, in many ways, they are the kind of men we would be proud to have known. It is because of men like these that our country has all the freedoms we enjoy. We will never forget them and what they did for us.

Let us now salute these men and all the veterans of World War II.



THE NATIONAL CEMETERY SYSTEM

This is the first in a series about the National Cemetery System, administered by the U.S. Dept. of Veterans affairs. In this issue: Heritage, eligibility, and how it applies to our membership. In later issues: Burial in National Cemeteries, Headstones and Markers, Memorial Plots, Presidential Memorial Certificates, and Burial Flags.

HERITAGE

In the United States, development of national cemeteries began as the Civil war was waged, trying and testing the very existence of a young nation.

During the early years of the war, the dead were buried in fields and church yards, or close to the hospitals and prison camps where they died. The number of dead soon exceeded that of any previous conflict on the North American continent.

President Lincoln on July 17, 1862, signed legislation that authorized the creation of 14 national cemeteries, "... for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country." These cemeteries were the beginning of what is now known as the National Cemetery System. From 1862 to 1973, these cemeteries were operated by the department of the Army. Today the National Cemetery System of the Department of Veterans affairs oversees 114 national cemeteries in the United States and Puerto Rico. Sixteen others are administered by the Army or the Department of the Interior.

At the end of the Civil War, search and recovery teams visited hundreds of battlefields, churchyards, and plantations where hasty combat interments had been made. More than a quarter of a million remains were disinterred. The reinterment process took five years to complete and resulted in the establishment of 50 additional cemeteries. Not surprisingly, many cemeteries are located in the Southeast, near the sites of Civil War battles and military hospitals.

Just eight years after the end of the Civil War, Congress opened the national cemeteries to all honorably discharged veterans of the Union forces.

Legislation passed after World War I made burial in national cemeteries (then administered by the War Depart-

ment) available to American veterans of all wartime service. After World War II, Congress expanded eligibility for burial to all veterans of the United States Armed Forces, to American war veterans of allied armed forces and to veterans' spouses and dependent children.

In 1973, Congress transferred responsibility for 82 cemeteries from the Department of the Army to the Veterans Administration, now the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). VA already had 21 cemeteries under its jurisdiction associated with its domiciliaries and soldiers homes. VA built seven additional national cemeteries by 1987 and three more were established by 1990. The newest national cemetery, San Joaquin Valley, opened in 1992 to serve veterans of Northern California.

As a nation, we collectively remember these men and women. Famous or obscure, recruit or five-star general, these veterans gave of themselves to protect the ideals of liberty. National cemeteries are enduring testimonials to that appreciation.

ELIGIBILITY

Who Is Eligible for Burial in a National Cemetery?

- Any U.S. Armed Forces veteran of active-duty service whose separation from service was not considered dishonorable.
- Members of the Armed Forces who die on active duty.
- Their spouse, remarried widow/widower, minor children and, under certain conditions, unmarried adult children.

Important Information for Those Desiring Burial in a National Cemetery

Have a copy of your military discharge certificate or DD214 available.

If you don't have these papers, contact the VA Regional Office, Veterans Services Division, nearest you for assistance in establishing eligibility.

After death your family or funeral director should contact the director of the national cemetery where you wish to be buried to schedule a committal service at the cemetery and burial.

The cemetery director will order a grave marker and verify the information to be inscribed on it with your funeral director or family.

Copied from the 376th BG "Liberandos Intelligencer"

TAPS
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE FOREVER

June 1996 - November 1996

| <u>SQ</u> | <u>Name</u> | <u>Hometown</u> | <u>MOS</u> | <u>Date of Death</u> |
|-----------|---------------------------|------------------|------------|----------------------|
| HDQ | Levine, Abe | Lauderhill, FL | 505 | 17 July 1996 |
| | Norins, Hanley M. | Little River, CA | 2159 | 1993 |
| 764 | Christie, William H. | Ocoee, FL | 750 | 1996 |
| | Kiernan, Robert J. | St Paul, MN | 612 | 1 May 1996 |
| | MacDiaramid, Robert A. | Fallon, NY | 1034 | 15 Sept 1996 |
| | Veronesi, Eugene J. | Bridgeport, CT | 060 | 2 June 1996 |
| | Windmuller, Donald H. | Green Bay, WI | 612 | 25 June 1996 |
| 765 | Boyce, Wayne W. | Monte Vista, CO | 612 | Oct 1996 |
| | Costello, Jack J. | Scranton, PA | 237 | 1974 |
| | Forkins, Patrick M. | Mahwah, NJ | 612 | 25 Apr 1996 |
| | Jeffords, David N. | Marion, AR | 1034 | 23 Dec 1995 |
| | Koester, Robert R. | Deland, FL | 1034 | 16 May 1994 |
| | Marchbank, Jack F. | New Lenox, IL | 1035 | 26 Oct 1996 |
| | Manke, Melvin F. | MN | 911 | 25 Mar 1996 |
| | Montgomery, Noel R. | Mason City, IA | 612 | 17 June 1993 |
| | Stackhouse, Donald L. | Hazleton, PA | 748 | 24 Apr 1996 |
| | Waitherwerch, Felix J. | Port Jervis, NY | 756 | 1996 |
| | Witt, Marvin C. | Atwater, CA | 513 | 26 Oct 1996 |
| 766 | Barks, John P. | Bernalillo, NM | 612 | 1996 |
| | Campbell, Orbie V. | Wichita, KS | 911 | 11 July 1996 |
| | Cropp, Melvin W. | MO | 612 | 2 Dec 1995 |
| | German, Joseph | Boca Raton, FL | 1034 | 1990 |
| | Logue, W. Harry | Shelbyville, TN | 1035 | 12 Jan 1996 |
| | Mays, Warren E. | Baltimore, MD | 748 | 19 Aug 1995 |
| | Snyder, William F. | Decatur, IL | 754 | 26 May 1968 |
| 767 | Dearnell, Thomas D. | Orlando, FL | 748 | 25 Dec 1995 |
| | Dempsey, James M. | CA | | 1996 |
| | Glenn, Royce, B. | Boise, ID | 1092 | 2 Feb 1995 |
| | Gruber, John B. | Buffalo, NY | 757 | Before 1995 |
| | Hermanson, Arthur G., Jr. | Newport News, VA | 757 | 22 Mar 1996 |
| | Keffer, Warren, G. | Enka, NC | 612 | 13 Feb 1996 |

Men Returning From Detached Service

June 1996 - November 1996

| | |
|-----|--|
| 764 | McCarthy, Paul W., 124 Siesta Circle E., Osprey, FL 34229-9051 |
| | Ritz, William, J., 3108 Western, Avenue, El Campo, TX 77437 |
| 765 | Mirasola, Joseph, Jr., 350 Greendale Road, York, PA 17403 |
| 767 | Grisvard, William B., 311 SW Langston Road, Renton, WA 98055 |
| | Harbin, Andrew B., RR #3 Box 65, Winfield, AL 35594-9318 |
| | Millikin, Paul H., 632 W 20th Avenue, Spokane, WA 99203-2062 |

HISTORY OF THE 461ST BOMB

CHAPTER XIII

WINTERIZATION - OCTOBER, 1944

(A) Narrative History

By order of the 49th Wing Commander, Colonel William L. Lee, woolens replaced khaki as the proper uniform on 1 October. Due to a shortage of woolen uniforms, however, many weeks passed before all of the enlisted men were issued the prescribed uniform.

In anticipation of winter, the minimum requirements for the winterization of tents had been sent down from Headquarters of the 15th Air Force through channels. Among the stipulations of these minimum requirements were the following: (a) Each tent floor, 16 x 16 feet, shall be covered with brick, tile, lumber, or gravel; (b) Each tent shall have side walls at least 1-1/2 feet high which are to be of tuff or lumber. (Editor: My dictionary says "Tuff, a porous stone." Any comments from you tent makers.)

As the summer months passed the ground personnel began to think of the forthcoming winter. Having lived on the Base in the cold snow, rain, wind, and mud of the months of February, March, and April of 1944, they had no intentions of facing the next winter unprepared. During the last half of the month of August three fragmentation bomb missions were flown. Shortly thereafter the "frag" boxes began to appear as flooring and sidewalls in the tents of men and officers in the ordnance, armament, engineering, and communications sections. Seeing this, the members of all other departments of the Group daily hoped for many more "frag" missions. But "frag" clusters had always been a bomb load seldom used by the Group. Not a single "frag" mission was flown by the Group during the months of September and October.

All possible "dunnage" lumber had been secured during September and every available packing box had been used in the winterization program. But the supply of lumber was woefully inadequate. By the beginning of October, the members of the Group were collecting fire, clay brick, and tuff brick. Additional Italian laborers were employed, both privately and by the Group, to work as masons in building the walls of the tents with tuff brick that was purchased by the Air Force.

Early in October the Group Commander, Colonel Hawes, announced that a weekly inspection of the tents would be made. The ground personnel, having learned much the hard way about field made stoves, improved upon their inventions of February 1944. The combat crew personnel, most of who had never lived in a tent in the wintertime, observed what the ground personnel were doing and began to bestir themselves. All were now committed to the prospect of spending the winter in far off non-sunny Italy and took steps to make themselves as comfortable as possible.

(B) Operations

Bad flying weather limited the Group to fifteen missions and only thirteen Group sorties during the month of October. The rainy season had actually begun in mid-September but had not seriously interfered with the supply missions to France because the pilots, flying individually instead of in formation, could do instrument flying.

In October the rains repeatedly caused missions to be cancelled or stood down. On almost every mission that the Group flew, the pilots were forced to struggle up through low cumulus clouds and to fly between or through decks of clouds. Frequently they ran into solid banks of clouds, the tops of which extended upward beyond the maximum operational ceiling of a loaded B-24. On several occasions they faced angry thunderheads that towered to 30,000 feet or more above the stratus. Twice the Group was turned back short of a sortie, and three times the planes returned their bombs to base or jettisoned them after being over a target which could not be identified.

Knowing that bad weather would hamper flying by large formations, the Air Force planned to strike at the

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enemy by using an increased number of small formations. Thus it came about that field orders were occasionally received for two missions on one day. The formations were named either "Force Able" and "Force Baker" or "Red Force" and "Blue Force". It is probable that the mission planning sections of intelligence and operations and the battle preparations sections of ordnance, armament, and engineering never worked harder and seemingly accomplished less than during the month of October.

By October the field order almost always specified the use of RDX bombs instead of the general-purpose bombs that had previously been used a great deal. Also, by October the bombing altitudes had been increased. Instead of bombing from 20,000, 21,000, and 22,000 feet, the Wing formation was bombing from 22,000, 23,000, and 24,000 feet. On 15 October the top group bombed from 25,000 feet, and on 26 October the top Group bombed from 26,000. Flak at the ever-decreasing number of targets was becoming more concentrated but cloud formations were cutting down its efficiency.

As had been the case in each month following the assignment of Major Burke to be the Commanding Officer of Squadron 766 in mid July, there were frequent changes in the officer personnel of the Group Operations Section. Either of necessity, or by accident, or as a result of careful planning the Group had been committed to a policy of placing promising pilots in the Operations Section as part of their preparation for a command assignment.

A total of twenty-six new crews were received during the month of October. The pilots of these crews and their assigned squadrons are listed below.

764th Squadron

2nd Lt. Clair B. Alexander
2nd Lt. Roland H. Stevens
2nd Lt. Charles W. Saur
1st Lt. Ernest C. Parsonson
2nd Lt. Ralph A. Weber
2nd Lt. John A. Young
2nd Lt. Chester J. Lalewicz

765th Squadron

2nd Lt. Philip J. Crossman
2nd Lt. Gerald R. Smith
2nd Lt. Thomas B. Welton
2nd Lt. Thomas K. West
2nd Lt. Russel G. Whalen
2nd Lt. William V. Simons
2nd Lt. Robert M. Kelleher

766th Squadron

2nd Lt. William A. Guyton
2nd Lt. George F. Wiemann III
1st Lt. Jack N. Yetter
2nd Lt. Nicholas Sidovar
2nd Lt. Mitchel F. Hall
F/O William J. Miller
2nd Lt. Watkis R. Kassian

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(Continued from page 25)

767th Squadron

2nd Lt. Charles F. Krahn
1st Lt. Clyde L. Boyer
1st Lt. Robert A. Galvan
2nd Lt. Max M. Hailey
2nd Lt. Robert A. Crinkley

MISSIONS

Mission No. 108 1 October 1944

**Target: Steyr Daimler Puch Assembly Plant,
Steyr, Austria**

Cancelled

Mission No. 108 4 October 1944

**Target: Munich West Marshalling Yard, Ger-
many**

The first mission of the month of October was also part of the first "double header" mission ever to be flown by this Group. It was flown by "Force Able" and led by the Group Commander, Lt. Colonel Hawes. It resulted in a superior bombing mission but was marked by disastrous losses over the target. The Group was the second of sixteen Groups of the Fifteenth Air Force over the West Marshalling Yard at Munich, Germany. Two of the twenty-eight airplanes taking off were early returns; the remaining twenty-six were over the target at 1155 hours at an altitude of 23,700 feet.

Despite the loss of seven planes out of the formation during the bomb run, the bombing was superior. Seventy percent of the bombs dropped were plotted within 1000 feet of the briefed aiming point. The bomb pattern started on the south edge of the central portion of the western half of the marshalling yard and continued across the center of the marshalling yard. Some hits were scored on the rail lines, other bombs fell on the marshalling yard tracks and goods wagons, while still others fell on the highway underpass through the center of the marshalling yard.

Sixteen of the nineteen planes that returned from the target were damaged by flak but there were no casualties. A total of seventy-two officers and enlisted men were missing in action in the seven planes lost to the

intense, accurate, and heavy flak over the target. The losses over this target were the heaviest ever sustained by this Group from flak.

One of the officers missing in action was Major William H. Tallant, the Operations Officer of the 764th Squadron, whose promotion to Major was dated the same day of the mission. He was flying as co-pilot with 1st Lt. Douglas T. Herrin. The pilots of the other six planes lost over the target were: 1st Lt. Robert T. Chalmers; 2nd Lt. Walter J. Chester; 2nd Lt. Robert D. Falkner; 2nd Lt. William M. Powell; 2nd Lt. John L. Turner; and 2nd Lt. William W. Waggoner.

Mission No. 109 4 October 1944

Target: Pinzano RR Bridge, Italy

The second mission of the day of 4 October, which was flown by "Force Baker", was also a superior mission. The target was the railroad bridge at Pinzano, Italy, across the Tegliamento River. The formation, which was led by Major Donovan, was made up of twenty planes that flew in an A-C-A type of formation. There were no early returns. Finding the target partially obscured by seven-tenths cloud coverage, Major Donovan dropped to an altitude of 17,000 feet and made five bomb runs on the target. On the fifth bomb run the 1000-pound RDX bombs were dropped in a very compact pattern. Because of the cloud coverage the mission was not scored by the Air Force, but it was rated by the Group Commanding Officer as the second superior mission of the day. Two of the planes that became lost in repeated turns over the primary target finally abandoned the target and bombed one of the alternate targets, the railroad bridge at Latisana, Italy. Six others left the formation and bombed another alternate target, the railroad bridge at Casarsa, Italy. There were no losses and no damage on this mission.

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Mission No. 110
5 October 1944

Target: Vosendorf Oil Refinery, Vienna, Austria

Cancelled

Mission No. 110
5 October 1944

Target: Komarom Marshalling Yard, Hungary

Cancelled

Mission No. 110
7 October 1944

Target: Szombathely Marshalling Yard, Hungary

Mission No. 110, which was flown on 7 October, was part of another "double header" for the day. The primary target was the Winterhafen Oil Storage at Vienna, Austria. Due to bad weather in the assembly area, over the Adriatic, and over Yugoslavia, the formation, which originally had had but twenty-four planes, was reduced to seventeen planes by the time the Alps had been crossed. Due, also, to the bad weather the formation was one hour and fifteen minutes late in getting over the Alps. Having lost his fighter escort and having been unable to rendezvous with the other Groups in the Wing or with any other Groups in the Air Force, Lt. Colonel Lawhon, who was leading the formation, debated the wisdom of facing the Vienna fighters and flak alone with his comparatively small formation. He finally decided to attack a target of opportunity, the marshalling yard at Szombathely, Hungary. The mission was not scored by the Air Force, but the results were excellent. The photographs show that a close pattern of bombs fell across the center of the marshalling yard with hits on the center choke point, the railroad station and overpass across the center choke point, the turn table, and the locomotive shop.

Mission No. 111
7 October 1944

Target: Komaron Marshalling Yard, Hungary

Mission No. 111, which was flown by the "Blue Force" as part of the "double header" of 7 October, was led by Major Goree. The target was the marshalling yard at Komaron, Hungary. Of the seventeen planes which took off, eight became separated from the formation while attempting to climb through the solid deck of clouds, the tops of which were at 16,000 feet over Yugoslavia. With only nine planes in the formation over the target, Major Goree, Lt. Garrett, Lt. Herold, and Lt. Littel, with Lt. MacDiarmid flying in place of Captain DeWitt, almost equaled the record setting bombing score for the Group which they had made at Smederovo Ferry Slip in Yugoslavia on 3 September 1944. The score on the Komaron Mission was 91 percent.

Mission No. 112
8 October 1944

Target: Vosendorf Oil Refinery, Vienna, Austria

Cancelled

Mission No. 112
8 October 1944

Target: Blechhammer South Oil Refinery, Germany

Cancelled

Mission No. 112
10 October 1944

Target: Castelfranco Veneto Railroad Junction, Italy

On 10 October Major Word led a formation of twenty-eight planes against the Castelfranco Veneto Railroad Junction in Italy. After fighting their way up through a seven-tenths stratus layer that extended from 15,000 to 20,000 feet above the Adriatic, the planes arrived at the target to find it completely covered by a ten-tenths layer of stratus. No bombs were dropped on the target; some were jettisoned in the Adriatic and others were returned to the base.

Mission No. 113
11 October 1944

Target: Vosendorf Oil Refinery, Vienna, Austria

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The target for Mission 113 on 11 October was the Vosendorf Oil Refinery, Vienna, Austria. Again bad weather was experienced over the Adriatic. In the Trieste area there were showers and thunderheads that towered to 30,000 feet. Being unable to get through, around, or above the bank of clouds, Major Goree attempted to lead the formation in attacking the last resort target, the aircraft factory at Kranj, Yugoslavia. Flying above a ten-tenths deck of cumulus with tops at 12,000 feet and below a high deck of cirrus, the formation reached the target but dropped no bombs.

Mission No. 114
12 October 1944

Target: Stores Depot, Bologna, Italy

Mission No. 114 on 12 October was a medium effort against a stores depot at Bologna, Italy. Forty planes were airborne on this mission and there were no early returns. Using 100-pound general-purpose bombs and taking full advantage of CAVU weather at the target that was defended with but little flak, the large formation dropped their bombs with excellent results.

Mission No. 115
13 October 1944

Target: Vienna North Marshalling Yard, Austria

The target for mission of 13 October was the North Marshalling Yard at Vienna, Austria. Finding the target obscured by an almost solid undercast, the thirty-four planes over the target dropped their bombs by the pathfinder method. The formation straggled back to base through adverse weather conditions where it was learned that sixteen of them had been hit by flak. A few enemy airplanes were seen in the target area but none were encountered.

After the planes had gained 9,000 feet of altitude and had nearly completed their assembly, the planes flown by 1st Lt. Willard R. King and 1st Lt. Arthur H. Trier collided. The plane flown by Lt. King was knocked to the ground and Sergeant Van V. Smith Jr. was the only survivor. Despite the fact that his plane had had an engine knocked off and had suffered severe damage to the empennage, Lt. Trier flew out

over the Adriatic to jettison his bombs before returning to the Base. This marked the first time the 461st Group had ever lost an airplane in take off or assembly on a combat mission.

Mission No. 116
14 October 1944

Target: Bratislava Marshalling Yard and Bridge, Czechoslovakia

As had been the case when Lt. Colonel Lawhon had last led the Group on 7 October, extremely adverse weather conditions again compelled him to abandon the primary target and bomb a target of opportunity. The primary target had been the Odertal Oil Refinery, in Germany; Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. Despite a seven-tenths cloud coverage at the target, 61 percent of the bombs were dropped within 1000 feet of the selected aiming point.

Mission No. 117
16 October 1944

Target: Herman Goering Benzol Plant, Linz, Austria

Mission No. 117, which was led by Major Donovan on 16 October, was an attack on the Herman Goering Benzol Plant at Linz, Austria. This was the first time the Group had been back to Linz since its disastrous mission against the Herman Goering Tank Factory on 25 July 1944. A ten-tenths cloud coverage I compelled the Group to bomb by the pathfinder method but it was probably largely responsible for the fact that only four of the thirty-three planes over the target were hit by flak. One of these four planes, which was flown by 2nd Lt. Roy F. Kuhlman, failed to return from the mission.

Mission No. 118
17 October 1944

Target: Vosendorf Oil Refinery, Vienna, Austria

On its 118th mission on 17 October bad weather continued to nullify the efforts of the Group in prosecuting the policy of the Fifteenth Air Force to constantly keep pressure on the enemy's vital targets. Because of a thick, solid layer of cirrus clouds over the primary target, which was the Vosendorf Oil Refinery at Vienna, Austria, the Group was compelled to abandon the target. Weather conditions also made impossible

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the bombing of the alternate target in the Vienna area. No bombs were dropped on an enemy target on this mission.

Mission No. 119
18 October 1944

Target: Hatvan Marshalling Yard, Hungary

Cancelled

Mission No. 119
20 October 1944

Target: Isotta Fraschini Works, Milan, Italy

After having hammered away despite adverse weather conditions at targets in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany for three weeks in October, the Group was assigned on 20 October to attack the lightly defended Isotta Fraschini Works at Milan, Italy. Weather conditions for this mission were extremely good, but the Group failed to completely take advantage of the light defenses and the good weather by dropping only 29 percent of its bombs within the prescribed area.

Mission No. 120
23 October 1944

Target: Locomotive Works, Milan, Italy

Cancelled

Mission No. 120
23 October 1944

Target: Allach Bayerische Motoren Werke, Munich, Germany

The mission of 23 October was another pathfinder assignment. The target was the Allach Bayerische Motoren Werke at Munich, Germany. Again there was a ten-tenths undercast and again only four planes were hit by heavy flak that defends the Munich area.

Mission No. 121
28 October 1944

Target: Winterhafen Oil Storage, Regensburg, Germany

Cancelled

Mission No. 121
29 October 1944

Target: Winterhafen Oil Storage, Regensburg, Germany

For Mission No. 121 on 29 October the assigned target was again the Winterhafen Oil Storage at Regensburg Germany. This was the first time a Regensburg target had ever been assigned to this Group. Near the head of the Adriatic the formation ran into an eight-tenths bank cirrus which extended upward from 22,000 to 26,000 feet. After failing to find a hole through the clouds, Major Donovan did a 180-degree turn and returned the incendiary bombs to the Base. No sortie credit was allowed by the Air Force for this mission.

Mission No. 122
30 October 1944

Target: Kralupy Oil Refinery, Czechoslovakia

Cancelled

Mission No. 122
30 October 1944

Target: Herman Goering Benzol Plant, Linz, Austria

Cancelled

Mission No. 122
31 October 1944

Target: Podgorica Troop Concentrations, Yugoslavia

On the last day of the month Major Donovan again failed to get this formation through the weather between the Base and the target. After successfully getting above an eight-tenths stratus layer with tops at 10,000 feet and eight-tenths alto stratus layer with tops at 12,500 feet, he ran into a nine-tenths stratus undercast with tops at 15,000 feet at the initial point. Above this stratus layer thunderheads towered up to 30,000 feet. The assigned target had been German troop concentrations at Podgorica, Yugoslavia. Again the bombs were returned to the Base and again no sortie credit was allowed.

STATISTICAL OPERATIONS SUMMARY

Of the 451 planes that were airborne on combat missions during the month, only 246, or 54 percent of them, dropped their bombs on an enemy target. The weather forced a total of 12 early returns. Of the 844 tons of bombs which were airborne only 370 were dropped on target.

In flying fifteen missions crews logged a total of 2703 combat hours. No enemy planes were encountered during the month. The Group's airplane losses were eight to flak and three to other causes.

New crews continued to arrive during the month. As a result the Group had an average of seventy-two crews assigned for October.

Again the Group stood fourth in the Air Force in bombing accuracy. The average score for the month was 63.4 percent. In May the Group had led the Air Force in bombing accuracy with a score of 34.2 percent.

An appendage entitled "Statistical Summary of Operations" constitutes part of the Group History for the month of October.

Letters of Commendation

HEADQUARTERS XII AIR FORCE SERVICE COMMAND APO 650

SUBJECT: Commendation

25 October 1944

TO: Commanding Officer, 451st Bomb Group, (H), APO 520
Commanding Officer, 461st Bomb Group, (H), APO 520
Commanding Officer, 484th Bomb Group, (H), APO 520

THRU: Commanding General, Twelfth Air Force, APO 650

1. "In order to successfully continue the destruction of fleeing Germans and enemy lines of communications and supply in Southern France, it was necessary to keep the Twelfth Air Force fighter bombers moving to the most forward fields as quickly as they were captured. This evolved two problems of transportation. First, the actual movement of the units into the advanced airfields; secondly, the stockage of the fields with necessary supply levels.

2. "The first problem was solved by fullest utilization of all vehicles. The second found its answer in air transport. The heavy bombers of the 451st, 461st and 484th Bomb Group of the 49th Bomb Wing, Fifteenth Air Force were diverted from their regular duties for the purpose of hauling necessary supplies of gasoline, bombs and ammunition from their Foggia, Italy bases to Bron Airfield, Lyon, France.

3. "Your groups did a magnificent job during the period of 10 September to 22 September 1944. Carrying an average load of over five tons, you made 411 flights transporting a grand total of 2,119 tons of bombs, fin crates, ammunition, gasoline and oil for this Command.

4. "The high degree of success attributed to the Twelfth Air force in this campaign was materially implemented by the assistance rendered by your groups, I offer my congratulations and commendation on your fine work and express to all elements of your commands my sincere appreciation for their efforts."

Arthur Thomas
Brigadier General, UDA
Commanding

Changes in Personnel

Paragraph 2 of the Group's Special Orders No. 120, dated 3 October 1944, officially relieved the Deputy Group Commander, Lt. Colonel Brooks A. Lawhon, as Acting Group Operations Officer. Paragraph 3 of the same orders designated Captain Richard L. Rider, who had been the Assistant Group Operations Officer, to be the Group Operations Officer. Paragraph 4 of the same orders transferred Captain LeRoy G. Russell from the 764th Bombardment Squadron to Group Headquarters and designated him Assistant Group Operations Officer. He was returned to the 764th almost immediately, however, to replace rated personnel lost in that squadron.

Additional changes in the Group's Operations Section were not long delayed. Within two week's time two flying officers were assigned to the Group by the 49th Bombardment Wing. Authority: Group Special Orders No. 128, dated 14 October 1944, paragraph 11 - "Having been asgd to this Gp PAC Par 1, SO 171, Hq 49th Bomb Wg, dtd 13 Oct 44, LT COL HARDY, OTHA B., JR., is further asgd to Hq 461st Bomb Gp and is hereby designated Gp Opns 0."; and Paragraph 12 - "Having been asgd to this Gp PAC 2, SO 171, Hq 49th Bomb Wing, dtd 13 Oct 44, CAPT PHILLIPS, CHARLES R., 0427655, is further asgd to Hq 461st Bomb Gp and is hereby designated Asst Gp Opns 0."

Paragraph 10 of the same Group Special Orders which designated Lt. Colonel Hardy to be Group Operations Officer again designated Captain Rider as the Assistant Group operations Officer.

But the end was not yet. Paragraph 5 of the Group's Special Orders No. 135, dated 24 October 1944, transferred Lt. Colonel Hardy to the 765th Squadron and directed him to assume command of that squadron. Paragraph 6 of the same Special Orders redesignated Rider, now a Major, to be the Group Operations Officer.

With the transfer of Lt. Colonel Hardy to the 765th Squadron, Major Hoermann again became the Operations Officer of that Squadron with Captain Baker as his Assistant.

Paragraph 9 of the same Group's Special Orders No. 120, dated 3 October 1944, relieved First Lieutenant Eugene B. Raymond from detached service to the 451st Bombardment Group and restored him to duty with this Group. After his return from the 451st, Lt. Raymond began the installation of "carpet equipment" in the planes of the Group.

Having trained Captain Kenneth W. Prien as his successor as Group Navigator, Major Marion M. Pruitt left the Group on 13 October 1944 to return to the United States.

Paragraph 9 of the Group's Special Orders No. 128, dated 14 October 1944, officially designated Captain Prien as the Group Navigation Officer.

On 26 October Chief Warrant Officer Fred C. Medau was officially designated Secretary of the Headquarters Officers' Club by paragraph 4 of the Group's Special Orders No. 136.

In times past, this position, which was actually one of being chairman of the board, president, and secretary, had been filled by the vocal orders of the Commanding Officer or by an election conducted by the Headquarters Officers. Mr. Medau, however, asked for the appointment and was officially placed on orders. Displaying unusual energy and ability, he straightened out the business details of the club, set up a stove for the winter, purchased new furniture, and most attractively decorated the club.

On 24 October, 1st Lt. Theodore R. Ahlberg returned to the Group from the United States. He was the first of several officers to return to the Group who had been sent home in July on the Fifteenth Air Force's rotation policy for combat crew personnel. Before the end of October several other officers as follows also returned from rotation to the United States: Major James C. Dooley, Captain James D. Iconis, Captain Donald L. MacDougall, Captain Marion C. Mixson, First Lieutenant Leon F. Churchill, First Lieutenant Constant V. Platz, and First Lieutenant Roger F. White.

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Major Dooley did not reassume his command of the 766th Squadron but was transferred to the 451st Group where he became a squadron commander.

Paragraph 6 of the Group's Special Orders No. 138, dated 29 October 1944, relieved Captain Iconis as the Squadron Bombardier of the 764th Squadron and transferred him to Group Headquarters where he became the Assistant Group Bombardier.

The remainder of the officers who returned in October from the United States were reassigned to their original squadrons, but it was understood that they would be used in command and staff positions.

* * * * *

461st BOMBARDMENT GROUP

Taken from "Air Force Combat Units of World War II", page 336

Constituted as the 461st Bombardment Group (Heavy) on 19 May 1943. *Activated* on 1 Jul 1943. Moved to the Mediterranean theater, Jan-Feb 1944, the air echelon flying B-24's via the South Atlantic and stopping in North Africa before joining the ground echelon in Italy. Began combat with the Fifteenth AF in Apr 1944. Engaged chiefly in bombardment of communications, industries, and other strategic objectives in Italy, France, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Austria, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Greece. Supported Fifteenth AF's counter-air operations by bombing airdromes and aircraft centers, receiving a Distinguished Unit Citation (DUC) for a mission on 13 Apr 1944 when the group battled its way through enemy defenses to attack an aircraft components plant in Budapest. Participated in the effort against the enemy's oil supply by flying missions to such oil centers as Brux, Blechhammer, Moosbierbaum, Vienna, and Ploesti. Received second DUC for a mission against oil facilities at Ploesti in Jul 1944 when, despite flak, clouds, smoke, and fighter attacks, the group bombed its objective. Also operated in support of ground forces and flew some interdiction missions. Hit artillery positions in support of the invasion of southern France in Aug 1944 and flew supply mission to France in Sept. Aided the Allied offensive in Italy in Apr 1945 by attacking gun emplacements and troop concentrations. Dropped supplies to prisoner-of-war camps in Austria during May 1945. Returned to the US in Jul. *Inactivated* on 28 Aug 1945.

Redesignated 461st Bombardment Group (Light). *Activated* on 23 Dec 1953. Assigned to Tactical Air Command. Trained with B-26's and later converted to B-57's. *Redesignated* 461st Bombardment Group (Tactical) in Oct 1955.

Squadrons. *764th*: 1943-1945; 1953-. *765th*: 1943-1945; 1953-. *766th*: 1943-1945; 1953-. *767th*: 1943-1945.

Stations: Wendover Field, Utah, 1 Jul 1943; Gowen Field, Idaho, 29 Jul 1943; Kearns, Utah, 11 Sep 1943; Wendover Field, Utah, 30 Sep 1943; Hammer Field, Calif, 30 Oct 1943-Jan 1944; Torretta Airfield, Italy, c. Feb 1944-Jul 1945; Sioux Falls AAFld, SD, 22 Jul-28 Aug 1945. Hill AFB, Utah, 23 Dec 1953-.

Commanders. Unkn, 1 Jul-12 Aug 1943; Lt Col Willis G Carter, 12 Aug 1943; Col Frederic E. Glantzberg, c. 25 Oct 1943; Col Philip R Hawes, 22 Sep 1944; Col Brooks A Lawhon, 20 Dec 1944; Col Cravens C Rogers, 16 Apr 1945. Maj Gordon Baker, c. Dec 1953; Lt Col Donald F Blake, 4 Feb 1954; Lt Col Robert F. Price, 20 Feb 1954; Col Maxwell W Roman, c. 14 Jul 1954; Lt Col John A McVey, c. 16 May 1955; Lt Col William F Furman, c. 1 Aug 1955-.

Campaigns. Air Combat, EAME Theater; Air offensive; Rome-Arno; Normandy; Northern France; Southern France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; Po Valley.

Decorations: Distinguished Unit Citations: Budapest, Hungary, 13 Apr 1944; Ploesti, Rumania, 15 Jul 1944.

B-24 Crew 4859 and The Summer of 1944

Introduction:

After fifty years, I have finally got around to transcribing my penciled, yellowing, dog-eared W.W. II diary that I wrote while a POW in 1944. The diary covers our flights from Topeka, Kansas to Torretta Airfield, near Cerignola, Italy; our crews combat experiences, and what happened after we were taken prisoner by the Romanians. I have expanded beyond the diary to include recollections and some research data that I obtained from the 461st Liberaider publications. Additionally, these writings are from where I sat and from what I remember and may not be 100% accurate. Some of our crew flew an additional mission and of course Tom Keeney was flying with another crew while Rudy Carr was flying with us for the first few missions until we got some combat experience. Our airplane was a four engine B-24J Liberator heavy bomber built by Ford. The wingspan was 110 feet, and maximum gross weight was about 72,000 lbs. It would carry 6,000 lbs of bombs over 2,000 miles and had a crew of ten. Our crew was as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Pilot | Elias E. Moses, 2nd Lt., (Moe) |
| Copilot | Thomas H. Keeney, 2nd Lt. |
| Navigator | Sherwood Ehrenfeld, 2nd Lt., (Sherry) |
| Bombardier | Howard K. Hollingshead, 2nd Lt., (Holly) |
| Engineer-Gunner | Jack C. Morledge, Sgt. (The Writer) |
| Radio Operator-Gunner | Paul F. Junge, Sgt. |
| Nose Turret Gunner | John V. Yagersz, Sgt. |
| Top Turret Gunner | Charley F. Sooy, Cpl. |
| Ball Turret Gunner | Charles E. Humphrey, Cpl., (Hump) |
| Tail Turret Gunner | Robert R. Vernon, Cpl. |
| Check-out Pilot | Rudolph C. Carr, 2nd Lt., (Rudy) |

Our crew along with 47 other B-24 crews staged at Topeka Army Airfield, AAF, Kansas, about the first of July 1944. There we picked up new airplanes outfitted with new flight equipment, and received final training before departing for our Port of Embarkation, POE.

My diary plus enhancements:

On the morning of July 8, 1944 at 2:00 a.m. combat crew 4859, of which I was assigned as flight engineer-gunner, took-off from Topeka AAF and headed towards New England. Passing over Kansas City we flew into a heavy thunderstorm with lightning and severe turbulence. After going through the bad weather we were very glad to see dawn breaking as we proceeded on an easterly course. Everything went well, except for a failure of the pilot's indicator gyro. We landed at Columbus AAF, Ohio to have the gyro replaced. We then flew to our POE, Grenier AAF, New Hampshire, without any further problems.

We left Grenier AAF on Sunday July 9th and flew to Boston, Massachusetts. Moe buzzed Charley's house and Fenway Park. The Boston Red Sox were playing and we gave everyone in the ballpark a farewell salute. Moe did this for Charley and needless to say, it really made Charley's day and mine too. We continued northeast over Canada and Nova Scotia, out over the water, and landed at Gander Lake, New Foundland. At Gander we learned that one of our 48 B-24s crashed on take off at Grenier; however, the crew survived.

We were weathered in at Gander for a couple of days that allowed me the opportunity to top-off the wing fuel tanks several times. We also had two gas tanks installed on the forward bomb bay with about 600 additional gallons of fuel. This gave us a total of about 3,600 gallons, enough for about 18 hours of flying. There were no gas stations between New Foundland and the Azores Islands, which was where we were heading. I probably had enough fuel on board to make it all the way to Italy without stopping.

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We departed Gander very early on the morning of the eleventh for the long over water flight to the Azores. The runway at Gander was slightly uphill/downhill and not very long, a disadvantage for heavy bomber takeoffs. To my great relief the wind favored a downhill takeoff run. The night air was cool and our engines were producing maximum horsepower for takeoff. We got off the ground with plenty of runway to spare even though we were a couple of thousand pounds over maximum gross weight. (Now I tell you, Tom Keeney couldn't swim so I made damn sure that we wouldn't run out of fuel.) The flight took about nine hours and all I saw was water until some little bitsy specs of land came up on the horizon. Sherry with the help of Paul hit the Azores right on the button. Moe and Tom did their thing too. Again the airplane performed as advertised and all I had to do in the Azores was add gas and oil.

We had a bit of a shock when we touched down on the Azores runway. The airplane started to shake, rattle and make weird noises like we had landed with the landing gear up or something. Actually the landing was perfect, the runway was a steel mat. (PSP, Pierced steel planking, was used all over the world where our forces built runways. Without PSP we would still be fighting W.W. II.)

We were only in the Azores overnight but it rained all the time we were there. Needless to say we were happy to leave the muddy Azores. The next morning on the 12th we flew east to Marrakech, French Morocco, North Africa. During the five-hour flight and shortly after departure from the Azores we opened our sealed orders and found our destination to be the 15th AF, 461st Bomb Group, Torretta Airfield, Cerignola, Italy. In addition we also loaded and test fired our guns, and manned our duty stations for real. The flight turned out to be a piece of cake, the airplane performed by the book, and so did the crew.

After landing at Marrakech in the early afternoon of the 12th I performed a 25-hour inspection on the airplane. It was kind of a look-see check for leaks, missing fasteners, general condition of the tires, wheels, brakes, etc. I went over every square inch of the airplane and didn't find anything wrong with it. Our B-24 was a damn good airplane. At Marrakech we were in the war zone and here I saw POWs for the first time. They were Italian soldiers that had been captured during the battle for North Africa. They were behind barbed wire and asking for cigarettes. I gave them cigarettes, I felt sorry for the poor devils.

We left Marrakech on the morning of the 13th and flew to Tunis, Tunisia. After landing at Tunis I had to wait for a long time until it was our turn to be refueled, and even longer for a ride across the airfield to Base Ops. It was only a couple of hundred yards from the revetment where the plane was parked, as the crow flies, over to Base Ops. However, the airfield had been mined, and the only safe route was about a four-mile trek around the airport perimeter road. While waiting for a ride I watched RAF Spitfires takeoff and land. (That was a really fun thing to watch. I have always been hung up on airplanes.) There was also a giant junk pile of wrecked airplanes close by. Some of the airplanes were German including those huge transports with multiple sets of wheels under the fuselage. At this point it became obvious that we were getting closer to the war.

On the morning of the 14th we took off from Tunis and flew to Gioio, Italy, (which is down in the toe of the boot or close to it). After reaching cruising altitude over the beautiful blue Mediterranean Sea we ran into a little problem. A British warship fired at us. I had used the Vary Pistol to fire the colors of the day when we approached their ships. Somebody goofed big time (I still don't think it was me). Anyway that was our baptism of fire and they were lousy gunners, thank goodness. After getting away from the Brits we flew peacefully up the East coast of Sicily and on to Gioio, Italy. An Ordnance Captain accompanied us as a passenger on this flight.

We left Gioio on the morning of the 15th and flew to our destination Torretta Airfield near Cerignola, Italy. Cerignola is about half way between Bari and Foggia. We were assigned to the 766th Squadron, 461st Bomb Group (heavy) of the 15th Air Force. The Group was commanded by Col. Fritz Glantzberg and consisted of the 764th, 765th, 766th, and 767th Squadrons. Each squadron had about 20 to 25 airplanes. When we arrived as a replacement crew the group had just completed 50 missions and they threw a wing-ding of a party. Very few of the original crews, if any, were there for the party. A lot of B-24s had been lost and a lot of brave young men had gone with them. The war was going full bore at that time and soon we would be

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right in the thick of it.

Four days after checking into our squadron, the 19th of July, we flew our first combat mission. We had flown a couple of training/orientation runs. So I figured that they would send us on a couple of milk runs to easy targets to break us in. Well, we went to Munich, Germany and it was a bugger. Their welcoming committee greeted us with a flak barrage that was something else. It's true you could get out and walk on it. None of us were wounded, but our nice new airplane came home with a bunch of holes in it. There may have been German fighters around but I didn't see any. They told us at briefing, "Don't worry about the flak, just worry about the fighters." What a bunch of bull stuff that was. All of our planes returned from the mission and that offered some solace. On the 21st our Bomb Group went to Brux, Czechoslovakia. I didn't go but Holly, Paul, and Bob flew the mission and said it was rough.

At the pre-mission briefing the morning of the 22nd we were told that our target would be the Romanian American Oil Refinery at Ploesti, Romania. The room became very quiet when they got the word. Everyone knew about Ploesti. Between the 8th and 15th Air Forces over 400 airplanes had already been lost trying to knock out Ploesti, and 300 of them were heavy bombers. That was the good news, the bad news; it was our turn up to bat in the Ploesti War Series.

The two-mile truck ride from our squadron area to the flight line was almost as perilous as flying the mission. The road, if you could call it that, was about the same as they use for the Baja California Race. We had to stand-up in the back of the 6-by and hang on for dear life. I am sure that all of the truck drivers were ex-Baja racers. Another shocker was the delivery of the bombs by the armorers to the airplane. After their 6-by backed up as close as possible to the airplane they dropped the tail gate and rolled the 1,000 pounders out of the truck bed and let them bounce on the ground, knocking other 1,000 pounders about. I knew that the bombs weren't armed but it still scared the Dickens out of me, (if that's what you call that stuff). After the bombs were loaded in the bomb bay Sherry would write little personal messages on them. He also would take along a little personal gift in a paper bag to throw out over the target. Sherry was one of the original brown bagger bombers.

We took off at day light and joined other planes in a standard box type formation. While climbing to our cruising altitude of 28,000 feet we flew across the Adriatic Sea over a bit of Albania, across Yugoslavia and the Danube River, into Romanian skies. By that time our formation was a mess. A lot of planes aborted requiring numerous position adjustments to fill the gaps. There was almost a steady stream of bombers going back to Italy. What really ruined our day was as we crossed the Danube the lead plane lost an engine and didn't abort. He just kept right on going and slowed the whole formation down. Consequently we were late by about eight minutes getting to the initial point for the bomb run over the target. By that time the Romanian gunners had time to load their guns, take a coffee break, and shoot our ass off when we got to the target.

When the bomb run began I took a couple of walk around oxygen bottles and went back to the tail turret to throw out chaff, (aluminum foil used to scramble the ground radar until we got to the target). When my oxygen bottles ran out I returned to my right waist gun position and reconnected my oxygen hose and interphone cord. By that time we had dropped our bombs and were getting hit by a heavy barrage of flak. It was immediately obvious that we had received several close or direct hits from the 88 mm shells. A quick look at the airplane from my perspective at the waist didn't look good. There was damage to the left vertical stabilizer/rudder assembly and the right side assembly was almost completely shot away. There was severe vibration in the whole aft section of the aircraft. The left wing was damaged and 100-octane fuel was pouring out and spraying the left side of the airplane from the number 2 tank. On the right side No. 3 engine was on fire and Moe had feathered No. 4.

I reported the damage to Moe over the interphone and he asked me how bad it was. I told him, "We can make it home". However, I didn't know we had a fire in the bomb bay. When Hump came up from the ball turret he opened the door leading forward into the bomb bay and we both saw that it was on fire. It was then that I realized that we had lost the airplane.

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Moe knew it too, and rang the bell to prepare to bail out. I opened the camera hatch door in the bottom of the aft fuselage and fastened the catch. The vibration of the tail section caused the door catch to come loose and slam shut. I had a tough time getting it opened and secured again. That was a must because the camera hatch was our bail out exit in the aft fuselage. After opening the hatch I started forward to see if there was any hope of fighting the bomb bay fire. I could see smoke coming from around the door and something was shorted and sparking in the command deck above the bomb bay. Hump told me that it was too far gone and we both knew that the airplane could blow-up at any moment.

I continued bail-out preparations, including getting Bob to abandon the tail turret. Moe rang the bail out bell. By that time Bob was out of his turret and we chuted up ready to go. Hump went first, followed by me and then Bob and Paul. Charley and Rudy went through the fire and out the front bomb bay. Sherry, Holly, and John went out the nose wheel well, and Moe went out the top hatch of the flight deck. Moe was the last to leave; he hung in until the rest of the crew had time to bail out before he left. By that time the fire had spread to the flight deck and he couldn't get to the bomb bay so he went out the top hatch, and made it. This was almost a miracle, he had to miss the props on the inboard engines, get by the top turret, clear the antennas, and the two vertical stabilizers without getting clobbered. Moe did a great job that day he saved everybody, including himself.

I think the airplane was between 20 to 25 thousand feet when we jumped. I should have free fallen for several thousand feet before pulling the ripcord but in a panic I yanked the "D" ring immediately after pushing out the hatch. I received a severe opening shock when my chute opened, but I got a hell of a nice long ride to the ground. The first thing I did after my chute opened was count the other crew members chutes. I counted six in addition to mine. I also saw our airplane explode. It went down in two large burning pieces. I was in chute for quite some time floating over the countryside, trying to determine where I would land. I yelled at the guys in the other chutes but they were too far away to hear.

When I landed I hit the ground hard falling backwards in a cornfield. It knocked the wind out of me. When I regained my senses and determined that I indeed survived. I found that my right ankle was a mess and probably broken, the fingernails of my right hand were badly damaged from clawing at my parachute. I still had a death grip on the "D" ring and I had company.

When I more or less regained my equilibrium I was confronted with a welcoming committee, two guys and one of them had a big barreled squirrel rifle in my face. The guy with the gun kept saying something like, "Ruskie". It didn't take long for me to figure out that he didn't like Russians. My most important effort quickly became convincing the guy with the gun that I was an American and not a Russian. Another important communication was that I wasn't armed. I forgot my side arm when I bailed out. That was a lucky mistake. The farmer probably would have shot me if I had my gun. While we became acquainted I removed my high top shoe from my right foot and wrapped my ankle with an ace bandage from my first aid kit. I put my shoe back on, laced it up tight. After my friends gathered up my gear, we walked a short distance to the guy's house.

Before long a number of people had gathered out in front of the house and a heated discussion seemed to be going on between some of them. While this was happening I would go to the front door and smile and wave to everybody. They were beginning to look and sound like a lynch mob. My luck held, before long a soldier in a dirty khaki uniform with a red star on his cap walked up and took charge. He looked like good news from home to me, maybe a guerilla fighter that would help me escape.

The soldier found me a stick to use as a cane. Along with a party of adults, children, and dogs we slowly made our way across the fields until we came to a dirt road. After I hobbled down the road for a while we stopped for a break. They brought us a cool pitcher of water. That was something else because it was a hot July afternoon and I was parched. We continued on at a slow pace. By this time the crowd had diminished considerably. After about a mile we stopped at a farmhouse and a lady brought me a chair and gave us marmalade and crackers. Further on down the road we stopped at another farmhouse and the farmer gave us several shots of schnapps in tiny

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glasses. We stopped at one more farmhouse where they gave some wine. If it hadn't been for the spirits I don't think I could have made it under my own power. Several times my foot hurt so bad I thought I would pass out. Finally we came to a small village and the soldier turned me over to the officials at the local jailhouse.

Sherry was already there. I was never so glad to see anyone in all of my life. By the end of the day our whole crew was there except for Holly and Hump. Things were looking up a little. Eight of us were alive with no serious injuries and we were reasonably certain that Holly and Hump had bailed out successfully. They gave us something to eat and even some beer. A doctor looked at my ankle and said that it appeared to be a bad sprain. He also looked at the rest of the crew and administered to their needs. That night I made a personal assessment of our situation. We were very lucky we had survived after being shot at, shot up and shot down. We were in the bag, POWs, now all we had to do was figure out how to get out of this mess.

On the morning of the 23rd they loaded us into two horse drawn wagons. The lead wagon took all of the crew except me. I was loaded into a second wagon with all our gear. Each wagon had a soldier for a driver. As we drove towards Ploesti, we passed some of the bombed out refineries, probably the ones we hit the day before. They were a mess. There were burned out tanks, twisted metal, and wreckage everywhere. Several thousand people were working at clearing debris along our route. They shook their fists at us and called us names like "gangster" and "criminal". We would have liked a faster mode of travel, however they didn't cause us any bodily harm.

At one point an air raid warning sounded and our drivers did a 180-degree turn and headed back towards the countryside until the all clear sounded. We then retraced our way back into the city. Ploesti had been hit hard. Most of the buildings were gutted and burned out. We were taken to a building that was still in tact and turned over to the authorities. There we were officially told that we were POW's and were interrogated. We gave them name, rank, and serial number and one dog tag. About 10:30 p.m. we had another air raid alert. They loaded us into trucks, and drove us someplace that I guess was away from the target. I thought that we would be asphyxiated by the smudge pot smoke. I could hardly breath even with my handkerchief over my face. We could hear and feel the bombs hit and could hear the flak guns fire. It appeared that we were front row center for the show. Everyone was scared. No one was hit or hurt. It was a great 4th of July type fireworks display.

The next day, the 24th of July, they loaded us and a whole bunch of other pilgrims that had been shot down into trucks. They took us to Bucharest, about 50 miles south of Ploesti. Bucharest is known as the Paris of the Balkans, it probably is, but our tour of the city was not very pleasant. The people were not the least bit hospitable. They threw garbage at us. We passed by the Palace. It was big, beautiful, and impressive. Shortly afterwards we arrived at the Prison and it was so large and impressive, but only in a negative way. Here we were interrogated again, name, rank, and serial number. We were separated from our commissioned officers. They were placed in a separate camp from us. We did not see or hear from them nor did they hear from us until we were released.

Our Camp was located next to a Romanian military hospital, in fact there was a red cross painted on the roof of our main dormitory building. Our main dormitory was a large brick two-story building with a basement. The basement was used as an air raid shelter. We also had a single story building that was used for the overflow of prisoners. They kept coming, and coming, and coming. The perimeter was enclosed by a high, wire fence and was guarded around the clock by Romanian soldiers.

Our mess hall was in an adjacent fenced in area across the road. When we went to chow we passed through two in-line gates to get from the dorm area to the mess area. Reversing the procedure going back to the dorm after chow. The guards attempted to take head counts as we passed through the gates at chow time. We would start simulated fights, shout, rant and rave to distract them. Prisoners would sneak by the headcounters and they would never get the same number twice. It drove them nuts. They never did know exactly how many pris-

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oners they had. I really doubt if we knew how many of us were in there either.

When we were put in the prison camp, there were about 400 airmen in our camp, and I believe about half as many officers in their camp. The officers were better off than we were, at least in a few ways. They received an allowance and could buy things like cigarettes and goodies. The bad news was that their dormitory was located very close to a munitions factory. Our camp was located very close to the marshalling yards. Every time we heard a train whistle we knew another air raid was soon to follow. Sweating out the air raids was very, very bad. Our 15th AF would hit us in the daytime and the RAF would get us after dark. I am sure everyone that has been on both the delivery end and the receiving end of a bomb attack would agree that the delivery is a piece of cake compared to having them fall on you. We were also bombed by the Russians and the Germans before the whole shooting match was over. Our compound was hit. They got our mess hall one time, but I think only one American was killed in the raids.

Most of the POW's were Americans; however, we had quite a few British, Canadians, and a sprinkling of other nationalities among us. The prison Commandant was a Romanian Colonel and the officer in charge of our Romanian guards was a Captain. Our people more or less ran their own show; our ranking guy was a Technical Sergeant. He called the shots. We even had our own guys operating the mess hall. The American senior officer in the Romanian prison was a Lt. Col. Gunn. (I don't recall ever seeing Col. Gunn when I was in prison but when I was stationed at Sheppard AFB, Texas 18 years later our paths crossed again. We reminisced about the good old POW days over coffee. We even made the AF Times. Incidentally, Col. Gunn was by then a bird Colonel. As for me I had brown nosed my way clear up to Master Sergeant.)

Life in the prison was rough but not terrible, The Russian prisoners did all the work; cleaning, sweeping, etc. Our guys didn't have much to do. They made playing cards out of scraps of paper. We were provided some hard back old English non-fiction books with a bunch of pages missing. We sat around looking through the fence and wondering how in the hell we would ever get out. One of the hardships was the lack of paper. Our diet was mainly soup and almost everyone had diarrhea to a certain degree. That's where the missing pages from the library books went.

Medical care was very bad. The Romanians didn't have much to share. There was no penicillin, no sulphur drugs, nor adequate common pharmaceuticals. Some of our boys died from infections, including gangrene. They probably could have been saved in an American hospital. (I am not saying that the French doctor that treated our boys didn't do the best he could with what he had nor that the Romanians didn't treat our wounded as best they could. The way it looked to me, our soldiers were treated medically the same as Romanian soldiers.)

The Royal Family of Romania and most of the Romanian people were not really in favor of the German take over of their country. They were more sympathetic to our cause, except for one thing. They hated the Russians and the Russians were our allies. War makes strange bedfellows. Actually the 130 guys that were taken prisoner in the first Ploesti raid on August 1st 1943 were treated almost like guests. They were put in a camp out in the country, away from all the bombing where it was very pleasant. One of our Sergeants even had something going with the commandant's daughter. She was one of our main sources of information. By the time we got there the country club had been shut down and the 130 guys from the first raid had moved into the city. We were just one big happy family.

About once a week the Romanian Blue Cross would pay a visit and we would be given a ration of cigarettes. They were about half as thick as American cigarettes and didn't last as long but they were really very good and were certainly appreciated. Nothing was wasted. We used the cigarette packages to make playing cards or used the paper for toilet paper. (Works better than your finger.) The Blue Cross would also bring us pastries and that was more than just a treat as we were suffering from the lack of sugar in our diet. I hadn't been there long before the lack of anything sweet really became a problem, not just with me but everybody. We traded everything we had of value to the guards for money to buy pastries. I even sold my GI wristwatch to one of the guards so I could buy pastries for our crew.

Morale among prisoners was fantastic. We had a POW Postmaster with a mailman's cap, although we never

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received any mail. We had a guy from Bob Will's Texas Playboys Band that headed up our prison orchestra that consisted of a guitar player, a fiddle player, a jug player, and a guy playing the harmonica. They were great and entertained every night, except when there were alerts or air raids. The shows would include sing alongs and played to a packed house until the guards would start shooting. I don't know what was the matter with them; maybe they just didn't like good Country Western Music.

Our main concern was how in the world would we ever get out of this mess alive. We knew that the Russians would make their move westward before long. We thought that they would probably set up their artillery just outside the city and pulverize it. We didn't want to stay for the big barrage and be on the receiving end. An escape plan was formulated and we made preparations to hook-em if the Russians attacked. We divided into small groups with a leader assigned to each group. Each group was assigned a direction to travel when they escaped. We made hard tach, maps and even knives from some banding off of clothes bundles that we had received from the Red Cross. The plan was generally to fan out in a number of directions. The lucky ones would get through.

July 26th, we had two air raids during the day and one that night. Some of the bombs fell close and we could hear them whistle on the way down. The night raid was the most spectacular show I have ever seen, with the searchlights beaming up, the flak guns firing, the different colored flares dropping from the bombers; the bombers making their runs with the Romanian fighters after them. The fighters would fly through their own flak to shoot a bomber down. The bombers were shooting back trying to save their skins. Usually every fifth round was a red tracer bullet and that added to the color and excitement of the battle.

We would watch from the windows of our building until the pom-pom guns very close-by started firing. That was our signal to run for cover that resulted in a mad scramble by all of us to the basement. The Brits used a Judas-goat tactic for their night raids. When the lead plane, the one that dropped the flares on the target, got caught in the lights and was getting the hell shot out of it. The rest of their bombers would make their runs singly and get the hell out of there. Invariably, the next morning the lead crew, or what was left of it would join our club.

July 27th, we had another night raid, they bombed the marshalling yards that were very close by, and we stayed in the basement for most of the show. Our luck has been holding out, so far our camp hasn't been hit.

August 22nd, our first anniversary (one month). The Russians are starting a new drive to the west. They are about 100 miles from Bucharest. The Romanian army has held the position for the past year. We get most of our news from the British people who have been interned. They walk past our compound going back and forth to the air raid shelter and whisper news to our guys through the fence. They have secret radios and listen to the BBC.

On August 23rd, the Russians are supposed to be on their way. Some say they will be here within four days. At 11 p.m., after we had all gone to bed, a fellow came into our building and told us that the Romanians had sued for peace. We all thought that the guy was flak happy and had lost it. Before long the news was confirmed and we all went flak happy.

August 24th, this morning the Romanians started fighting the Germans. We woke up at 6 a.m. to find the gates were opened and the guards were gone. Around 7 a.m. all hell broke loose, there was shooting on all sides of our camp and fighting close by in the streets. We were in and out of foxholes all morning. A ME-109 strafed our camp and everyone dove under their beds. We must have been right in the middle of the battles. Both sides were using their 88mm anti-aircraft guns as field pieces and the shells from both sides were passing over us. We were in a bad situation and it would get a lot worse before it got any better.

We heard all kinds of rumors. Someone said that American paratroopers were on their way to rescue us. Someone else said that the Romanians wanted us to take over the Government. The one that was probably closest to being true was that the Germans were holding an airfield a few kilometers from us and the Romanians were trying to take it.

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There was a lull in the fighting for a while before the main performance began. The Luftwaffe got in the act by bombing a large unfinished building used as an air raid shelter and possibly for other purposes. They hit it with Stuka dive-bombers using the toss bomb technique. They were quite good at it, although some of the bombs fell a bit short of the target and uncomfortably close to us. I am sure that many people in the building were killed or injured. The all clear sounded after the raid and everyone left their shelters. That's when the second wave of dive-bombers hit. This time it looked like they were after our buildings. We had large red crosses painted on the roofs and that seemed to be their aiming point. They missed our buildings but some of the bombs fell in our prison yard where we had dug trenches, and some of our people were wounded and possibly killed.

It became quiet again for a couple of hours except for the street fighting. Right on cue, it couldn't have happened at a better time, we were issued our first and only Red Cross packages. Each Package was in a heavy-duty cardboard box about twice the size of a shoebox. It was packed with canned goods and non-perishable food, and even cigarettes. The package also came in very handy as a head protector. When the bombing was going on, pieces of flak with jagged edges were falling all about us. We would hold the boxes over our heads for protection.

After the pounding we had taken in the prison yard from the last bombing, we decided to move away from the building and their roofs with red crosses if and when the raids resumed. When the next alarm sounded we went to an outpost in a tomato patch a couple of hundred yards from the prison. When we go there it was full. Another wave of dive-bombers were arriving and starting their runs. The flak guns opened up and we were in a real bad spot. We ran for a small wooden shack to get a little shelter and it was almost the last run we would ever make. Two waves of ME-111's flew directly overhead at about 3,000 feet and dropped their bombs right on top of us. The shack we were in was blown to smithereens and we were bounced at least three feet off the ground by the explosions. That's when we decided to get the hell out of there.

Editor's Note: The conclusion of this true story from the World War II diary of Jack Morledge and what happens next to B-24 Crew 4859 will be printed in the June 1997 Issue of the "Liber Raider".

In preparing this issue of the "Liber Raider" the above story of Crew 4859 kept knocking at me because the crew names were very familiar. The reason why, I learned, is shown on pages 20 and 21 of the June 1995 issue of the "Liber Raider". Another interesting story.

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