



*The 461st*

# Liberaider



Vol. 14, No. 2

December 1997

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

## REUNION 1998

### BOSTON, MA

### AUGUST 20—23



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

CORPORATE HDQRS: P.O. Box 461, Spencer, IA 51301-0461

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Publicity: Looking for a volunteer!

1998 Reunion: All Ways Travel, 172 Route 6A, Sandwich, MA 02563

#### "Liberaider"

George D. Dickie—Editor—P.O. Box 615, East Sandwich, MA 02537-0615  
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.

There comes a time that time must be recognized.

The Bylaws of the Group require elections of officers every two years and 1998 is the year for these elections to take place. Site of the elections will be in the Boston area during the 1998 reunion.

I have been endeavoring to find, communicate with, and provide an organization, second to none, of men that served in the 461st Bombardment Group during World War II, since 1980. I have never felt that this was a JOB, but rather a labor of love. Time has taken its toll and I feel that I must retreat on this front.

It has taken several years to finally admit that the Group must look for leadership elsewhere. I am taking this means to advise you that I will not be on the 1998 ballot for re-election as your President. I do plan to remain as the unofficial historian and advisor as requested.

I am appointing the Board as the Nominating Committee with John Underwood as Chairman. John can be reached at P.O. Box 829, Prudenville, MI, 48651.

Frank C. O'Bannon, Jr.  
President

## About Those Medals

As World War II drew to a close, many of us were being transferred, discharged, separated and so on, and did not wait around for the paperwork to be completed.

In many cases, servicemen returned to civilian life unaware of medals and decorations being authorized after the fact and never awarded or presented.

According to a letter from Dept. of Air Force Personnel Center at Randolph AFB, Texas, some information previously published in *Communications* on this matter has been misleading.

Any Air Force (it was the Army Air Corps in those days) veteran who wishes to obtain a copy of his personal or medical records, replacement of awards and/or decorations, or have corrections made to his records, should write to:

National Personnel Records Center  
9700 Page Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63132-5100

The cover letter should include the applicant's full name, current mailing address, Social security number, Army Serial Number(s), and a message, something like, "I request to be issued all award emblems I am entitled to. I have attached a copy of my separation document."

If the applicant is requesting determination of an award or decoration not listed on the report of separation, legible copies of documents which substantiate the claim should be attached.

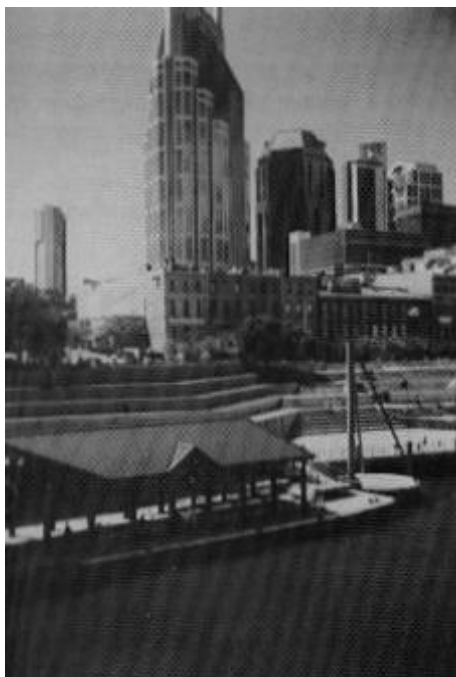
## An Ode To An Editor

An editor knocked at the Pearly Gate  
His face was scarred and cold;  
He stood before the man of fate  
For admission to the fold.

"What have you done" St. Peter asked,  
"To gain admission here?"  
"I've been an editor, sir," he said,  
"For many and many a year."

The Pearly Gates swung open wide.  
St. Peter touched the bell.  
"Come in," he said, "and get your harp  
You've had your share of hell."

**NASHVILLE REUNION**  
**August, 1997**  
**Written By John Underwood, 764th Squadron**



**Nashville from the Cumberland River. Some of us ate at the Hard Rock Cafe, the brick building above the dock in the foreground**

**Wednesday, August 20**

Betty and I had a nice trip down from Michigan, it rained on us some. Checked into the Marriott. Met George and Elenore Miller and Daulton and Erma Verner of the 764th in the lobby. We settled on a table for the Saturday night banquet. Also ran into John Oliver of the 764th. I had not seen him since 1984 in Orlando.

In the evening we rode the bus to Chaffin's Barn, a dinner theater. The food was very good and lots of it along with an excellent dessert bar. We saw the play "Take My Wife", a pretty good comedy with lots of laughs. We went to bed by midnite.

**Thursday August 21**

It was pretty foggy in the morning but we could see the planes flying in and out of the airport. We had a nice breakfast at the hotel and Betty went on the bus tour.

They visited The Hermitage, home of Andrew Jackson. Then the Ryman Auditorium which was the home of the Grand Ole Opry from 1943 to 1974 and then on the The Parthenon which is a full scale replica of the

*(Continued on page 4)*

*(Continued from page 3)*

original Greek Parthenon. It was built by the City of Nashville and is now an art museum. Everyone on the tour commented on how interesting and worthwhile it was.

The Squadron Dinners that evening were well attended, and the food was very good. Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and it is always nice to meet and talk to old friends and learn what others have done since 1945.

### **Friday August 22**

We all boarded the busses at 0900 and went to the Opryland Hotel. It is a beautiful place with lots of shops and restaurants. The women did some shopping and after a nice lunch in one of the many restaurants, we returned to the Marriott Hotel on one of the shuttle busses.

In the evening we all went to the Grand Ole Opry and enjoyed a nice Friday evening performance, some of which was broadcast live on Nashville's WLW Radio.

We heard several comments that the Opryland Hotel and the evening performance of the Grand Ole Opry were much better than they expected.

### **Saturday August 23**

After a fast breakfast in the hotel we boarded the bus at 0830 for a tour of the Antebellum Home, Belle Meade. It has an interesting history, it was built in 1853 and survived the Civil War undamaged.

We reboarded the bus and went on to Cheekwood. Cheekwood was built in the early 1920's by the Cheek family. They made their fortune by selling their formula for roasting coffee to the Maxwell House Coffee Company and they still use the same process today.

The Annual Business Meeting was held in the afternoon and was well attended. Ed Chan resigned as Vice President. Everyone thanked him for his valuable contributions to the success of the 461st Bomb Group, especially in locating the addresses of so many members.

Jim Hardy was appointed Vice President. He has always worked hard for the Group and I am sure he will prove to be an excellent choice.

After much discussion, it was determined that the 1998 Reunion will be held in the Boston, Massachusetts area. George Dickie, your Editor of the "Liberaider", has volunteered to make the arrangements. You will be notified of the dates and location in the near future.

The Annual Banquet on Saturday evening was well attended and it was great to get together again with old friends and tell "War Stories", some probably exaggerated a little after all these years. The evening ended with dancing to music of the 40's that was provided by a good local band.

### **Sunday August 24**

We were up early again for a nice Memorial Service led by Chaplain Lieutenant Colonel Larry M. Kirk. We then went to a well-organized breakfast buffet and returned to our rooms to finish packing and check out.

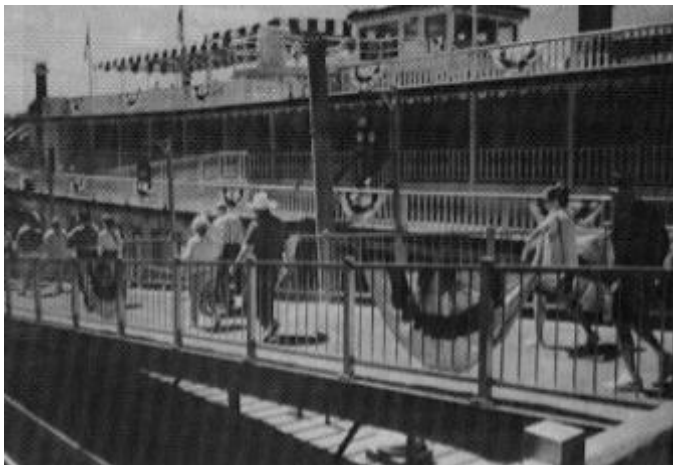
The busses left at 1100 for the cruise on the Cumberland River aboard the General Jackson. It was a real Show Boat, actually propelled by a large stem paddle wheel. The buffet was excellent and the entertainment was very good. The cruise down the Cumberland River all the way to downtown Nashville provided a lot of

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great scenery most of us had never seen before.

The busses returned to the hotel by 3:00 p.m. where goodbyes were said with lots of the parting words being, "We will see you in Boston next year."



**Boarding the  
General Jackson**

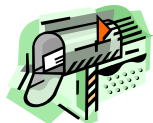
**Barbara Dickie, Verna  
Peterson, George Dickie and  
Pete Peterson approaching  
Nashville**







**THE WINNER IS  
CERIGNOLA, ITALY 1944**



**MAIL CALL**

July 21, 1997

Dear George,

July 24, 1997

Dear George,

I'm a life member of the 461st Association for the past several years. I was in the 764th Sqdn, armament section at Torretta. I'm enclosing a photo of Cerignola taken in 1944. I cannot remember how I got it. It is only one of some 150 photos in my album. You need not return it, put it in your files. Seems to match your photo very well.

I was reading the June 1997 issue of the 461st Liberaider and in my opinion the picture on page 35 is Cerignola. The Cathedral Dome is the identifying feature.

You listed me, 2nd Lt. James G. Taylor as the airplane commander of one of the new crews that joined the 461st during the month of November 1944.

I enjoy the "Liberaider" although it is mostly about the air crews. (Bless them!)

Sincerely,  
Remo Bacchi  
CMSGT, USAF Ret.

Sincerely,

Jim Taylor  
764th Bomb Squadron  
2231 S. 80th E. Ave.  
Tulsa, OK 74129-2427

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July 22, 1997

Dear Mr. Dickie

My most grateful thanks for your editing the 461st Liberator. I read every word and I review the history of the 461st of which I played a role in her final efforts before the surrender of Germany. I was a pilot in the 764th Bomb Squadron.

The picture of Cerignola is definitely the city of Cerignola. The church is the landmark many pilots used to make our final to different squadrons in the area. Enclosed is a copy of a picture to confirm the Catholic church in the picture. There are three round transepts around the main dome.

Warren E. Inskeep  
Rt I Box 27  
Cawker City, KS 67430



\* \* \* \* \*

George,

Re 461st Liberator, June 1997, page 35, it has to be Foggia, not Cerignola. I have blown up aerial views of Cerignola that I used in the 455th History, and it isn't a match. But once you've seen one Italian town, you've seen them all.

Regards,

Tom Ramey  
Appleton, WI

Editor's Note: Sorry Tom, I think you lose.

\* \* \* \* \*

June 30, 1997

Dear Mr. Dickie,

I am the daughter of Lt. Eugene Paul Ford, who was a pilot in the 461st Bomb Group. He was killed on December 17, 1944, and I am trying to locate people who might have known him, as well as several of his friends.

I have determined that three of his crew survived, and one of them, Val R. Miller was the bombardier, but didn't know my father because he had been assigned to that crew for the first time on Dec. 17. The other survivors were Sgt. John F. Toney (nose gunner) and Lt. Vincent O. Eklund (co-pilot). I have an address and phone number for Sgt. Toney, but so far have no information on Lt. Eklund. I also am searching for information about pilot Richard Stanton Fawcett and navigator "Dutch" Dietrich. I know Mr. Fawcett was killed, but I don't know where or when. Mr. Dietrich was at one point, my father's regular navigator, but was not with him on Dec. 17.

I would appreciate any help you can give me. I posted a message on the B-24 Internet page last December. Apparently someone took my note and published it in Sortie, and people have started to write me and send me E-mail. I am planning to attend the reunion in Nashville, and I also have written to Frank O'Bannon, Ed Chan, and Lawrence Eidsmore.

Sincerely,  
Norma Beard

Editor's Note: The notice that appeared in "Sortie", the newsletter of the 15th Air Force Association, follows. Norma did attend the Reunion.

LOST 461 BG FATHER: My brother and I are try-

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ing to locate anyone who might be able to tell us anything about our father, 1st Lt. Eugene P. Ford, 461 BG, 765 BS reported missing in action on 17 Dec 1944 and later declared killed in action. He received a DFC for a mission over France on 5 July 1944 and was the pilot of **Hare Power**. His navigator or bombardier was "Dutch" Dietrich who was also killed. My father was flying his 43rd mission and ditched his plane in the Adriatic. One of his best friends was a B-24 pilot named Richard Fawcett, also killed in action. This is all we know about our father and his AAF career. Our mother is 72 and fragile. She has only recently begun to try and deal with my father's death and more information about his last mission or career would help us all. Norma Beard, P.O. Box 229, Fairland, IN, 46126 Phone: (317) 835-8125. NBEARD9964@AOL.Com.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Liberaiders,

Martin Rush's story in the June issue about R & R in Rome and Capri revived some old memories. I had only a short time in the 461st and the ETO, but it was packed.

After a stint as a rifleman in the infantry, I was trained as an Aerial Gunner at Harlingen, Texas, then a Navigator at Selman Field, Louisiana, and a Radar Observer (Bombardment, AN/APS-15), otherwise known as "Mickey," at Langley Field, Virginia.

As a replacement, I went over on a transport, trained for two weeks in the 764th, then flew on 14 missions with the 765th, between March 15 (Weiner Neustadt) and April 24 (Rovert, Italy), 1945, in the deputy or lead plane. I still have some strike photos: marshalling yards, oil depots, bridges, and inevitably - - farmland. Aside from flak, including a piece the size of a marble, with the manufacturer's symbol that ended up in my intercom box there were no injuries, no aborts. Not everyone was as lucky.

The March 24 mission was to Ceske Budejovice (Czechoslovakia), where a "Budweiser" has been produced for generations. Since the war, the giant Budweiser here in St. Louis has battled or negotiated

with them over European Markets.

May 1 to 4, I went to Rome for R & R with four others. Like Rush, I luxuriated in a fancy hotel bathtub, saw the Coliseum, the Forum and St. Peter's. Like him, I attended an audience with the Pope, Pius XII, with about 100 other American and British military. Took a I chance with my 35 mm. camera (see photo).

One of my comrades was Catholic, and he forgot to bring the rosaries he was planning to bring to his nieces, but the rest of us, Protestants and Jews, prevailed on him to rush out and buy some replacements so that he could have them at the audience. (Incidentally, his grandfather, who later immigrated to the U.S., helped build the large Victor Emmanul Memorial, doing masonry.)

A "big day" in Rome was when the newspapers (and posters) had a very large photograph of Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci, hanging upside down; they had just been caught in Northern Italy.

On May 9, I was on a three-plane mission to drop food and supplies at low level to a prisoner of war camp at Spittal, Austria, that the Germans had abandoned. "As low as you can go to get the stuff to the men," we were told, but what did we know - - we had never done any treetop flying. One happy guy was sitting on top of the barracks roof, waving wildly. We got in and dropped the canisters all right, but we weren't briefed how to get out, and we were in a canyon (they call it a "pass" in the Alps), and we barely made it out. I was in the nose, and when I saw the ground rushing under me, I felt an urge to scamper back into the plane for "safety."

Beginning June 3, I navigated a "slightly used" B-24 back to the United States, in seven all-day flights through Africa, South America, ending in Puerto Rico, then Savannah.

The trickiest navigating was from Dakar, Senegal, to Natal in Brazil, across the South Atlantic. Used celestial for the first time, shooting the sun all day and getting fixes by reading the waves with the drift meter. When we got within radio contact of Natal, the field was closed - - 10/10 cloud cover. I gave the pilot a heading for our alternate, Recife, and then, as he turned South, I calculated that we didn't have enough fuel to make it, so we circled around Natal for 40

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minutes until we found a small break in the clouds and went in. The approach was wobbly, but the landing was OK. On the next leg to British Guiana (now independent Guyana), we lost an engine, so we hung around for three days, heard "Rum and Coca Cola" sung by a native playing an upright piano at the British Officer's Club, while a new engine was flown down from the States.

My father had the photograph of the Pope enlarged and he sent it to two bishops he had met in Colombia, when he was there on business in the 1930's. He received very warm letters in return. The photo isn't very good, but the Pope is easily identifiable in the original. My father said that the airplane in Colombia had been a Ford tri-motor and the pilots were Germans. They had to climb to land at the Bogota airport, because they cruised at an altitude lower than the city, which is at 8,500 feet.

Mark Heyman  
St. Louis, MO  
764th Squadron



**Audience With Pope Pius XII, Early May, 1945**

\* \* \* \* \*



## THE PRICE THEY PAID

Have you ever wondered what happened to those men who signed the Declaration of Independence?

Five signers were captured by the British as traitors and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army; another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six signers fought and died from wounds or the hardships of the Revolutionary War.

What kind of men were they? Twenty-four were lawyers and jurists. Eleven were merchants, nine were farmers and large plantation owners, men of means, well educated. But they signed the Declaration of Independence knowing full well that the penalty would be death if they were captured. They signed and they pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

Carter Braxton of Virginia, a wealthy planter and trader, saw his ships swept from the seas by the British navy. He sold his home and properties to pay his debts and died in rags.

Thomas McKeam was so hounded by the British that he was forced to move his family almost constantly. He served in the Congress without pay and his family kept in hiding. His possessions were taken from him and poverty was his reward. Vandals or soldiers, or both, looted the properties of Ellery, Clymer, Hall, Walton, Gwinnett, Hewyard, Rutledge and Middleton.

At the Battle of Yorktown, Thomas Nelson, Jr., noted that the British General Cornwallis had taken over the Nelson home for his headquarters. The owner quietly urged General George Washington to open fire, which was done. The home was destroyed and Nelson died bankrupt. Francis Lewis had his home and properties destroyed. The enemy jailed his wife and she died within a few months.

John Hart was driven from his wife's bedside as she was dying. Their 13 children fled for their lives. His fields and gristmill were laid to waste. For more than a year he lived in forests and caves, returning home after the war to find his wife dead, his children vanished. A few weeks later, he died from exhaustion and a broken heart.

Norris and Livingston suffered similar fates.

Such were the sacrifices of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. They gave us an independent America. Can we keep it?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **ADD THE FOLLOWING NAMES TO YOUR 766 SQUADRON ROSTER**

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>MOS</u>
Aylor, Joseph H.	Sperryville, VA	Deceased 612
Burgoon, Joseph T.	Philadelphia, PA	Deceased 612
Clark, Andrew H. Jr.	North Wales, PA	Deceased 748
Hansen, Stanley F.	11642 Swift Court, Naples, FL 34119	1034
Harriss, Charles W.	88 Oak Hill Drive, Belleville, IL 62223	1035
Kelso, Frank	Boise, ID	Deceased 612
Locke, R. W.	Montgomery, AL	Deceased 092
Roeder, La Verne C.		612
Wiseman, Charles O.	616 Harbor Drive, Ludington, MI 49431	757
Zilm, Edwin E.	Peoria, IL	1092
von Ehrenkrook, B.M.	19629 N. Welk, Sun City, AZ 85373	1092

## THE CONTINUING CONTROVERSY

By Robert S. DeGroat

One of the many interesting sidelights to World War II is the question of which 4-engine bomber was better, the Boeing B-17 FLYING FORTRESS or the Consolidated B-24 LIBERATOR. Although the war has been over for nearly fifty years, the controversy has actually increased in intensity.

While I had always heard FORT fanatics press the details of their fondness for the Boeing product, those on the opposite side seemed to accept it without much question. That is, until I met some veterans of the 459th Bomb Group, which was my dad's unit during WWII. This was the first time I had ever heard such vociferous support for the much-maligned LIBERATOR airplane. There seemed to be more than just a little pent-up anger.

This prompted me to take another assessment of the controversy, set it out and see how it plays. Now that I have flown in both (Dad forgives me my B-17 experience) maybe I have some justification that I didn't have before.

First, let's get the specifications out of the way. I chose to examine the most produced version of each type for comparison.

	<u>B-17G</u>	<u>B-24J</u>
Length:	74'-9"	67'-2"
Height:	19'-1"	17'-11"
Wing Span:	103'-9"	110'-0"
Engines:	4-Wright Cy. R-1820@1200Hp.	4-Pratt & Whitney R-1830@1200Hp.
Propellers:	3-blade Ham. Std.	(same)

There is other background information that should be covered before we move on. The B-17 prototype (called Model 299) emerged in 1935, and the XB-24 in 1939. This would possibly enable Consolidated engineers to learn from the Boeing design. This may be exemplified by the fact that the B-17 had a tail wheel, while the B-24 used the newer tricycle landing gear. It most certainly is reflected by the statement that the B-24 had two bomb bays, each nearly the same size as compared to the B-17's only one!

The B-24 was said to be bigger, faster and could carry a heavier bomb load farther than the Fortress. The rap on the Liberator was that it could not take the punishment, nor could it fly the same tight formation at high altitude that the B-17 demonstrated. This is essentially confirmed by my dad, who was actually given a choice after Advanced Training. He chose the B-24 because it was reported to be bigger, faster and more difficult to fly. If there was any pride in bombers, it seemed to be in flying them well.

Some might argue that a nonpilot should not make judgments on flight equipment, but I have enough Flight Engineer experience to counterbalance that. My particular concern is the throttle quadrant, with its two different approaches. The B-17 has a throttle arrangement that is almost as famous as the plane itself, and correct technique requires palm up operation. This allowed minor power changes to each engine without changing one's grip. The B-24 was a more standard throttle arrangement of four levers, which require the Pilot to use an overhand, or palm down technique. Minor power changes could also be achieved, if the levers were operated by the fingers of the hand (one lever per finger). From a safety standpoint I found this to be preferable, since a severe engine backfire might drive its corresponding throttle back via the linkage. (1-point for the B-24)

For those operating each bomber, how was the visibility necessary to get their individual jobs done? The view from the Flight deck was marginal at best, though I have a sense that the B-17 was somewhat better. Dad thought flying the B-24 was like "flying a hotel from the basement window". At other positions, there is no question. The Navigator and the Bombardier in the B-17 had unparalleled forward vision through that splendid plexiglas nose. Those same positions were so different and difficult in the B-24 that they eventually tried to have the Navigators and Bombardiers operate the Nose Turret in an attempt to help out. (1-point for the B-17)

Crew comfort, of course, is a relative thing in a combat aircraft, but there are sometimes items that give the crew members an indication that the design engi-

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neer at least gave him a passing thought. Without even dwelling on the inefficient heaters in each bomber that were supposed to help against the cold, there are some things that stand out about each aircraft. The B-17 looks as if it had room for each crewman to sit down. A small detail, but it provided some confidence. The B-24 really did not, and though the B-24 was a bit larger, it also seemed to be filled with more equipment, and each piece of that equipment seemed to have its own sharp edge! Not very comforting. (1-point for the B- 17)

In any discussion of armament, it is essential to remember that having the most guns does not always mean the best. The B-17G had 13-machine guns and the B-24J had 10. Here, all the gun calibers are the same, 50 cal, so that is not a problem. If one is restricted to how the machine guns were used, and the possible cone of fire available, then a different aspect of defensive power is feasible for discussion. The Radio Operator in the Fortress had a gun, but it was virtually useless. The Waist guns were a little better, but the B-24 had a problem with its large vertical tail surfaces that blocked each gunners view. However, the basic scenario being from the tail, or head on, is where we should concentrate.

For the tail, the B-24 holds the edge with a Tail Turret, allowing a greater field of fire than the B-17's stinger despite the B-24's twin tails. And while the chin turret on the Fort was a brilliant idea, it did not have the elevation capability that the B-24 Nose Turret had. This could be countered somewhat by the B-17's cheek guns, but all four of the guns could not be operated at once, or in such cramped quarters. Though I will get some disagreement and hate mail on this. (a point for the B-24)

As I stated earlier, the B-24 could fly farther than the B-17. This resulted in the B-17 being withdrawn everywhere except where that essentially did not matter, such as the ETO. In every other instance the B-24 was required by the military because of its greater range, with the Pacific Theatre being a good example. (a point for the B-24)

When speed counted, the B-24 was faster. This caused real problems when the two aircraft were combined on missions. If the B-24's led, they usually left the Forts behind them. If the B-17's led, the already marginal stability of the Liberator at altitude

deteriorated further, since they had to fly slower to maintain position. What the B-24 pilots liked was an all Liberator force, which allowed them to keep their speed up. The B-17 'Jocks' countered that their greater altitude and tighter formation enabled better survivability. In the cold climate high over Europe where both operated for the duration of the war, altitude and good formation seemed to be the best answer. (a point for the B-17)

The usual bomb load in the European Theatre was ten 500 pound high explosive bombs. This load could be carried by either the B-17 or the B-24, even though each might be quite overloaded when adding full crews and topped-off fuel tanks. It must be remembered that safety during a war situation, while important, does not carry the same overriding significance that it does in peacetime. Both carried their intended loads very well. (This is a draw)

What happened when those bomb loads were over the target is something else again. If one checks statistics, generally the B-17 gets higher marks for accuracy. A close examination will show that the statistics are slanted toward the B-17 in that it included the B-24's introduction to combat, where new crews are learning the plane and combat procedures. By the time the B-24 reached combat in anything like usable numbers, the teething troubles of the B-17 were over. By comparing useful combat time for each aircraft, the B-24 comes out ahead. In fact, from October 1944 on, the B-24 had an accuracy better than the B-17 of some 20% in certain cases. (point for the B-24)

From a maintenance view, each has its good points. I found the preflight easier on the B-17, since everything sits lower and is easier to see and get at. However, if things go wrong, then the B-24 is easier to work on. The heavy B-17 cowling is really tough for one person to remove to work on a troublesome engine. And though I haven't worked on one, the B-24 cowling appears to make the engine more readily accessible. (a point for the B-24)

If there is one thing that B-17 veterans will even come close to admitting, it is the fact that they should have had B-24's engines mounted on their airplanes. The Pratt & Whitneys were cleaner running and even more reliable than the Wright Cyclones. The Wrights were notoriously dirty engines and maintenance on them only made worse by a coating of oil. (B-24 point)

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*(Continued from page 12)*

Another aspect of maintenance requires a look at the internal systems of each bomber. There is a saying, "if it is a Boeing, it is electric." This was almost in direct contrast to the Consolidated's reliance on hydraulics. The Fort's electrical system was undoubtedly cleaner, but there was the possibility of those electrical motors burning out at inopportune moments. Depending on your preference, this one could go either way. My belief is that you should know the system well regardless. I tend to think of the B-24 systems as a plumbers nightmare. (a point for the B- 17)

If you really wish to start an argument, try a discussion with veterans about the respective ability of each plane to take punishment. With the bottom line being to get crews home, each manufacturer could be proud of their designs for doing just that, often with unbelievably grievous injuries to the air frame and often leading directly to the scrap yard after landing. But they got the crews home, nonetheless. The only things I question are both on the B-24. A weak spot in each wing where the wheel wells were located and the fuel transfer system situated in the bomb bay. Fire or flak hits at either point were usually fatal. With that in mind (a point for the B-17)

When discussing emergency procedures, the one word Liberator crews hated to hear was "Ditch". The B-17 had a greater survival rate after hitting the water than the B-24 did, since the B-24 fuselage had a tendency to break just in front of the wings and crush those fragile bomb bay doors. To my knowledge, it was never adequately reinforced during its useful life in the military. (a point for the B- 17)

Despite the popularity in the press and Doolittle's ultimate praise for the Fortress, sometimes numbers speak louder than long-winded explanations. In that case, let's look at the total production of each type plane. Overall there is no comparison; there were 19,256 Liberators and 12,731 Fortresses made. That alone should provide evidence in how the military viewed the relative worth of each type plane at that time. It also puts the B-24 in historic territory, for only the BF-109 and the Soviet IL-2 were produced in greater numbers during the war. (a point for the B-24)

After saying that, however, a look at post war uses of each may reveal the opposite view to what was just stated. The B-24 was almost exclusively flown to the

bone yards and reduced to pots and pans. The B-17, on the other hand, had a full life, being employed at various times as an aerial mapping platform, drone director aircraft, borate bomber and a transport. This is the main reason why so many more examples of the Fortress exist today. (A point for the B-17)

Wearily, there is no way that this will end the controversy by any means. It is really only an attempt to set some of the myths and records straight. As you can see by the score (even), the controversy may never be answered to either side's satisfaction. Two historians whom I respect highly, Steve Birdsall and Roger Freeman, both have written that whichever one you flew was the most desirable. Since the vast majority of veterans never had a choice, they did the best they could with what they were given. Both aircraft ultimately did a fine job.

Editor's Note: This article by Robert S. DeGroat was printed in the July 1992 issue of *WARBIRDS*, the magazine of EAA Warbirds of America.

### THE "HELL" YOU SAY!

Just what is meant by this word "Hell"?  
 They say sometimes "It's cold as "Hell!"  
 Sometimes they say "It's hot as "Hell!"  
 When it rains hard, "It's 'Hell" they cry -  
     It's also "Hell" when it is dry.  
 They hate like "Hell" to see it snow,  
 It's a "Hell" of a wind when it starts to blow.  
 Now, how in "Hell" can anyone tell  
 What in "Hell" they mean by the word "Hell"?  
 This married life is "Hell", they say -  
 It's "Hell" when the kid you have to tote,  
 When he starts to bawl it's a "Hell" of a note.  
 It's "Hell" when the doctor sends his bills  
 For a "Hell" of a lot of trips and pills,  
 When you get this, you'll know real well  
 Just what is meant by the word "Hell."  
 "Hell" yes, "Hell" no, and Oh "Hell" too,  
 The "Hell" you don't, and the "Hell" you do  
 And what in the "Hell", and the "Hell" it is,  
 The "Hell" with yours, and the "Hell" with his.  
 Now who in the "Hell", and oh "Hell" where,  
 And what in the "Hell" you think I care -  
 But the "Hell" of it is - it sure is "Hell",  
 Cause we don't know what in "Hell" is "Hell".

\*From "Unscramble" newsletter of the Valiant Air Command - Nov 1997\*



## THE HERITAGE OF THE FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

### Part XXXVI

From: The Army Air Forces in WWII, Vol. III, Office of the Air Force History

#### THE BEGINNING OF THE END

OPERATION CLARION was the beginning of the end for the Germans. Bombing accuracy was unexpectedly high, losses were slight, and the German people had received an unforgettable demonstration of Allied air power. Moreover, at least 150 marshalling yards were damaged, perhaps 500 rail cuts were made, and about 300 locomotives were destroyed. The enemy's communications system had apparently suffered a staggering blow, and railway traffic was at a standstill in many parts of the Reich.

#### STRATEGIC OFFENSE RESUMES

The success which attended the Allied land offensive toward the Rhine after Feb 23, 1945 enabled the heavy bomber commands to return to the strategic air offensive. The goals remained the same: deny oil products to the enemy, ruin his communications, reduce the number of weapons he could use in land battles, and, if there remained marginal effort, his budding jet aircraft force and new submarines. With the stabilization of the European Front, commitments to bomb large population and communications centers dropped down the priority list. The air battle against German transportation was shaping into a new phase, however, and attacks would continue in great weight.

#### FIFTEEN ATTACKS

The Fifteenth Air Force had fine weather during the last few days of February over its bases and routes, although conditions at targets usually made it necessary to employ blind bombing techniques. Nearly all of the Fifteenth's objectives were tactical: railway targets in northern Italy, Austria, and southern Germany, most of which would benefit the Russian land forces moving gradually up toward Vienna. On February 24, the Fifteenth carried out a phase of the long and inclusive campaign to break the Brenner Pass railway line, in which the tactical Twelfth Air Force concentrated on bridges and lines and the Fifteenth on main marshalling yards. On the 25th, the familiar benzol plant at Linz received a light bombing, as did the ordnance depot in that city; marshalling yards there also caught significant tonnages. Bombers were not able to surmount the Alps obstacle on February 26, but on the next day, 430 B-17s and B-24s dropped almost 1,100 tons on Augsburg's marshalling yard. The Brenner

Pass line received most of the effort of February 28, when 533 B-24's and 222 B-17s bombed bridges and rail centers on the Italian side.

#### LOWER LOSSES

In terms of tonnage, the last week of February was one of the most notable in the history of the Fifteenth Air Force. For the aircrews, another pleasant aspect was the almost complete absence of the enemy's fighter force. The Germans could no longer fly their conventional fighters (primarily as a result of Fifteenth's attack on Nazi oil) and their jets were not quite ready for full-scale participation in the air war. During this interval both the Eighth and the Fifteenth suffered minimum losses. Flak was more concentrated than ever before, however, now that Germany had shrunk in area. But Allied countermeasures were also better than ever before.

#### MOVING IN FOR THE KILL

As March opened, the only air force problem was to maintain the offensive along the lines set by February's operations. Allied land forces were moving forward, German oil supplies were adequate only for a fitful, uncertain defense, and the strategic air forces were to direct 36,000 tons, the second largest amount in the entire oil offensive, at refineries and storage dumps in March. The only setback occurred when the Germans surprisingly recaptured some of the Hungarian oil fields from the Russians. The protracted campaign against enemy transportation was now paying off in economic and military paralysis, perhaps long overdue but nevertheless final. Shortage of all types of equipment for waging war - largely the accumulated result of the long series of Allied strategic bombing - now hampered the German Armies.

Even if new jet and submarine forces were about to appear, the Allies no longer worried about the war. The Germans discovered the harsh realities of modern war. An army which has no fuel for its tanks cannot win land battles; a navy which has no fuel for its ships and submarines cannot win a battle at sea; and an air force which has no fuel for its bombers and fighters cannot win an air battle or even defend its own skies. The strategic air offensive had only a few more weeks to go before victory was secure. At the beginning of

*(Continued on page 15)*

(Continued from page 14)

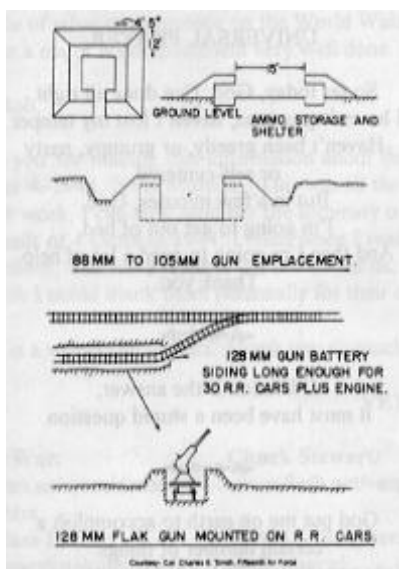
March, the air forces had no new directives. They needed none. A steady application of blows for a few weeks would leave the Third Reich helpless!

### FLAK

Ploesti, Roumania was one of the most heavily defended targets with flak imaginable! Black puffs of shrapnel all over the sky. No place to go to avoid it. When you could see the orange of the flak burst and could smell the gunpowder, you were too close! About the only thing left to do is pray.

Ploesti flak guns were mostly of the 75 and 88 mm sizes. Early-on these numbered about 200 and later nearly 300 by the time of the last mission flown. In August 1944, Air Force records show that 223 aircraft went down on Ploesti missions, not counting the 54 B-24's lost on the 1 August 43 "Tidal Wave" low-level mission from Africa.

There were some larger flak guns of the 105 and 128 mm variety mounted on railroad flat-cars that could be moved about to confuse the Allies. The diagram here shows how the enemy used the berm-protected sidings when the Early Warning systems alerted them. Initial alerts were given when the bombers were about 150 miles from either Ploesti or Bucharest.



Stolen from the 459th BG newsletter the  
"Pathfinder"

### More Christmas Mail

This card came from John L. Caraway  
I would like to share it with you all!

I have a list of folks I know, all written in a book,  
And every year at Christmas time I go and take a  
look,  
And that is when I realize that these names are a part,  
Not of the book they're written in, but of my heart.

For each name stands for someone whose path  
touched mine, and then,  
Left such a print of friendship that I want to touch  
again.

And while it sounds fantastic for me to make this  
claim,

I really feel I am composed of each remembered  
name.

So never think my Christmas cards are just a mere  
routine

of names upon a Christmas list, forgotten in between.  
For when I send a Christmas card that is addressed  
to you

It's because you're on that list of folks I am  
indebted to.

And every year when Christmas comes  
I realize anew

**The Biggest Gift** life can give is  
**Meeting Folks Like You.**

And may the Spirit of Christmas that  
forever and ever endures  
Leave it's richest blessing in the hearts of  
**You and Yours.**

Editor's Note: I lost track of where I stole this but  
thank you John.



## HUMOR

### AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE

Here are some actual maintenance complaints submitted by US Air Force pilots and the replies from the maintenance crews.

Problems: Left inside main tire almost needs replacement.

Solution: Almost replaced left inside main tire.

Problem: DME volume unbelievably loud.

Solution: Volume set to a more believable level.

Problem: Dead bugs on windshield.

Solution: Live bugs on order.

Problem: Autopilot in altitude hold mode produces a 200 fpm descent.

Solution: Cannot reproduce the problem on the ground.

Problem: Number three engine is missing.

Solution: Engine found on right wing after brief search.

\* \* \* \* \*

SMILE, it makes people wonder what you are thinking.

\* \* \* \* \*

Did you hear about the Italian who was asked to be a Jehovah's witness? He refused, because he said he didn't see the accident.

\* \* \* \* \*

"What instructions did Noah give his sons about fishing off the Ark?"

Answer: "Go easy on the bait boys, I only have two worms.

\* \* \* \* \*

Be nice to your kids  
They'll choose your nursing home.

A man who smelled like a distillery flopped on a subway seat next to a priest. The man was stained, his face plastered with red lipstick, and a half empty bottle of gin was sticking out of his torn coat pocket.

He opened his newspaper and began reading. After a few minutes the disheveled guy turned to the priest and asked, "Say, Father, what causes arthritis?"

"Mister, it's caused by loose living, being with cheap wicked women, too much alcohol, and a contempt for your fellow man."

"Well, I'll be darned," the drunk muttered, returning to his paper.

The Priest, thinking about what he had said, nudged the man and apologized.

"I'm very sorry, I didn't mean to come on so strong. How long have you had arthritis?"

"I don't have it, Father. I was just reading here that the Pope does."

\* \* \* \* \*

### UNIVERSAL PRAYER

So far today, God, I've done all right.  
I haven't gossiped, haven't lost my temper.  
Haven't been greedy, or grumpy, nasty  
or self-centered.  
But in a few minutes, God,  
I'm going to get out of bed,  
And then I'm going to need a lot of help.  
Thank you.

\* \* \* \* \*

If Clinton is the answer,  
it must have been a stupid question.

\* \* \* \* \*

God put me on earth to accomplish a  
certain number of things.  
Right now I'm so far behind, I will never die.



### WE HAVE OUR OWN WEBSITE!

<http://members.aol.com/tempole/461st.html>

On 1 September, 1997, the 461st Bomb Group (H) moved into a new headquarters on the World Wide Web. With features including Mission Summaries, photos of life at Torretta Field, Cerignola vignettes, reunion information, and many other departments of interest to Group members. It will be an ongoing project for the design team of Rob Hoskins and Steve Curry from Website Architecture.

The site was submitted to several "Search Engines" which might be of interest to veterans, and within no time we were averaging 100 "hits" per week. In a very short time, the website had taken its place among the favorite venues of its type on the web and the volume of E-Mail from Group members and their families has been universally enthusiastic.

We would like to encourage members of the Association to drop in on the site and take a look at where the design is headed. Photos of Torretta, Cerignola, and the aircraft serving the Group are being actively sought, so if you have anything that might add to the content of the site please do not hesitate to let us know by E-Mail or post.

Editor's Note: This website is the brainchild of Rob Hoskins, an associate member of the 461st Bomb Group Association. His father is Robert S. Hoskins, a pilot of crew 124 of the 766th Squadron. Rob's work has stirred up a hornet's nest of activity in a short period of time. One of the first E-Mail letters he received is presented below as an example of what our presence on the World Wide Web can mean to the families and relatives of our members. Thanks Rob for a major accomplishment very well done.

Dear Rob,

Thank you for making this information about the 461st available. My uncle was a member of the 461st; he died on October 4, 1944. "over Munich." This was all the information my mother had about her brother's final mission. Thanks to your work, I can now send her the summary of Mission #108 of October 4, 1944. We have always wondered about the details of 4 October 1944; I cried when I read the summary online. I enjoyed the photos, too, and will send copies to my mom. You have filled in the blanks for us, and so I'm thanking you. I cannot imagine the bravery of these men, and wish I could thank them personally for their contribution.

Yours is a wonderful project. Thank you so much. - Jean Foghino, Schoolcraft, MI

### VETERAN'S WEB SITES

#### Dad's War:

[members.aol.com/  
dadswar/index.htm](http://members.aol.com/dadswar/index.htm)

#### Chuck Stewart:

[www.flash.net/~azgecko](http://www.flash.net/~azgecko)

#### Jerry Norris:

[www.elite.net/~askjerry/  
military.html](http://www.elite.net/~askjerry/military.html)

#### American Legion:

[www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

#### Fire Base Dallas:

[www.computeek.net/  
public/jaw-mis/namvet01.  
html](http://www.computeek.net/public/jaw-mis/namvet01.html)

#### WWII U.S. Veterans:

[ww2.vetorg/](http://ww2.vetorg/)

#### Department of Veterans Affairs:

[www.va.gov/](http://www.va.gov/)

*TAPS*  
*MAY THEY REST IN PEACE FOREVER*

June 1997—November 1997

<u>SQ</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
764	Anderson, Jerald R.	Charles City, I	747	May 1995
	Jones, James B.	Ridgeway, VA	748	28 May 1997
	Kursawe, Hans J.	Monroe, CT	612	1997
	McDonough, John J.	Barneget, NJ	748	9 Sept 1997
	Miner, Roger L.	Ventura, CA	1092	12 Aug 1997
765	Boerger, George W.	Beavercreek, OH	612	26 July 1995
	Craig, George N.	Ft. Lauderdale, FL	748	21 Dec 1995
	Klements, Joseph H.	McDonald, PA	612	May 1997
	Wilkins, G. William	Lincoln, NE	940	14 Apr 1997
766	Aylor, Joseph H.	Sperryville, VA	612	13 Feb 1996
	Burgoon, Joseph T.	Philadelphia, PA	612	4 Aug 1966
	Chan, Edward X	New Hyde Park, NY	1034	10 Sept 1997
	Clark, Andrew H.	North Wales, PA	748	11 Dec 1983
	Kelso, Frank	Boise, ID	612	Unk
	Locke, R. W.	Montgomery, AL	1092	23 Dec 1967
	Logue, W. Harry	Shelbyville, TN	1035	12 Jan 1996
767	Crosson, William L.	Arlington Hts, IL	1035	14 May 1997
	Piccoli, Arthur C.	Philadelphia, PA	612	1983

**Edward N. Chan**  
**Tracer of Lost Persons**

Ed Chan, New Hyde Park, NY, Vice President of the 461st Bomb Group Association, flew his last flight shortly after our reunion in Nashville last August. He was born in Berkley, CA. Subsequently he married Mabel who gave birth to their two daughters Vicki Tanner and Barbara Cassar. Ed was a Navigator in the 766th Bomb Squadron, was shot down and spent nine months as a prisoner of war in Germany.

Following the war, Ed received a Masters Degree in Engineering from New York University. Over the years he worked for both Republic and Grumman Aircraft Companies. Later in life he taught school in the Bronx High School of Science. He did volunteer work for the Disabled American Veterans Association and as a driver for the local Veterans Medical Center. He was an avid "Barbershopper" and he and Mabel loved "Square" and "Line" dancing.

He will be sorely missed by his friends in the 461st. He worked tirelessly searching for "Lost" members of the Bomb Group. Without his dedication to the association we would not be the strong, active organization that we are today. May he rest in Peace forever.

**MUSEUM HONORS JAMES STEWART**

The American Flag at the 8th Air Force Heritage Museum flew at half staff for four days to honor popular actor and former 8AF pilot James Stewart who died July 2 at age 89.

"James Stewart was a true American hero both on and off the screen," said Lt. Gen. E. G. Shuler, Jr., museum CEO. "Not only did he make more than 75 movies but during WWII he flew 35 combat missions as an 8AF B-24 pilot with the 445th, 453rd, and 389th Bomb Groups based in England. For his service he received

*(Continued on page 19)*



*(Continued from page 18)*

two Distinguished Flying Crosses, four Air Medals and the French Croix de Gueffe."

As a tribute to Stewart, Shuler said the museum flag flew at half staff until after Stewart's funeral. "On behalf of the Heritage Museum, its board of directors and members I want to express our deepest sympathy to Mr. Stewart's family. Our thoughts and prayers are with them in this time of loss."

After WWII Stewart resumed his movie career but he remained in the U.S. Air Force Reserves and eventually retired as a brigadier general. In one of his most popular films, "Strategic Air Command", Stewart played a reserve pilot who was recalled to active duty to fly bombers during the Cold War.

Museum officials kept Stewart informed about the progress and construction of the Heritage Museum and invited him to attend the grand opening in May 1996. Although unable to attend because of poor health Stewart had his personal assistant call the museum and deliver his personal congratulations and best wishes to the Heritage Museum and all 8AF veterans. Several photos of Stewart taken during his wartime service are included in Heritage Museum exhibits.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dear Sir,

September 25, 1997

Please be advised that Roger L. Miner of Ventura, CA, who flew 16 missions as co-pilot of Crew 16-3, 764th Squadron, died at home on August 12, 1997. A copy of his obituary is enclosed.

He was my older brother and my lifelong favorite person. He was very proud of his World War II service, and of his country, and its flag - that he flew from his front lawn every day.

Among his things we found a dozen copies of "Liberaider", concluding with the December 1996 issue, so it is possible he was among those who somehow overlooked the notice about keeping current with dues. In that case, you didn't need to be asked to remove his name from your mailing list. My real reason for writing was to commend you and everyone else involved in producing such a splendid record of your experiences, of your participation in history.

Douglas Miner, West Granby, CT

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Frank Kurtz**

Los Angeles, California Colonel Frank Kurtz, the most decorated Army Air Corps pilot in World War II died Oct. 31 after a fall at his home. He was 85. Colonel Kurtz gained fame early in the war as a pilot of a B-17 nicknamed the "Swoose". The bomber was one of 35 in the Philippines on Dec. 7, 1941, and the only one left when the Allies were pushed out of the islands. It was kept airworthy through hundreds of combat missions with scrounged parts; Swoose got its name from a popular song of the day about a bird that was half swan and half goose. The Swoose saw action in the Philippines, Java and Australia. Except for the Enola Gay, which dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, it was the most famous airplane in the Pacific.

When Colonel Kurtz's daughter was born during the war, the news media nicknamed her the second Swoose, and the name stuck. The daughter grew up to become the actress Swoosie Kurtz.

The only bomber of its type to survive the entire war in the Pacific, the Swoose was retired as a war memorial in Los Angeles. It was eventually donated to the Smithsonian, where it still remains in storage awaiting restoration. Colonel Kurtz was given the honor of delivering the Swoose to the Smithsonian.

After serving in the Southwest Pacific, Colonel Kurtz later commanded the Swoose Group, a heavy-bomber group (463rd Bomb Group) assigned to the 15th AF. He flew 60 combat missions over Europe bombing tar-

*(Continued on page 20)*

(Continued from page 19)

gets in 11 different countries. Colonel Kurtz earned three Distinguished Flying Crosses, three Silver Stars, three Air Medals, five Presidential Citations, a Purple Heart and the Croix de Guerre. His exploits, and those of the Swoose were recounted in a book titled "Queens Die Proudly" by W.L. White. Col. Kurtz also won a bronze medal in platform diving at the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles.

Stolen From: B-17 Combat Crewmen & Wingmen May/June 1997.

**Men Returning From Detached Service**  
**June 1997 - November 1997**

766	Hansen, Stanley F.	11642 Swift Ct., Naples, FL 34119
	Harriss, Charles W.	88 Oak Hill Dr., Belleville, IL 62223
	Merkouris, Thomas M.	10608 Rhodes Dr., Fredricksburg, VA 22407
	Wiseman, Charles O.	616 Harbor Dr., Ludington, MI 49431
	von Ehrenkrook, Bernard M.	19269 N. Welk, Sun City, AZ 85373
767	George, Harold J.	Box 100 Star Rte, Spring Church, PA 15686
	Kunkes, Herman J.	1050 George St. #17M, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

**461st Bomb Group Reunion**  
**Boston, Massachusetts**  
**20-23 August 1998**

Sheraton Tara Hotel  
Braintree, Massachusetts

If you are planning to attend next years reunion PLEASE let us know your intentions AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. You do not have to send any money at this time but WE HAVE TO OBTAIN some idea of how many will attend. It is CRUCIAL to the financial arrangements with the hotel.

On or about 12 November we sent out a questionnaire to all dues paying members requesting them to let us know if they will attend the reunion and asking them to indicate their preferences regarding a selection of available tours in the Boston area. By the time you receive the "Liberaider" you should have received the questionnaire AND RETURNED IT TO ME. If you haven't, DO IT NOW!!!!

If you did not receive the questionnaire and are planning to attend the reunion PLEASE call or write to me requesting a copy. (See appropriate addresses below).

With your help, I believe we can have a GREAT REUNION in the Boston area. Your early participation in the planning will make it even better. Please respond soon.

If there are any members that live in the Greater Boston Area that would like to volunteer to help with the reunion plans and activities please contact me.

Prior to Jan. 3, 1998

George Dickie  
P.O. Box 615  
East Sandwich, MA 02537  
(508) 888-2082

After Jan. 6, 1998

7856 S.E. Wren Ave.  
Hobe Sound, FL 33455  
(561) 546-4380

## **HISTORY OF THE 461ST BOMB GROUP**

### **CHAPTER XVI SECOND UNIT CITATION AND CHANGE OF COMMAND - DECEMBER, 1944**

#### **(A) Narrative History**

War Department Unit Citation. On 3 December, Brigadier General Charles F. Born, Deputy Commander of the Fifteenth Air Force, presented the 461st Bombardment Group with its second War Department Unit Citation. Due to the fact that this was the second Unit Citation to be received by the Group within a period of one month, the ceremonies may have lacked a little of the color which had marked the first presentation on 6 November 1944. Those who witnessed the ceremonies, however, felt that the participants gave fully as good an account of themselves as had been done for the first citation.

After General Born had returned to his Headquarters he wrote the following letter which was endorsed to the Group by Colonel William L. Lee, Commanding Officer of the 49th Bombardment Wing:

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE  
Office of the Commanding General

SUBJECT: Commendation.

5 December 1944

THROUGH: Commanding General, 49th Bombardment Wing

TO: Commanding Officer, 461st Bombardment Group (H)

1. I viewed with a great deal of pride your citation ceremonies on 3 December 1944.
2. You, your officers, and men are to be commended for this excellent showing. In the stress of combat it is easy to forget the essentials that are necessary in our military life. The ceremonies presented by your Group showed that high degree of training, discipline, loyalty, and efficiency that is so necessary for successful combat. You and every member of your command may rightfully be proud of the magnificent achievements of your organization. By your leadership you have reflected great credit upon yourself and the armed forces.
3. This commendation will become part of your official record and will be attached to your next efficiency report.

/s/ Charles F. Born  
Brigadier General, USA  
Deputy Commander

HEADQUARTERS 49TH BOMBARDMENT WING (H)

7 December 1944.

TO: Commanding Officer, 461st Bomb Group (H)

It gives me great pleasure to pass this commendation on to you with my congratulations and complete concurrence.

/s/ William L. Lee  
Colonel, Air Corps, Commanding

*(Continued from page 21)*

The unit citation that was awarded for a pathfinder attack on the Creditul-Minier Oil Refinery at Ploesti, Roumania on 15 July 1944, was approved by the Fifteenth Air Force on 26 October 1944 and by the Headquarters Army Air Forces of the Mediterranean Theater of Operations on 22 November 1944.

HEADQUARTERS  
FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE  
APO 520

26 October 1944.

GENERAL ORDERS

NUMBER 4187

SECTION I - - CITATION OF UNIT

Under the provisions of Circular No. 333, War Department, 1943, and Circular No. 89, Headquarters NA-TOUSA, 10 July 1944, the following unit is cited for outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy:

461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP. For outstanding performance of duty in armed conflict with the enemy. Notified to prepare for a bombing mission against the Creditul-Minier Oil Refinery at Ploesti, Roumania, the Group underwent extensive training to enable it to overcome the enemy's newest defensive weapon, and effective chemical smoke screen. Special Pathfinder crews trained rigorously for several weeks perfecting a new technique in non-visual, synchronous bombing, fully realizing that a successful accomplishment of this mission would reduce by 1,500,000 tons refinery capacity of the oil production and stores available to the Axis forces. Prior to the mission, ground crews worked tirelessly and determinedly to insure that their aircraft were in perfect mechanical condition for the operation. On 15 July 1944, thirty-nine (39) B-24 type aircraft were airborne and after assuming the lead of the wing formation encountered severe adverse weather conditions, making it necessary for them to split up into flights and individual ships to get through. After successfully penetrating the first cloud coverage and reassembling, they again encountered adverse weather, and only through the superior skill of the navigators was the target reached. Approaching the objective, it was observed to be completely obscured by the effective smoke from previous bomber raids on adjacent refineries. Undaunted by these seemingly overwhelming handicaps, together with the heavy barrage of intense anti-aircraft fire over the target, displaying outstanding courage and determination, the gallant crews fought their way through the heavy enemy defenses. With full realization of the importance of the target and their responsibility in leading the entire formation unerringly to the objective, the Pathfinder operator and lead bombardier skillfully coordinated their instruments and dropped their bombs on the obscured target, enabling the formation to lay down a perfect pattern of hits which completely smothered the target area. Immediately after the bombs were released, a break in the clouds enabled a perfect view of the objective and the pattern of bomb strikes. There were one-hundred and twenty-five (125) hits visible on the refinery, eighteen (18) in the tank car storage yard and approximately twenty-one (21) on the choke point of the adjacent marshalling yard. So intense was the flak over the target, that one ship was lost, another severely damaged and fifteen (15) slightly damaged, with losses held to a minimum through skillful evasive action taken. By the conspicuous courage, professional skill and determination of the combat crews, together with the superior technical skill and devotion to duty of the ground personnel, the 461st Bombardment Group has reflected great credit upon itself and the Armed Forces of the United States of America.

By command of Major General Twining

/s/

R. K. TAYLOR  
Colonel, GSC  
Chief of Staff

*(Continued on page 23)*



### **MISSION 62, 15 JULY 1944 - CREDITUL-MINIER OIL REFINERY, PLOESTI, ROUMANIA**

*(Continued from page 22)*

Change of Command. In leading the Wing and Group formation in an attack on the Linz, Austria, Main Marshalling Yard on 15 December, Colonel Hawes completed his tour of duty. During the days immediately following this mission, he visited Headquarters of both the 49th Wing and the Fifteenth Air Force in completing matters pertaining to his command and in preparation for his return to the United States. The evening of 20 December, accompanied in a command car by Major Joseph N. Donovan who had completed his tour of duty on 11 December, he left for Naples in anticipation of his return to the United States. During his assignment with the 461st Group he had served as Deputy Group Commander from 3 November 1943 to 22 September 1944, and as Group Commander from 22 September 1944 to the day of his departure.

Upon the departure of Colonel Hawes, command of the Group was assumed by Lt. Colonel Brooks A. Lawhon who previously had been Colonel Hawes' Deputy Commander. Lt. Colonel Otha B. Hardy, 764th Squadron Commander, was named the Deputy Group Commander. Captain Robert K. Baker, the Operations Officer of the 765th Squadron, became the Commanding Officer of that Squadron with 1st Lt. Leo F. Cooper as his Operations Officer.

Major Joseph N. Donovan was replaced as the 767th Squadron Commander by Captain Frank M. Poole.

Inspections. On 10 November Major L. Liddon, Technical Inspector from the Fifteenth Air Force Air Inspector's Office, and his Assistant, Captain J. E. Worley inspected the engineering and armament sections of the Group. The conclusion of their report of the inspections - "Overall rating for Group - Satisfactory."

From 27 November through 2 December and inspection team consisting of four officers and four enlisted men from Headquarters, Mediterranean Theatre of Operations, United States Army, inspected the service records of the Group. This team was headed by Lt. Colonel W. S. Von Bermuth who had as his first assistant Lt. Colonel Barnett C. Wolin. The report of this inspection, which included officer set-up, supervision, and condition of service records, ranged all the way from "Unrated" to "Excellent".

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During the period from 14 to 17 December inclusive the Annual General Inspection was conducted. The inspection team was made up of four officers and four enlisted men with Lt. Colonel Ellis E. Eno as Acting Inspector General. Lt. Colonel Eno's report reads as follows:

HEADQUARTERS  
49TH BOMBARDMENT WING (H)  
Office of the Air Inspector

19 December 1944

SUBJECT: Report of Annual General Inspection, 461st Bomb Group (H)

TO: Commanding General, Fifteenth Air Force, (Thru: Commanding Officer, 461st Bomb Group (H), and Commanding General, 49th Bomb Wing (H))

I. AUTHORITY AND COMMAND INSPECTED

1. Under the provisions of par. 3a, AR 20-10. 3 Sept. 1943, and pursuant to VOGG, Fifteenth Air Force, the annual general inspection (non-continuing type) of 461st Bomb Group (H) was made by Lieut. Colonel Ellis E. Eno, AC, (Acting Inspector General), assisted by personnel of the Air Inspector's Section of the 49th Bomb Wing, during the period of 14-17 December 1944. The units inspected, together with the general rating given each, are shown in Enclosure No. 1. This Group has been commanded by Colonel Philip R. Hawes, 0-21220, AC, since 22 September 1944. Previous commander was Colonel Frederic, E. Glantzberg, AC.

II. ORGANIZATION

3. The Group and four Squadrons were activated 29 May 1943 per G.O. 78, Headquarters, Second Air Force, 29 May 1943. The Group operated under T/O and E 1-112 and 1-117.

III. IRREGULARITIES, DEFICIENCIES AND COMMENTS

4. Personnel, buildings and grounds, messes, warehousing, transportation, discipline, security, records, funds and all other matters covered by this inspection were found to be in a satisfactory condition or better.
5. Considerable ingenuity is evidenced by the improvised steam tables installed in the messes. These improvisations are excellent additions to the messes.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The general overall rating is: Satisfactory.
7. Recommendations where appropriate, appear in each action-letter I.G.D. (Editor's Note: Not included here.)

/s/

ELLIS E. ENO  
Lieut. Colonel, AC  
Acting Inspector General

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List of Units inspected during Annual General Inspection, 461st Bomb Group (H).

<u>Organization</u>	<u>Rating</u>
461st Bomb Group (H), Headquarters	Satisfactory
764th Bomb Squadron (H)	Excellent
765th Bomb Squadron (H)	Satisfactory
766th Bomb Squadron (H)	Satisfactory
767th Bomb Squadron (H)	Satisfactory

On 21 December 1st Lt. Robert V. Ellis and one enlisted man conducted the 49th Wing Medical Administrative Inspection in the Group. His report mentioned no specific items for attention by the Group but did contain specific recommendations for the Squadrons.

The final inspection for the month of December was made on the 22nd by Major L. D. Yard and his assistants from the Communications Section of the Fifteenth Air Force. A complete inspection was made of all of the Group's communications and radar installations. Final rating: "All phases - very satisfactory."

Meeting Conducted by General William L. Lee. Following the submission of the Report of the Annual General Inspection of the Group by the Acting Inspector General, the 49th Wing Commander, Brigadier General William L. Lee, conducted a meeting with selected personnel of the Group in the Group briefing room on 21 December 1944. The personnel present consisted of headquarters officers and squadron commanders, executive officers and adjutants. The general purpose of the meeting seemed to be that of providing the General with an opportunity to discuss with the staff members of the Group some of the current problems of the Wing and of the Air Force.

Subjects mentioned by the General included: Need for aggressive action in combating the increased venereal rate; The necessity for reducing the number of delinquents; Methods for solving the complicated problem of Transportation; The method of distributing and the need for accurate accounting of combat whiskey; The shortage of airplanes in the Air Force; and The desirability of building pride in an organization.

Following the General's remarks, his Chief of Staff, Lt. Colonel Ellis E. Eno, discussed several items of army procedure that pertained primarily to the Adjutant's Office. After Lt. Colonel Eno had finished his remarks the Wing Assistant Adjutant, Major Frank E. Marek, discussed the mechanics and the proper techniques for making recommendations for decorations and awards.

Christmas. So far as the day itself was concerned Christmas Day was little different from previous holidays such as Election Day, Armistice Day, and Thanksgiving Day had previously proven to be. Fundamentally, it was just another day of War. But nonetheless it was Christmas.

A few days before Christmas, arrangements were made to send a small delegation of officers and men of the Roman Catholic faith to Rome where they attended midnight Christmas Mass celebrated by the Pope. On Sunday, 24 December, Chaplain Rasmussen conducted a total of seven different services. On Christmas night the officers and men enjoyed their turkey in highly decorated mess halls. Perhaps the biggest boon to apparently every member of the command at Christmas time was the large number of overseas Christmas packages that began to arrive in late November and were received in a continuous stream throughout the first three weeks of December.

Health. In December both Hepatitis and diphtheria threatened the efficiency of the Group. The following account of this threat has been written by the Group Surgeon, Major Charles J. Deishley.

"Hepatitis - There were four cases from early in August until the later part of November. Between Novem-

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ber 1st and December 13th our Group had 23 cases (14 in 766th and 9 in 765th). Of the men affected in the 765th, it is unusual that it seems to confine itself to the ground officers. At one time all but one line officer in that squadron were in the hospital. There were 13 cases in November and 10 cases in December. At the present time there are no new cases developing."

"Diphtheria - Only one squadron was involved in this disease. This was the 765th Squadron. During the period 26 November to 2 December, eight definite cases were admitted to the hospital, and three persons diagnosed as carriers were admitted. There were several other suspects admitted, but diagnosis was not confirmed. Very strict precautions were exercised as soon as the first case appeared, which may have been the reason a severe epidemic did not occur. Fifteenth Air Force heard of our cases and sent two surgeons to assist us in Schick testing the entire squadron. Ten days after the original Schick test those men who were positive were given another Schick test. The results have been forwarded to Air Force and may prove valuable in case some other outfit has diphtheria."

### **(B) Operations**

Seventeen combat missions were flown during the month of December. Seven of these missions were against the enemy's big synthetic oil refineries in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Germany; eight were against marshalling yards and two were against railroad viaducts. The complete list of targets attacked was probably the roughest for any month since July.

The losses for the month attested to the roughness of the targets. Personnel losses totaled 3 killed, 9 wounded, and 125 missing in action. Of the 324 planes that flew effective sorties, 63 were damaged by flak and fighters, 19 others were lost. In the only encounter during the month with enemy fighters our crews claimed 24 destroyed and 5 probably destroyed.

New crews continued to arrive and the number of airplanes available continued to decline. For the month the Group had an average of 104.2 crews and an average of only 46.5 airplanes assigned.

To increase the possibility of a Group assembly above the undercasts that frequently attended take-offs, three additional assembly areas were assigned to the Group. One was along the Western shoreline of the Adriatic south of the "spur"; one was along the coast north of the "spur"; and the third was along the coast of Yugoslavia, east of the Island of Vis.

A cargo plane returning from Naples was lost near the Field shortly after dark the evening of 23 December while attempting to land below bad weather and a very low ceiling. Ten of the fifteen officers and men aboard the plane were killed. Among the survivors were the pilot, Captain Gerald L. Vanderhoeven, and the co-pilot, 1st Lt. Theodore R. Ahlberg, both of whom were seriously injured when thrown clear of the wreckage through the top of the plane. Both had been outstanding flight leaders in the 766th Squadron. Captain Vanderhoeven had completed his tour of duty and was awaiting orders to return to the United States. Lt. Ahlberg, who had returned several weeks previous to the accident from rotation to the United States, had but a few missions left to complete his tour of duty.

Two enlisted men from the Group survived the crash. They were S/Sgt. Saul Koplowitz and S/Sgt. Gerald S. Huizenga. The fifth survivor was an enlisted man from the 484th Group.

Those fatally injured were: 1st Lt. Paul M. Kuric, a flight leader navigator from the 766th Squadron who had returned to the Group from rotation to the United States and who was serving as the navigator on this mission; T/Sgt. William Tychostup; S/Sgt. Robert E. Moritz; S/Sgt. Raymond G. Hunter Jr.; Cpl. James C. Wilson; and Cpl. George G. Oder.

Correction. In previous chapters reference has been made under the Operations Section to combat hours. In each case this reference applied to airplane combat hours and not, as stated, to combat hours for crewmembers.

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## NEW CREWS

A total of twenty-two new crews were received during the month of December. They were led by:

### 764t Squadron

2nd Lt. Frank M. Brown Jr.  
2nd Lt. Jessie C. Carlisle  
2nd Lt. Chester W. Crumbo  
2nd Lt. Paul P. Viliesis

### 765th Squadron

2nd Lt. John W. Anderson Jr.  
2nd Lt. Lloyd R. Heinze  
2nd Lt. Dewey E. McMillen  
2nd Lt. Stanley P. Porch  
2nd Lt. Dominick Traetta  
2nd Lt. Vahl A. Vladyka

### 766th Squadron

2nd Lt. John H. Boyd  
2nd Lt. Andrew Curtis Jr.  
2nd Lt. Josiah R. Hooper  
2nd Lt. Robert R. McKee

### 767th Squadron

2nd Lt. Donald Cameron  
2nd Lt. Walter M. Clarke Jr.  
2nd Lt. Edward K. Delana  
2nd Lt. Robert C. Hansen  
1st Lt. Charles V. Lang Jr.  
2nd Lt. William E. Vogel  
2nd Lt. Thomas R. Wiley  
2nd Lt. Robert L. Yauger

## MISSIONS

### Mission No. 142 2 December 1944

#### **Target: Blechhammer South Synthetic Oil Refinery, Germany**

Major Donovan led a six flight formation on 2 December in attacking the South Plant of the synthetic oil refinery at Blechhammer, Germany, by pathfinder method. A very effective smoke screen with the smudge pots located considerable distances from the target seemed to have baffled the navigators, the bombardiers, and the mickey operators in the lead and deputy lead planes. Upon returning to Base they expressed undivided confidence that they had hit the target, but photographs of the mission revealed that the target was missed by approximately seven miles. Of the twenty-six planes over the target two were severely damaged by flak and thirteen others were hit. One man was wounded on this mission.

### Mission No. 143 3 December 1944

#### **Target: Ali Pasin Most Marshalling Yard at Sarajevo, Yugoslavia**

Cancelled

### Mission No. 143 3 December 1944

#### **Target: Innsbruck Main Marshalling Yard, Austria**

Two missions were briefed the morning of 3 December. A four-box formation assigned to bomb the Ali Pasin Most M/Y at Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, was stood down, but the two pathfinder individual plane mission to Innsbruck Main Marshalling Yard, Austria, was flown. Both planes bombed the target by pathfinder methods above a ten-tenths undercast with unobserved results. Flak at the target was negligible. The plane flown by 2nd Lt. Robert R. Friedersdori returned to the base without incident, but the one flown by 1st Lt. Bertrand J. Arents developed serious engine trouble on the return route and was compelled to land at Rimini. All but three of the crewmembers hitch-hiked back to the Base. Nineteen days elapsed before Lt. Arents returned to the Base with the plane.

### Mission No. 144 6 December 1944

#### **Target: Maribor South Marshalling Yard, Yugoslavia**

Bad weather seriously hindered the mission of 6 December when Captain Mixson led a six flight formation against the South Marshalling Yard at Maribor, Yugoslavia. Some of the planes in the formation became lost when attempting to get above a stratus layer based at 15,000 feet. Some of these stray planes bombed individually and others bombed with different Groups in the Air Force. The formation that was able to stay with Captain Mixson found poor visibility and nine-tenths cloud coverage at the target. Pathfinder methods were used for navigational purposes and for the target approach, but the bombing was done visually with observed results. Nine planes were

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hit by flak over the target.

**Mission No. 145**  
**7 December 1944**

**Target: Innsbruck Main Station, Austria**

Mission No. 145 was a two-plane pathfinder mission against the Innsbruck Main Station, Austria, the night of 6-7 December 1944. 2nd Lt. Robert J. Louches and his crew were forced to return early when their number four engine caught on fire. The plane piloted by 1st Lt. Robert A. Galvan hit the primary target. Radio conversation that was overheard on this mission revealed that enemy night fighters were attacking bombers of the Fifteenth Air Force on this mission.

**Mission No. 146**  
**8 December 1944**

**Target: Moosbierbaum Oil Refinery, Austria**

Mission No. 146 was another two-plane pathfinder mission against the oil refinery at Moosbierbaum, Austria. It was flown the night of 7-8 December. The plane flown by 1st Lt. Hubert W. Souther could not get to its briefed altitude because of icing conditions. When it finally reached the initial point the visibility was so good that lights in the target area could be seen in the distance. With inadequate cloud protection, the crew abandoned the target, jettisoned their bombs in the Adriatic, and returned to the Base.

The second plane, piloted by 2nd Lt. Robert R. Friedersdorf, encountered five enemy fighters after making landfall at the head of the Adriatic. Three of the unidentified fighters stood off the wings of the bomber at a safe distance while two others attacked, making their passes low, one from each side. The bomber crew jettisoned their bombs, fought off the attack, found cloud cover and returned to Base.

**Mission No. 147**  
**11 December 1944**

**Target: Vienna Maitzlendorf Goods Station, Austria**

Pressing to complete his tour of duty, Colonel Hawes led a formation of thirty planes in attacking the Vi-

enna Maitzlendorf Goods Station on 11 December 1944. With only two-tenths cloud coverage at the target the enemy flak, which was intense, accurate, and heavy, was probably the worst ever experienced by this Group at Vienna. Fourteen of the twenty-four planes over the target were hit.

Several Groups in the Fifteenth Air Force had already hit targets in the South Vienna Area before this Group arrived at the target. Despite good horizontal visibility the Group was compelled to bomb by pathfinder methods due to the smoke screen, the fires, and the haze in the target area. The bomb pattern was a concentrated one but unfortunately most of the bombs fell just short of the target in an industrial area.

1st Lt. Jay M. Garner had his hydraulics shot out and his cables jammed on this mission. He circled the field for nearly two hours using up his gasoline and waiting for his crew to find some way of letting down and locking the landing gear. Finally, when nearly out of gas, he bailed out all but two other members of his crew and successfully crash landed the plane in the darkness on the non-serviceable East runway. The copilot, Lt. Roger Nixon, and the engineer, Cpl. Charles Barnes, rode the plane down with him. None of the three were injured and much of the plane was salvaged.

Major Joseph N. Donovan, the 767th Squadron Commander, led the second section on this mission and became the third squadron commander in the history of the Group to complete a tour of duty.

**Mission No. 148**  
**12 December 1944**

**Target: Blechhammer South Synthetic Oil Refinery, Germany**

For Mission No. 148 another feature was added to the ever-changing tactics employed by the Fifteenth Air Force in its endless effort to keep pressure on German oil and rolling stock despite adverse weather conditions. Six pathfinder planes were assigned to hit the Blechhammer South Oil Refinery during daylight hours. Instead of flying individual missions with short intervals between each plane over the target, the planes for this mission were scheduled to fly and attack the target in three flights of two planes each.

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Of the six planes scheduled for the mission, only five got off. Two were early returns due to mechanical failures. Each of the three remaining planes bombed a different target.

While one of the planes was en route to the target it was discovered that the radar set was not working accurately. Because of this, the town of Gattendorf, near Vienna, was picked as a target of opportunity and bombed by a combination of visual and pathfinder methods with unobserved results. A second plane developed gasoline leaks en route to the target and so was compelled to bomb the second alternative target, the Privoz Oil Refinery at Moravska Ostrava, Czechoslovakia. One plane hit the primary target with unobserved results.

Flying between two decks of clouds, 2nd Lt. Robert T. Barnes and his crew were jumped by enemy fighters north of Lake Balaton on their return from the Privoz Oil Refinery. A formation of four ME-109's were led out of the clouds by an unidentified plane which might have possibly been a radar plane. In the encounter that took place before Lt. Barnes could reach the protection of the clouds below him, two of his gunners were wounded and one enemy airplane was probably destroyed.

The plane which went to the primary target was compelled to land at Vis to refuel on the return route. (Despite the fact that this is the first mention in this History of one of our planes having landed at Vis, there is nothing unusual in this incident. On the 13th mission of the 461st Group on 23 April 1944, 1st Lt. Matias M. Torres Jr. had bailed his crew out over the Island of Vis. Following that incident one or more planes in a Group formation which were running low on gasoline frequently stopped at the friendly Isle of Vis to refuel.)

**Mission No. 149**  
**13 December 1944**

**Target: Brux Synthetic Oil Plant, Czechoslovakia**

Cancelled

**Mission No. 149**  
**13 December 1944**

**Target: Linz Main Marshalling Yard, Austria**

Cancelled

**Mission No. 149**  
**14 December 1944**

**Target: Brux Synthetic Oil Plant, Czechoslovakia**

Cancelled

**Mission No. 149**  
**14 December 1944**

**Target: Linz Main Marshalling Yard, Austria**

Cancelled

**Mission No. 149**  
**15 December 1944**

**Target: Rolling Stock at Linz Main Marshalling Yard, Austria**

On 15 December the Group Commander, Colonel Hawes, completed his tour of duty in leading the Group and Wing formation in an attack on the Main Marshalling Yard at Linz, Austria. After take-off the rendezvous was made above a ten-tenths layer of clouds with tops at 6000 feet. Horizontal visibility at the target was unlimited, but the solid undercast necessitated instrument bombing with unobserved results. Over the target the Group experienced moderate, inaccurate, and heavy flak, but not a single plane that returned to the Base was hit. The plane flown by 2nd Lt. Clarence P. Marshall left the formation before the initial point and failed to return to the Base.

It seemed a most fitting conclusion to Colonel Hawes' tour of duty that he took twenty-nine airplanes over the exceptionally well-defended target area of Linz without having a plane hit by flak. As a Group, Wing, and Air Force leader, he had repeatedly demonstrated his ability during his tour of duty to come off rough targets having suffered a minimum amount of damage. When not leading the Air Force, he had habitually made it his practice to maneuver his formation in such a manner as to sit tight above the tail of a Group or Wing formation immediately ahead of him over the target.

**Mission No. 150**  
**16 December 1944**

**Target: Brux Synthetic Oil Refinery, Czechoslovakia**

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On 16 December Major Rider lead a large formation against a far distant and heavily defended target, the synthetic oil refinery, at Brux, Czechoslovakia. The formation flew between two decks of clouds over the Adriatic, but experienced fairly good weather over the Alps. Over the target the tops of the solid undercast were up to 20,000 feet. Taking advantage of the high solid undercast, Major Rider was able to almost completely avoid the intense flak. The plane flown by 1st Lt. Lee P. Ward Jr., which failed to return from the mission, was the only plane over the target to be hit.

**Mission No. 151**  
**17 December 1944**

**Target: Odertal Oil Refinery, Germany**

Captain Mixson took off on 17 December with thirty-one airplanes to attack the synthetic oil refinery at Odertal, Germany. There were five early returns. Only fifteen of the twenty-six remaining airplanes reached the target, the bombs were dropped through a solid undercast with unobserved results.

To minimize drag and thus conserve gasoline for the long mission, the gunners had been briefed to stand by to lower the ball turrets but not to actually lower them until the IP, Zuckmantel, was reached. Near Muglitz, just south of the initial point, the Group was attacked by upward of fifty Me-109s and FW-190s.

The attack lasted approximately fifteen minutes during which the enemy used both rockets and 20mm cannon. Passes were made mostly in pairs from 5 to 7 o'clock low with break-aways also low. The bombers that returned to the Base claimed twenty-four of the attacking fighters destroyed and five probably destroyed. Despite the fact that the ball turrets had the advantage of computing sights and the most favorable position against -low attacks, they fired the fewest number of rounds and claimed the fewest enemy airplanes of any position on the bombers. Of a total of 12,260 rounds of ammunition expended, the ball turrets expended but 1365 rounds.

As a result of the fighter attack, nine planes in the formation were shot down and a tenth one was lost to ditching while in the traffic pattern near the Island of Vis. In all, ten planes were lost, five others were damaged, three individuals were killed, two were wounded, and ninety-three were missing in action.

On the way home from the mission, while North of Vienna, Captain Mixson was checking the number of planes left in his formation over the radio when a German voice, apparently using our radio frequency, broke in with the proper call sign to ask, "Where is the rest of your formation?", laughed, and signed off.

Killed in the ditching were 1st Lt. Eugene P. Ford, 1st Lt. Russell C. Landry and T/Sgt. Charles E. Priest. The wounded were Sgt. Archie S. Russell and Sgt. Walter L. Franks. Missing in action were the crews of the following pilots: 1st Lt. Robert A. Galvan; 1st Lt. Charles V. Lang Jr.; 2nd Lt. Frederick B. Capalbo; 2nd Lt. Philip J. Crossman; 2nd Lt. Max M. Hailey; 2nd Lt. Nicholas Sidovar; 2nd Lt. Gerald R. Smith; 2nd Lt. Kenneth B. Smith; and 2nd Lt. Thomas J. West.

**Mission No. 152**  
**18 December 1944**

**Target: Blechhammer North Synthetic Oil Refinery, Germany**

Mission No. 153 was a three-flight formation led by Lt. Colonel Lawhon against the North Oil Refinery at Blechhammer, Germany. Due to practically a solid cloud coverage the bombing, as usual, was done by pathfinder method. The bomb strike pictures, however, show three small breaks in the clouds over the target. A long and detailed study of these pictures, which was instigated by Colonel Hawes, revealed beyond a doubt that the target was exceptionally well hit by the fifteen planes in the formation. Again a crew was lost on this mission when the plane piloted by 2nd Lt. Edward K. George dropped behind the formation after coming off the target.

**Mission No. 153**  
**19 December 1944**

**Target: Blechhammer South Oil Refinery, Germany**

Another three flight formation to Blechhammer, this time with the South Refinery as the target. Of the eighteen airplanes off, two were early returns and six lost the formation in snowstorms. These six planes, all in one flight, bombed Sternberg, Germany, as a target of opportunity. The ten planes over the target dropped their bombs through a solid undercast with unobserved results. Six of the ten planes over the primary target were hit by flak but there were no losses.

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## COMMENDATION

From: 49th Bomb Wing

To: 451st, 461st, 484th Bomb Groups. Attention: S-3 Officers.

"Recent photographic coverage has proved that our relentless attacks have dealt crippling blows to the Hun and his most vulnerable spot - his sources of oil. Definite information verifying the effectiveness of the tremendous effort the combat and service units of this Air Force have been called upon to exert compensated in measure for the sacrifices entailed. I realize that in ordering deep penetrations into enemy territory with favorable weather adding to the hazards of combat I have required the personnel of this command to exert a supreme effort. It is heartening to know that such an effort has been crowned with success. The devastated refinery of Blechhammer North bears witness to the valor, the outstanding flying proficiency and professional skill of our combat crews and to the determination of their combat leaders. I commend the fighter pilots and their leaders on the brilliant performance of their escort assignments. I congratulate the service units and the maintenance personnel of the tactical units on their excellent response to the arduous demands made upon them. We know that our campaign is progressing favorably and that our successful attacks on the enemy in the recent months will hasten his complete and utter defeat."

(Signed) TWINING

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**Mission No. 154**  
**20 December 1944**

**Target: Villach Marshalling Yard, Austria**

On 20 December a two-flight formation led by Lt. Colonel Hardy took off with the synthetic oil refinery at Brux, Czechoslovakia, as the primary target. The weather over Yugoslavia was so bad that it was impossible to keep even a two-flight formation together. As a result, one flight bombed Villach, Austria, and the other one bombed Linz, Austria, with the 484th Group. The results were unobserved. When the planes returned to the Base the ceiling was 200 feet, but there were no landing accidents.

**Mission No. 155**  
**22 December 1944**

**Target: Brux Synthetic Oil Refinery, Czechoslovakia**

Cancelled

**Mission No. 155**  
**23 December 1944**

**Target: Verona Locomotive Repair Depot, Italy**

Cancelled

**Mission No. 155**  
**24 December 1944**

**Target: Lechfeld Airdrome, Germany**

Cancelled

**Mission No. 155**  
**25 December 1944**

**Target: Weis Marshalling Yard, Austria**

At 2200 hours on Christmas Eve the officers and men in transportation, armament and ordnance sections were ordered to the line in a cold, driving rain to change the bomb load from frag clusters to 500 pound RDX bombs. These frag bombs had been left in the planes in anticipation of the possibility of flying the mission of the 24 December that had been stood down.

At 0744 hours on Christmas morning twenty-six airplanes took off to bomb the synthetic oil refinery at Brux, Czechoslovakia. The planes were off in the rain that was accompanied by a visibility of two miles and a ceiling of less than 500 feet. This was the poorest weather in which this Group had ever taken off for a combat mission. The planes broke through the ten-tenths cumulus at 1500 feet and proceeded to the coast of Yugoslavia individually for assembly and rendezvous. From the rendezvous area northward the

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weather steadily improved with the result that by the time the Alps were reached it was CAVU with haze.

Having been late in taking off and also having been late at the rendezvous, the Group did not have enough daylight hours left in which to complete a mission against the primary target. As a result, the Group bombed the third alternate target, the marshalling yard at Wels, Austria. The bombing was done visually but unfortunately the target was missed.

It was long after dark that evening before the bad weather over the Base moved out to sea. Each of the pilots in the five planes that were early returns had difficulty landing because of the low hanging cumulus clouds. Only one plane that was over the target returned to the Base at the completion of the mission. The pilot of this plane circled the field three times to get underneath a 200-foot ceiling.

Most of the planes landed at Bari and at Gioia with a few at scattered fields in the Foggia area. During the afternoon of 25 December a warning order for a mission on the following day was received by the Group. This warning order was later cancelled when it was learned by the Air Force that the Group would not have enough planes with which to fly a mission on 26 December.

During the day of the 26th the planes came straggling back to the Base. Having missed their target despite the good weather, having been away from the Base for Christmas, and having slept in their clothes in a vain effort to keep warm, the crews were a dejected lot.

### **Mission No. 156**

**27 December 1944**

#### **Target: Venzone Viaduct, Italy**

On 27 December Captain Roberts led a five-flight formation to North Italy where the Venzone Viaduct was bombed visually. The planes carrying 1000-pound bombs, bombed by flights. The main pattern of bombs fell on the west side of the viaduct where direct hits and near misses were scored. The scattered patterns of the various boxes clearly demonstrated that practice bombing was sorely needed.

### **Mission No. 157**

**28 December 1944**

#### **Target: Venzone Viaduct, Italy**

On the following day the Group and the Wing were back again in good weather to the Venzone Viaduct with 1000-pound bombs. Again the formation led this time by Captain Phillips, bombed by boxes. The best pattern started in the river west of the target and continued directly across the target. The bombing on the whole was much better than it had been on the previous day.

Photo reconnaissance on 28 December, after both attacks by the 49th Wing, revealed that the complete interdiction was achieved as a result of these two missions. The structure, 2760 feet in length, 16 feet in width, and 32 feet in height, was completely cut in two different places.

### **COMMENDATION**

From: CO, 49th Bomb Wing, Command Section.

To: CO, 461st Bomb Gp.

"The following message from General Twining is quoted for your information, 'My congratulations to the 49th Wing for superior bridge busting job at Venzone on the 27 and 28 of December. Please pass to all Groups participating Well Done'".

(Signed) LEE

### **Mission No. 158**

**29 December 1944**

**Target: Rosenheim Marshalling Yard, Germany and  
Castelfranco Veneto Railroad Junction,  
Italy**

The last mission of the month, flown on 29 December, was led by Lt. Colonel Hardy. The primary target was the Passau Marshalling Yard in Germany. As had been the case earlier in December, Lt. Colonel Hardy drew an especially bad weather assignment.

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Scattered cirrus, which extended up to 22,000 feet over the Adriatic, split the twenty-eight planes into two formations.

Two flights, above a solid undercast, bombed the marshalling yard at Rosenheim, Germany, with unobserved results. The other two flights visually bombed the locomotive depot at Castelfranco Veneto where the weather was clear. The photographs of the bombing of Castelfranco show a close concentrated pattern of hits on the large repair shop, the center of the marshalling yard, the west choke point, an industrial plant southeast of the locomotive depot, and the highway overpass.

On returning to the Base three of the four flights found a hole south of the spur at Lake Lesina through which to let down for a return to the Base. The fourth flight failed to find a hole and was compelled to land at Iesi and Falconara where they remained until late afternoon of 31 December. Captain Murphy, the Group Bombardier, completed his tour of duty on this mission. With the exception of eighteen officers who returned to the Group on rotation to the United States, Captain Murphy was the last individual among the flying officers of the original Group and Squadron staffs and combat crewmembers to complete a tour of duty. He was aboard one of the planes that landed at Iesi. When he returned to the Base he learned of his promotion to major.

### **COMMENDATION**

From: TWX A 00504

To: All Concerned

"The following message received from General Twining is quoted for your information cite XVAF A230. 'The results of the bombing by the 461st Bomb Group against the alternate target, the locomotive depot at Castelfranco, were most excellent. My highest commendations to the crews who turned in this splendid performance.'"

\* \* \* \* \*

Editor's Note: The following selected items are taken from the written history of the 461st Bomb Group for December 1944.

### **"Liberaiders in Italy".**

During the month of December the Special Services Section of the Group published a 48-page illustrated booklet for the Group entitled "Liberaiders in Italy". This was largely the work of the Special Services Officers, Captain Joseph J. Mente, and his Chief Clerk, Sergeant Donald R. Paine. These were widely distributed throughout the Group at the cost of 100 lira per copy and were made available for overseas mailing by having the manuscript passed by the Base Censor before printing. A copy of this booklet is included as part of the Group History.

### **Messages and Commendations**

From: Headquarters 49th Bomb Wing, 26 December 1944.

To: All Concerned

"The following teletype is quoted for your information, XVAF A 226. Herewith Christmas message from Spaatz: 'I extend my hearty wish for a joyous Christmas to every man in your command, both those flying the planes and those helping them in the air, and express to them my firm belief in their continuous effective use of air power in the year to come so ably displayed in the year 1944.

(Signed) LEE

*(Continued on page 34)*



(Continued from page 33)

From: Headquarters Fifteenth Air Force, 24 December 1944.

To: All Concerned

"The following personal command message from General Twining quoted for your information:

"I am repeating message received from the Chief of Staff, United States Army, General George C. Marshall. Please see that it has complete distribution to all personnel."

"We will, no doubt, have to wait until the end of the war to appreciate the full effect of the strategic bombing of Germany but from what we already learned, there is no question that it has played a major part in making possible the successes that our ground armies have gained during the past six months. My congratulations to you and all the members of the Fifteenth Air Force for the vital part they have played and for the high standard of efficiency they have displayed."

### STATISTICAL SUMMARY OF OPERATIONS December 1944

Editor's Note: I have never provided this detailed information before but it may be of interest to some of you. It covers just the month of December 1944. The key to the abbreviations is as follows:

A/A	Anti-Aircraft	EFF	Effective		No	Number	
A/B	Airborne	Oper	Operational		O/T	Over Target	
A/C	Aircraft						
			764th	765th	766th	767th	Group
Sorties							
	No Aircraft Airborne		92	87	88	104	371
	Less Non-Eff Sorties		13	21	15	11	60
	No Effective Sorties		79	66	73	93	311
	% Airborne Effective		86	76	83	89	84
	Av No A/C A/B per Mission		5.4	5.1	5.2	6.1	21.8
Early Returns							
	Mechanical Failures		6	9	10	3	28
	Personnel Failures		0	0	1	0	1
	Weather		1	3	3	0	7
	% A/B Returning Early		7.6	13.8	15.9	2.9	9.7
Bomb Tonnage							
	No Airborne		165.8	156.9	158.3	169.6	650.6
	Dropped Over Target		125.3	109.5	122.0	117.1	473.9
	% Airborne Dropped O/T		76	70	77	69	72
Victories							
	Destroyed		10	5	6	3	24
	Probables		0	2	0	3	5
	Damaged		0	0	0	0	0
	Victories per Loss		10	0.6	1.2	0.6	1.3
	Victories per 100 Sorties		12.7	7.6	8.2	3.2	7.7

	764th	765th	766th	767th	Group
<b>Losses</b>					
To Anti-Aircraft	0	2	2	0	4
To Enemy Aircraft	1	5	1	4	11
Other Combat Losses	0	1	2	1	4
Total Losses	0	8	5	5	19
To A/A per 100 Sorties	0	3.0	2.7	0	1.3
To E/A per 100 Sorties	1.3	7.6	1.4	4.3	3.5
<b>Flying Time</b>					
Combat Hours Flown	678	632	605	704	2619
Non-Combat Hours Flown	314	263	257	193	1027
Total Hours Flown	992	895	862	897	3646
Hours per Oper Aircraft	96	112	94	114	103
Hours per Oper Crew	40	39	40	38	39
Combat Hours per Oper Crew	28	27	28	30	29
<b>Aircraft</b>					
Av No Assigned	12.8	11.3	11.9	10.5	46.5
Av No Operational	10.3	8.0	9.2	7.9	35.4
% Operational	80	71	77	75	76
No Eff Sortie per A/C	6.1	5.8	6.1	8.9	6.7
<b>Crews</b>					
Average No Assigned	27.3	25.8	25.3	25.7	104.2
Average No Operational	24.6	23.0	21.4	23.5	92.5
% Operational	90	89	85	91	89
No Ell Sorties per Crew Assigned	2.9	2.6	2.9	3.6	3.0

### COMBAT LOG OF THE B-24

“It’s a good feeling to have taught an elephant to do a ballet”

To the newly commissioned Second Lieutenant with his shiny silver wings, receiving orders for the B-24 Transition School can be a sobering jolt .....

Bomber losses in Europe during World War II were continually fearful, and the need for replacement crews cut short the dreams of many a cadet who had plans of tearing up the skies in his P-51 or A-20. Furthermore an airplane called the B-24 was increasingly moving into the predominant role over that gallant lady, the fabled B-17 Fortress, and although often overlooked, was faster, had greater range, and could carry a heavier load.

After the usual struggle through the training phases of Stearmans, BT-13s and the Beach AT-10s, it was awesome to walk up to a B-24 for the first time. There it sat; squat, heavy, pregnant, solid, very homely, and all business.

Despite the first "walk around" to inspect the ship for external flaws, there really was not much that could be determined from the outside, and so, with the instructor seriously outlining things to avoid, it was time to board and aviate this unhandsome, awkward freight train.

The B-24 was entered through the bomb bay. One had to bend over to do it as the belly was not much more than knee high. The pilots stepped up to the "halfdeck," the upper story of the nose section. Nose gunner, bombardier and navigator slithered through the tunnel under the flight deck to their offices, in the company of the nose wheel. The remainder of the crew moved

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rearward to the more spacious areas of the waist. The nose boys had to be continually mindful of one great hazard. When the wheel extended it would merely push the doors open, and when retracted small springs snapped the doors shut. We all remember the bombardier who came hurtling out, arms flailing, his bundled chute and fluttering magazine behind him. He had intended to lie back in comfort, using his chute as a pillow. No one had warned him about the doors.

The flight engineer would start the small lawn mower engine, the auxiliary power unit, or APU. This would furnish power to fire the four mills. From that point on, it was a routine aircraft start. The main power switch and energizers were on the co-pilot's right. Number three would always be started first, as all bleed off power came from that engine. Following would be numbers one, two. Then four.

With all instruments jumping to life, and gyros uncaged, the airplane was ready to get on with it. The engineer would report in that all looked good from the waist window view, and would clamber up to his taxi position, head and shoulders popped out of the top hatch, much in the fashion that the armor boys ride in their tanks. This top hatch was for emergency exit on the ground, but caution was the word in utilizing it. Slipping into a whirling prop on either side was all too easy. We saw it happen twice.

Taxiing began with the usual blast away from standstill. Then it got complicated. Out board engines were used for steering, and it was a real job to learn how. Considerable lead-time was necessary to anticipate corrections. Also, after goosing number one throttle and neutralizing its turn effect with number four, the novice pilot would not notice that his ground speed had built up considerably. That's when brakes came into play, and they were always sure, effective, and positive.

After the routine 450 position for run up, to keep from blasting the plane behind, mags were checked, - - and checked carefully. We would also run the engine up to full bore to see if it was going to deliver; then on to the next mag. At this stage tools or rags fell out of the nacelles (three times running) a dandy little confidence builder.

With check list completed, props up full, half flaps, and the assorted electrical and meter checks it was time to "light the fuse." As all throttles were eased slowly up to the stop the co-pilot would reach up and manually hold them. As the roll began, cowl flaps were closed. This was really important. Should even one engine have cowl flaps stuck open the buffeting would be fearful. I recall a stratocruiser ditching in Seattle because of severe vibration immediately after takeoff. When we lifted from the water all four engines had wide-open cowl flaps.

The engineer by this time had positioned himself behind the pilot's right ear, into which he shouted the increasing speed. This allowed full attention by the pilot to the recommended procedure of going down the runway.

Nose wheel off at ninety, main gear at one hundred. The noise by now was deafening, and hand signals for gear up were necessary. Making dam sure the wheels were actually off the deck, they would be braked firmly two or three times, to prevent their vibrating by spinning in the wheel wells. Then throttle back, props back (always in that order) to climb setting. Now that the aircraft was airborne for sure the flaps up signal would be given. They would be milked up in short jerks, to prevent the plane from sinking back to the deck. And sink it would!

The engineer would carefully check all dials and hurriedly disappear to the waist to see if the gear was full up, flaps were retracted, and checked for any oil trailing back or gas siphoning in its telltale, white ribbon. His return with an OK was always welcome.

The smarter pilots would crack the bomb bay doors about now. There were always fumes in the bay, and more than one 24 was blown up by a careless engineer who had lit a cigarette up front and went back through the bomb bay without thinking about it. Earlier models used U shaped tubes that were plugged into one tank to transfer gas to another. The leakage was awful. This was re-engineered in later models, but the

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stark lesson remained. Most B-24s never flew with closed bomb doors.

If flying alone or as leadship on a mission the autopilot was now brought into play. It could take quite awhile to fine tune it down to holding the exact altitude, course, etc., and once set up it would take an act of Congress to turn it off.

Driving along was now quite pleasant. The even hum of the huge engines just outside and behind became a song to those who loved to fly. Then too, there was always a playful navigator who would appear in the bubble out front and grimace like a baleful spook. You could even figure on the bombardier sneaking back from his post over the Norden sight to playfully reach up from the underneath and pull on a rudder pedal. The sudden yaw was exactly the same as losing an engine, and the pilot's eyes would dilate as he dropped his paperback for emergency procedures. Real clowns those nose dwellers.

It was formation flying that changed everything regarding the 24. Routine and normal flying was one thing, but now a different element entered. Formation flying was unbelievable. Trying to wrestle that anvil through an eight-hour mission was a real ordeal. The controls fought back and moved hard - - real hard. And only one hand could be used, as the other was on the throttles. The usual pattern was fifteen minutes of flying at a stretch. It was even worse when the lead ship was on your opposite side. This meant aligning through the co-pilot's window. Worse yet, new side windows appeared late in the war that had huge "bubbles" bulging out, apparently so the pilot could lean over and look straight down. These added to formation problems, as the lead ship became distorted, bent, humpbacked or generally warped. We hastily replaced them with the old flat windows.

After getting into Germany six hundred miles deep, one began to ponder the impossibilities of getting out of the bird if necessary. This is where World War I and II share a common horror - - going down in flames. We had chutes, yes, but unplugging oxygen, radio jacks, heated suit, seat belt etc., and then lifting your legs by hand over the pedestal between the seats, while the co-pilot was doing the same thing was just not possible. If one did get free and the plane was diving it would be necessary to climb up to the bomb bay. It's no wonder we usually counted on only eight out of the ten chutes, coming from a stricken ship.

The loss of an engine was also fun and games. Two engines out on one side would require both pilots, total counter trim, and fervent prayer. Holding those two platter rudders against the rushing wind was really beyond a man's strength. We flew three hours once with one and two both out, at an altitude of roughly fifty feet. The co-pilot drove while I used both hands to keep my knees from buckling. It took both feet on one pedal. My legs did not quit burning for a week. Yes, we made it, but the plane never flew again. Incidentally, it was the mark of a good pilot if he brought much of his fuel back. The jerky formation jockey would continually add and retard throttles, eating up gas like stop and go driving. Our gas consumption was read to us like exam grades, to promote smoother formations.

The Davis airfoil wing was a cutie, too. Without power to pull it along, it quit flying. So all landings were rather strong on power. The standard rule for landing a 24 was, "Open a window, drop a brick, and follow it down."

The "gliding" ability was just about like that. Usually we would drop half flaps and the gear on downwind, fly past the end of the runway thirty seconds and turn on the base leg, 3/4 flaps then. The checklist would be completed by now, and the engineer back up front ready to call out airspeed. It was a good idea to aim a little short, to touch down as soon after round out as possible. Sometimes "just enough power to flush the commode" would get us over the fence, followed by the massive pull needed to lift the nose. The common trick was to crank in substantial up trim and hold the nose down against it. Then by relaxing the yoke, trim would bring the nose up, effortlessly. The 24 required a good spacing, by the way, behind the ship on final just ahead. It laid down a tornado of prop wash. It only took one such experience to allow plenty of room in the pattern.

I supposed we envied the B-17 boys in some ways. Their airplane was much more gentle. It would glide, it

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would ditch, it would land wheels up. Ours would not. But they left before us and returned after we did, and we liked that. An effort was made late in the war to make the B-24 into a more gentle type. We picked up one such modification at the repair depot at Bari. Of all things, it had ball bearing controls. When I hauled that thing off the ground we almost did a loop. Despite this joyous innovation, however, that particular plane, 313, lasted only two weeks. It went down over Bologna with six of its ten crewmembers.

The 24 was the last plane of such a size built without a flight engineer's position. We had to fly it and read the meters too. The next one, the B-29, had another enviable feature. Hot food. Our brown-waxed ration boxes always froze solid. When we got to them on the way home we usually shattered the brick hard chocolate on the throttle quadrant and sucked the chips.

Once on the ground we had to be careful of "torching." Raw orange fire would trail out of the exhaust, but could be killed by a rapid throttle blast. It was a live hazard and the tower constantly monitored all landing planes, as the pilot could not see it from his seat. We had one plane, "Suzy Q," burn and blow up from torching.

Maybe the legion of drivers of B-24s have collective memories of some of the agonies described herein, but I'll bet they all feel in their hearts as I do. It's easy to stand there and throw rocks at the stubborn beast, but more than once I stopped to look over my shoulder at that plodding truck, and felt a surge of compassion as I reflected on her ungirdled figure. It's a good feeling to have taught an elephant to do a ballet.

Editor's Note: This article was 'stolen' from Air Classics, Vol. 5, No.4, April 1969. I believe it was written by Bob Carlin. The article was submitted by Wally Robinson, our PX Manager and member of the 767th Squadron.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **YUGOSLAV GENERAL HONORED AT LAST For Aiding 500 American Airmen**

**By Joseph Crumb  
Pittsburgh (Pa.) Tribune-Review**

tional Committee of American Airmen rescued by General Mihailovich.

When the Iron Curtain dropped on Eastern Europe after World War II, it wiped out the life and buried the heroic legacy of Gen. Draza Mihailovich, who saved the lives of 500 American fliers shot down over Yugoslavia in 1944.

Mihailovich, commander in chief of the Royal Yugoslav Army during World War II, will receive a measure of gratitude today for his efforts more than a half century after his country's communist regime put him to death.

A bronze bust of Mihailovich will be unveiled at 1 p. m. at the Serb National Federation, One Fifth Avenue, Downtown.

"It would take hours to tell you how much this bust means to me. It's the culmination of a long, hard struggle," retired U.S. Air Force Major Richard L. Felman said Tuesday. Felman is President of the Na-

Felman, 75, of Tucson, Arizona, was a navigator on a B-24 bomber shot down over Yugoslavia after a raid on the Ploesti oil fields in Roumania - - the main source of petroleum for Hitler's war machine.

The Nazis saw the plane's crew parachute to safety in the hills controlled by Mihailovich's men. They sent a message to the general demanding he turn over the 10 American flyboys.

"Either you send us the 10 Americans or we will burn down this Serbian village with 200 women and children," Felman recalled.

The Americans were ready to surrender, but Mihailovich refused.

"Throughout our history we've been fighting invaders," Mihailovich told the American airmen. "This is

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just another period in our history. Freedom means more than our lives," he said.

"We have a saying. Better in graves than as slaves."

"The next day, I saw the Germans burn down the village," Felman said, his voice breaking as the 50-year-old smell of burning human flesh lingered in his memory.

When the Germans took Belgrade in 1941 Mihailovich refused to give up his arms, fleeing into the hills where he carried out guerrilla operations against the Nazis, Felman said.

In a July 1946 editorial, The New York Times recommended that the Soviet Union erect a statue of Milailovich in Red Square, arguing that Mihailovich's insurgency delayed Germany's invasion of Russia by six weeks, preventing its conquest by keeping Nazi armies from reaching Moscow until midwinter of 1941-42.

Mihailovich was responsible for the greatest behind-enemy-lines rescue of American personnel in U.S. military history; the Halyard Mission, carried out from Aug. 9 to Dec. 20, 1944.

From a makeshift landing strip carved out in the hills, 500 Americans and about 200 other Allied personnel were evacuated by C-47 transports guarded by fighter planes.

Before the evacuation took place, Mihailovich's "Chetnick" hid the Americans in the Yugoslav countryside, said Carl J. Walpusk, 72, of Coraopolis. Walpusk was an Army Air Forces staff sergeant when he was shot down over Yugoslavia on July 19, 1944.

"They would take us from house to house, feed us a meal, then, the next day, they would take us to another house," Walpusk said.

They gave us everything they could. I often wondered whether the people in this country would give something like that," he said.

"They treated us. Their hospitality was unmatched. They used to sleep on the floor and give us the beds. If there was any food in the house, one slice of bread, one egg, they gave it to the Americans," Felman said.

Felman is convinced Mihailovich was never a Nazi

collaborator and that America owes the Serbian General a deep debt of gratitude. "Why would he save Americans if he was collaborating with the Germans?"



Editor's Note: For the full story of the "Halyard Mission", see page 27 of the June 1995 "Liberaider". The article above was borrowed from the newsletter of the Air Force Escape and Evasion Society.

## NOTICE

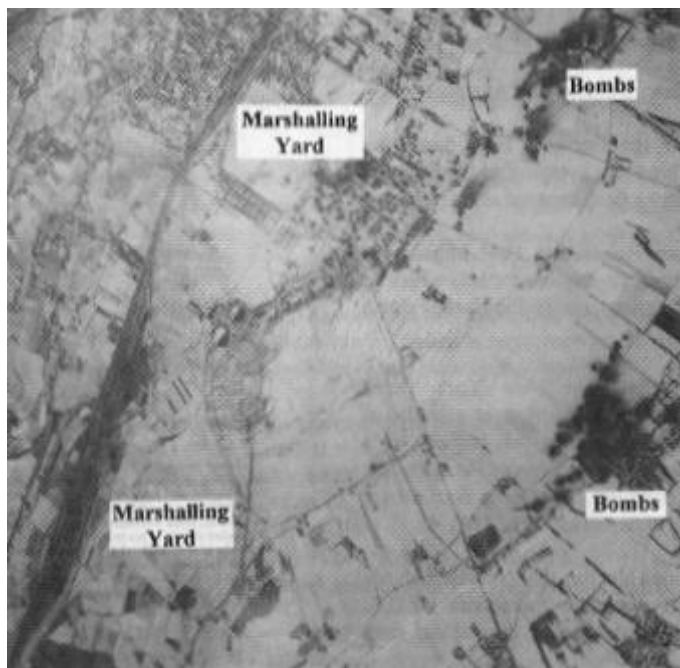
### From the Department of Veterans Affairs

A false and misleading rumor sweeping the nation is plaguing us at the Department of Veteran's Affairs and leading thousands of veterans such as you to write us requesting dividends on insurance that you might have had in force while on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Congress did not pass any new law giving veterans a dividend based on the amount of months their insurance was in force while on active duty. This is a hoax

Also false is a rumor that individuals who are currently serving or who served in the military after 1965 and are or were insured under the SGLI (Servicemen's Group Life Insurance) program are entitled to a refund. There have never been any dividends, rebates or refunds due to surplus funds in the SGLI program.

You can help us to eliminate these rumors by passing this information along to any of your friends or to any veteran's group to which you belong. Thank You.

**MERRY CHRISTMAS****Mission 155 25 December 1944 Wels Marshalling Yard, Austria****Win a few, Lose a few****(See mission summary page 31)****461st BOMB Group (H) 1943-1945, Inc.**

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