



*The 461st*

# Liberaider



Vol. 27, No. 2

DECEMBER 2010

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

## Chicago, IL – 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Reunion - 2010

Thursday, September 23, was arrival and check in day.

The registration table was open all day as was the hospitality room with refreshments and display tables. Dave, Mary Jo, Barbara, and Linda had everything in order and check in was quick and easy.

The General Meeting was held at 7:00. Al

*(Continued on page 4)*

## Diary of Warren G. Whaley

This is an account of the daily happenings of his life overseas (transcriber's comments are in parenthesis).

(My father wrote in cursive and used an ink pen with a medium tip and some of the words he wrote are hard to decipher. I wish he was still around to help me decipher them.

I am sitting here transcribing my father's diary while watching "Band of Brothers" on the History Channel. I can only imagine the hell that 101<sup>st</sup>

Airborne went through that 1<sup>st</sup> night and the slaughter of the troops landing on Normandy beach the following morning.)

Travel Notes

10 November 1942—Entered Army at age 16 (lied about age)

1 January 1943—Arrived at Truax Field (Madison, WI)

10 June 1943—Arrived at Buckley Brothers" on the History Channel. I Field (Buckley AFB)

*(Continued on page 9)*

## WWII Mission 19

by  
George Leasure

This was written in August 1945 after we were shot down on 26 March 1945.

I hope my memory was accurate, but it may not be 100%.

On 26 March 1945, I was flying as both bombardier and navigator on my 19<sup>th</sup> mission. We were briefed to bomb the marshaling yards at Straszhof, Austria about 14 kilometers north of Vienna. The group formed as usual over Italy, flew north and east to Yugoslavia, then north along the Danube to Budapest, Hungary.

Our number one engine began to smoke about half an hour before we reached Budapest, but we lost no power so we continued on the mission.

We flew over the target at the altitude of 19,000 feet and encountered a moderate amount of flak. The photographer was hit in the right arm and several holes were made in the plane.

We left the target all right and started south. The group had to drop to 17,000 feet to fly formation because of the lowering cirri-stratus clouds. Just after we crossed the Danube River between

*(Continued on page 22)*

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# *Taps*

May they rest in peace forever

Please forward all death notices to:

Hughes Glantzberg

P.O. Box 926

Gunnison, CO 81230

editor@461st.org

## **764th Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>DOD</b></u>
Dorn, Dale A.	Salem, OR	612	08/27/2010
Freeman, Richard E.	Webster, NY	1092	09/22/2010
Grebe, LeRoy	Bellville, TX	764	
Rock, William E.	Glenshaw, PA	757	10/15/2009

## **765th Squadron**

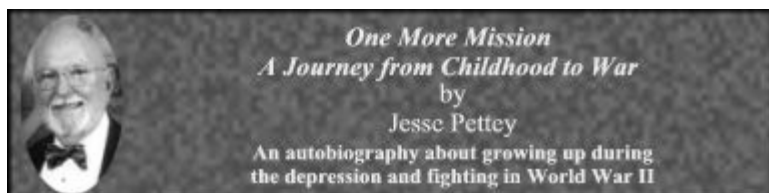
<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>DOD</b></u>
Duchinsky, Louis F.	St. Louis, MO	757	05/24/2010
Sipply, James E.	Woodlyn, PA	757	06/29/2010
Tamea, Conrad D.	Harleysville, PA	757	06/14/2009
Van Nostrand, James	Jackson, WY	940	08/20/2010

## **766th Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>DOD</b></u>
Crowningshield, John W.	Rockport, MA	911	11/04/2009
Feldman, David I.	Woodbury, NY	1034	07/23/2010
Poulin, Jean R.	Lewiston, ME	747	06/15/2010
Sproul, Alexander E.	Staunton, VA	3100	07/12/2010

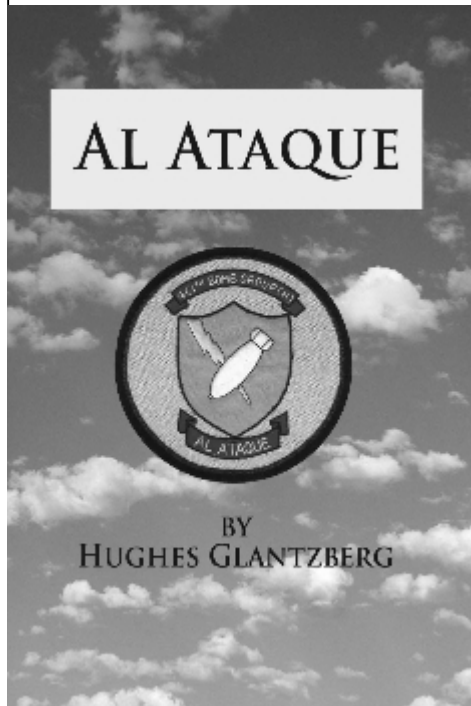
## **767th Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>DOD</b></u>
Callenberger, Kenneth R.	Orlando, FL	1034	10/29/2010
Rollins, Williams G.	Lake City, SC	612	03/16/2009
Rush, Martin A. Jr.	Middletown, OH	1092	10/25/2010
Seagrave-Smith, Henry	Templeton, CA	612	11/08/2006
Suits, Robert N.	Genoa, IL	612	09/09/2010
Wiest, William H.	Gainesville, FL	757	09/15/2007



With a special interest in World War II and the 461st Bombardment Group in particular, I found this book excellent. Most of the men who fought during WWII were in their late teens and early 20s. It's amazing to be able to read about their activities. Liberaider Editor

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and Xlibris (at a 15% discount) (<http://www2.xlibris.com/bookstore/bookdisplay.asp?bookid=11013>).



## Al Ataque

History / General

Trade **Paperback**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$26.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

ISBN: **0-595-41572-5**

413 Pages

On Demand Printing

Available from Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble, Ingram Book Group, Baker & Taylor, and from iUniverse, Inc

To order call 1-800-AUTHORS

Trade **Hardcopy**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$36.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

ISBN: **0-595-86486-4**

Al Ataque is an excellent book that describes the preparation a bomb group goes through before being deployed overseas as well as the problems of shipping over five thousand men and supplies along with some eighty B-24 aircraft from a stateside base to a foreign country. The book details the establishment of Torretta Field which was used by the 461st for the duration of the war in Europe. The 461st Bomb Group flew two hundred and twenty-three combat missions between April 1944 and April 1945. Each of these is described in the book. Personal experiences of veterans who were actually part of the 461st are also included.



## Music Bravely Ringing

by

Martin A. Rush

767th Squadron

This is the story of a small town boy who, during WWII, wandered onto the conveyor belt that turned civilians into bomber pilots. Initially awed and intimidated at the world outside his home town, he began to realize that this was an opportunity to have a hand in stimulating and challenging dealings larger than he had expected. He had a few near-misses, but gradually began to get the hang of it. His story is that like the thousands of young men who were tossed into the maelstrom of war in the skies. He was one of the ones who was lucky enough to live through it.

This book is at the publisher now and should be available early in 2008.

*(Continued from page 1)*

St. Ives officially handed over the meeting to Hughes Glantzberg after the nominations for the Officers and Board were approved. See minutes for all of the new officers, board members and advisors.

Friday, September 24

Friday morning we headed out to the Chicago Field Museum. It was a little longer getting there than anticipated with the ever-present freeway traffic. But it



Sue

was worth the drive as the museum is really great with Sue, a Tyrannosaurus Rex, front and center on display. Our guide/docent gave us a varied and informative tour touching upon part of the Egyptian



Pawnee Indian Lodge

mummy display, a Pawnee Indian lodge (a native Nebraskan tribe so extra interesting for us Nebraskans) along with other Native American displays ranging from Alaska to the Pacific Northwest on south, and various animal dioramas grouped by continent. We ended in the African animal area where we had a great sack lunch and a little relaxation be-



Lunch at the Field Museum

fore boarding the buses again to head to the Willis Tower (formerly Sears tower).

At the Willis Tower we got in line for the elevator trip up to the 103<sup>rd</sup> floor observation deck. The weather cooperated very well as it had been cloudy



View of Field Museum, Aquarium and Planetarium

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

earlier in the day but by the time we arrived at the Tower it had cleared and there were magnificent views from every side. Even more fun, were the glass bump-outs built so that you can literally walk out on glass and look straight down to the street! That was awesome.

Friday evening was the Squadron dinner. We enjoyed a tasty pasta buffet but while trying to hold the cost down a salad and desert was overlooked on the buffet menu. However, Jim Watson and Kristi volunteered to go to Costco and pickup some ice cream which was delivered to the hospitality room on the QT. Once everyone found out about the ice cream, we had a great crowd and a great time talking and enjoying our dessert long into the evening. Thanks a lot Jim and Kristi!

Saturday, September 25

The buses left at 8:45 on this day and headed toward



Anita Dee

Lake Michigan and our architectural tour of downtown Chicago via the Chicago River on the Anita Dee. Again the weather smiled on us as it was sunny, if brisk, during our tour. Heading north on the water got a little chilly but overall the conditions were very tolerable with plenty of room either out in the open or under cover. We saw many beautiful and interesting buildings of historic interest and our guide was very knowledgeable. It was a fun trip on

the water.

When we arrived back at the Marina, we were treated to lunch at the Chicago Yacht Club. We had a delicious luncheon buffet with soup, sandwiches,



Lunch at the Chicago Yacht Club

salads, cookies and (my personal favorite) home-made potato chips. It was yummy and a unique experience. The veterans had their picture taken there and each of them received an 8 x 10 photograph of the group later that evening thanks to Mary Jo Belak.

That evening was the Group Banquet with a sit down dinner. We had a good time with food and friends and thoroughly enjoyed the evening.

Sunday, September 26

Our last function, all too soon, was the Memorial Breakfast which was another buffet. President Hughes Glantzberg spoke briefly and thanked everyone for coming and those who helped put the weekend together. After breakfast, we sang some songs. Mary Jo Belak and Jim Watson read the names of those no longer with us. Chaplain Lt. Col. Jerry Gleason gave an address and closing prayer. We hope to see everyone and more next year.

It seemed like the weekend was over all too soon. In a flash, we were saying goodbye to new friends and old friends. See you next year!

## Minutes from General Meeting

### September 23, 2010

Al St. Ives called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm at the Holiday Inn in Oakbrook Terrace, IL.

Al mentioned that there were 19 vets at the reunion this year. There were 33 vets last year. He recognized Orville Hommert from the 484<sup>th</sup> for coming the past few years.

Al asked members of the Nominating Committee to stand and be acknowledged. Hughes Glantzberg as the chair of the Nominating Committee took the floor to discuss the new board nominees.

The nominating committee selected the following:

President – Hughes Glantzberg

Vice-President – Glenda Price

Board –

764<sup>th</sup> – Jeanne Hickey

765<sup>th</sup> – Dave Blake

766<sup>th</sup> – Barbara Alden

767<sup>th</sup> – Jeanne Hickey

Headquarters – Lee Cole

Secretary – Glenda Price

Treasurer – Dave St. Ives

Secretary and Treasurer were previously appointed by the Board and already children.

Advisors (3 Veterans) to the Board

Al St. Ives

Bob Hayes

Ed Baumann was nominated from the floor and added

Jeanne Hickey volunteered to serve as the representative for the 767<sup>th</sup> in addition to the 764<sup>th</sup>.

The Board was approved as nominated. Hughes continued running the meeting.

Dave Blake took the floor and spoke briefly about the weekend activities. Hospitality rooms will be open as much as possible. It is on the first floor.

In the interest of getting more veterans to attend the reunions and due to the ongoing economic situation,

Barbara Alden moved to let all the 461<sup>st</sup> veteran's registration, banquets and tours be free, money to be paid from the treasury. Hotel & transportation to the reunion would be at the veteran's expense. The motion was seconded and approved.

Orville Hommert mentioned that the Air Force Magazine will publish reunion dates.

Hughes talked about the 461<sup>st</sup> website. It is now part of the Fifteenth Air Force website. The history of the Fifteenth Air Force is being expanded as a result. A discussion of veterans' records ensued. For National Archives, the website can be contacted for information. A fire in St. Louis destroyed many records for individuals in the service prior to 1973.

No one seemed sure of what happened to the video records that were created a few years ago by the University of Michigan via the Huizengas.

A request for veteran's stories for future publication in the Liberaider was made.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:45.

Respectfully submitted,  
Glenda Price  
Secretary





## The 461st/484th Bomb Group 2011 REUNION



***Bloomington (Minneapolis/St. Paul), Minnesota***  
**Thursday, September 22nd—Sunday, September 25th**

**Holiday Inn Minneapolis International Airport Hotel  
Crowne Plaza Hotel & Suites**

3 Appletree Square, Bloomington, MN 55425

(This hotel is currently a Holiday Inn but will be upgraded to Crowne Plaza in early 2011. Don't be surprised if you call early and they answer the phone as Holiday Inn.)

Call (800) 465-4329 or hotel direct at (952) 854-9000 and reference GROUP CODE: **BOM** or **461st/484th Bombardment Group Reunion**, to get your discounted rates on or before August 30, 2011. Reservations may be made after August 30<sup>th</sup> at the group rate, **but are subject to room availability**.

Room rate is \$89 per night, plus taxes and **includes a full breakfast buffet for up to two people per room**. Every room has a refrigerator and microwave oven. Room rate is good for three days prior to and after the reunion dates. Suites are \$109 plus tax.

Look for complete details and registration information in your June, 2011 issue of *The Liberaider*. You can also keep up on developments as they happen by visiting your web site: **www.461st.org/**

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

**Officers:**

Hughes Glantzberg, President, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230  
Glenda Price, Vice-President, 1621 Devoe Drive, Lincoln, NE 68506  
Dave St. Yves, Treasurer, 5 Hutt Forest Lane, East Taunton, MA 02718  
Glenda Price, Secretary, 1621 Devoe Drive, Lincoln, NE 68506  
Hughes Glantzberg, Historian, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230

**Directors**

Lee Cole, Hdqtrs Sqdn, 9010 North Grand, Kansas City, MO 64155  
Jeanne Hickey, 764th Sqdn, 535 Gibbs Hill Road, Kane, PA 16735  
Dave Blake, 765th Sqdn, 648 Lakewood Road, Bonner Springs, KS 66012  
Barbara Alden, 766th Sqdn, 2360 Rudat Circle, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670  
Jeanne Hickey, 767th Sqdn, 535 Gibbs Hill Road, Kane, PA 16735  
Director at Large  
Jim Fitzpatrick, San Diego Magazine 1450 Front Street, San Diego, CA 92101  
Hughes Glantzberg, Webmaster, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230  
Dave Blake, Reunion Chairman, 648 Lakewood Road, Bonner Springs, KS 66012  
The 461st Liberaider  
Hughes Glantzberg, Editor, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230  
The Liberaider is published twice yearly on behalf of the members of the organization. Permission is granted to use articles provided source is given.

## President's Corner

For those who don't know, the 461st held an election at the 2010 reunion in Chicago. The criteria for the nominees was that all the officers would be children of veterans. The operation of the Association was being turned over to the children so the veterans could sit back and enjoy the fruit of their labor. The election resulted in the following officers:

President	Hughes Glantzberg
Vice-President	Glenda Price
Treasurer	Dave St. Yves
Secretary	Glenda Price
Headquarters	Lee Cole
764th Squadron	Jeanne Hickey
765th Squadron	Dave Blake
766th Squadron	Barbara Alden
767th Squadron	Jeanne Hickey

These children are dedicated to carrying on the mission of the 461st Bombardment Group Association:

- perpetuate the history of the 461st Bombardment Group (H), Fifteenth Air Force, and the memory of those comrades who gave their lives in the defense of our country.
- arrange annual reunions and provide social and recreational activities for its members - provide a means for the members of the 461st Bombardment Group (H) of the Fifteenth Air Force to continue to readily and more easily associate, communicate and enjoy each other's friendship.
- assist family members and others in learning more about the experiences of the members of the 461st Bombardment Group (H) during World War II, both aircrew and ground crew.

In view of that last mission statement, I would like to ask your help in finding some information about Kenneth Callenberger. Caleb Beech is the granddaughter of Kenneth and is interested in hearing from any one who knew her grandfather or knows of

anything about his crew. Kenneth was the Navigator on the McGinnis crew #109 of the 767th Squadron. If you have any information, please get in touch with Caleb at beechnut463@gmail.com or 34 red Bank Road, McAlisterville, PA 17049, (717) 513-7873.

The Association voted pay the cost for 461st veterans to attend the reunion next year. This is to include: **Registration fee, Friday and Saturday tours** (including lunch during the tour each day), **Squadron Dinner and Group Banquet**. The only cost to the 461<sup>st</sup> veterans will be transportation to and from the reunion and the hotel room itself. Also, there will be no cost involved for anyone attending the Memorial Breakfast as breakfast is included with the sleeping rooms.

I know this issue of the Liberaider is a little late. I had some personal problems just about the time I would have started on this issue and was delayed in getting it out.

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*(Continued from page 1)*

10 July 1943—Arrived at Loury Field (Loury AFB)  
 30 September 1943—Arrived at L.A.A.F. (Laguna Army Air Field)  
 8 November 1943—Made Sergeant upon graduation  
 17 November 1943—Arrived home  
 1 December 1943—Arrived Salt Lake City A.A.B.  
 10 December 1943—Made Gunnery Instructor  
 5 March 1944—Arrived Boise, ID  
 1 June 1944—Home on convalescent furlough  
 25 August 1944—Home on Furlough  
 31 August 1944—Arrived Topeka, KS  
 5 September 1944—Arrived Camp Patrick Henry  
 11 September 1944—Left Camp Patrick Henry for Europe  
 5 October 1944—Arrived Naples, Italy  
 13 October 1944—Arrived 461st/766th Bomb Squadron, Torretta Field, Italy  
 25 December 1944—Celebrated Christmas some place  
 1 January 1945—New Years

Start of Diary entries - Note: Diary only covers his service abroad after arriving in Europe on troop ship.

6 October 1944—Arrived in Naples, Italy after 28 days on the ocean. Docked at noon and went to the 19th Replacement Center. Very muddy and cold.

7-16 October 1944—No entries in diary .

17 October 1944—Arrived in Bari. Now a member of the 461st Bombardment Group, 766th Bomb Squadron. Was fortunate to get a new tent.

18-31 October 1944—No entries in diary.

1 November 1944—First Mission

Target: Graz Marshalling Yards

Place: Vienna, Austria

Altitude: 21,000 feet

Time at target: 1310

Take off: 0901

Landed: 1556

Fighters: None

Flak: Intense and accurate

Damage: Engine #2 (I think) Flathead no. 2 after leaving target. Hole in fuselage to right

and above ball turret. Holes in wings. Holes in bombardier's compartment.

Injuries: None

Plane #: 43

Note: 1st encounter with flak. Scared as hell, lot of praying.

2,3 November 1944—No entries

4 November 1944—Mission #2

Target: Augsburg Marshalling

Place: Augsburg, Germany

Take off: 0750

Time at target: 1203

Altitude: 26,000 feet

Flak: Moderate and inaccurate

Fighters: 6, ME-109

Damage: None

Injuries: None

Landed: 1956

Landed-Emergency: Falconero, Italy

Plane #: 56

Temperature: -51°

Note: Near airlock in engines. Given warning to bail out over Swiss Alps. Foot caught in turret and if I had to bail out as had been ordered it would have been disastrous for me. More praying.

5-10 November 1944—No entries

11 November 1944—Mission #3

Target: Hermann Goering Benzol Plant

Place: Linz, Austria

Take off: 0602

Altitude: 26,000 feet

Flak: Moderate and accurate

Fighters: 5, FW-190

Damage: 6 holes

Injuries: None

Plane #: 41

Note: Came back over northern Italy. Hit by flak. One piece went through. Cut through hydraulic lines and imbedded in mounting ring. Missed me by an inch.

12-16 November 1944—No entries

*(Continued on page 10)*

*(Continued from page 9)*

17 November 1944—Mission #4

Target: Florisdorf Oil Refinery

Place: Vienna, Austria

Take off: 0738

Altitude: 24,000 feet

Landed: 1408

Fighters: None

Flak: Intense, inaccurate, barrage

Damage: None

Plane #: 40

Note: Flak very inaccurate, closest to ship was 500 feet. Morris grounded for this mission.

Target: Vienna Marshalling Yards

Place: Vienna, Austria

Awoke: 0525

Briefed: 0630

Take off: 0839

Over target: 1240

Landed: 1616

Flak: Intense and accurate

Damage: None

Injuries: None

Altitude: 26,000 feet

Temperature: -49

Note: Back very sore from leaning forward in turret. My penis was frostbitten. I urinated in my pants. I was extremely nervous.

18-19 November 1944—No entries

20 November 1944—Mission #5

Target: Blechhammer Oil Refinery

Place: Blechhammer, Germany

Take off: 0732

Altitude: 24,000 feet

At target: 1220

Landed: 1642

Flak: Intense, accurate

Damage: near pilot, near co-pilot and near radio

Fighters: None

Note: Flak all over the sky. Two runs on the target. Hit by flak in four different locations.

12 December 1944—Arrived at 34th Field Hospital. Diagnosis: Polyuria. Urinated in my pants over Vienna, Austria yesterday. Capt. Sproul MD said it was emotional. It was the third time it has happened. Clean sheets, seems like a long time since I've used them. T-4 Bailey is ward bay. A good Joe. Awfully sleepy and nervous.

13 December 1944—Had interview with Dr. Not allowed to drink water after 6:00 PM. Urinated about every hour. Read a couple of books. Have good chow here. My back hurts.

14 December 1944—Read a couple of books. Having back rubbed. Same urinary frequency.

15 December 1944—Nothing new.

16 December 1944—Ditto.

17 December 1944—Wrote a couple of letters to Dad and Ginna. Read a couple of books. Lost one pound. Same urinary frequency. Went to church.

18 December 1944—Christmas in the air. Red Cross lady has been decorating ward. Gave me a bottle of Drene shampoo. Read about 10 comic books. Back still being rubbed, but feels better. Lost a couple more pounds.

19 December 1944—Dr recommended me for 126th General Hospital at Bari. I leave tomorrow. Played

21 November-8 December 1944—No entries

9 December 1944—Bad weather for past 3 weeks.

Constant stand down.

Awoke: 0430

Briefed: 0540

Take off: 0740

Mission called off: 1235

Note: Emergency call at 1000 feet. Received letter from Helen & Emily. 1 package.

Briefed for Linz.

10 December 1944—

Awoke: 0350

Briefed for Brux: 0535

Take off: 0745

11 December 1944—Mission #6

*(Continued on page 11)*

*(Continued from page 10)*

a few games of ping pong. I had some fresh popcorn with butter. Good.

20 December 1944—Arrived at Bari at noon. I'm in ward C-3 which is general medicine. Dr looked over case history. Do not have same urinary frequency. Nice looking nurses. Very comfortable beds. Very modern hospital. Was an Italian hospital. Lost \$10 playing poker.

21 December 1944—Woke up with a hellava sore throat, cough and cold in nose. Placed in isolation ward. Cute nurse gives me rub downs. Some fun. Just finished "Jacque Casanova".

22 December 1944—Cold improved. Sending me down to psychopathic ward. Said urinary frequency result of "combat fatigue or psychoneurosis.

23 December 1944—Interviewed with psychiatrist. Said I'm very emotional and will stay under observation.

24 December 1944—Nurses were around singing Christmas carols. I read some and went to bed early. Went to church.

25 December 1944—Christmas Day. Red Cross gave each of us a small present. Had a swell Christmas dinner, USO show and movie.

26 December 1944—Gave Christmas party to German, Yugoslavian and Polish refugees. They are Jewish orphans and are on their way to Palestine. One little Yugoslavian gal was with Partisans for 1½ years.

27 December 1944—Read some today and saw a movie. Fellows came to see me. Had ice cream for supper. Played ping pong. Received 16 letters.

28 December 1944—Dr said today I would be leaving tomorrow for duty. Saw the movie "5 Graves to Cairo". Read a couple of books.

29 December 1944—Returned from Bari today. Stopped at the 34th Field Hospital and said hello. Red Cross lady brought me to Squadron. Saw fel-

lows and officers. Received 3 Christmas packages. I received a letter from Ginna (sister-in-law), 1 from Emily (sister), and 1 from Aunt Abec. No mission tomorrow.

30 December 1944—Went down to clean guns on ship 55. Came back and received packages—two from Franz and one from Grace.

31 December 1944—Went to church this morning. Chaplain Rasmussen. Snowed all day. Very cold. Received two packages from Dad and a letter from Ginna. Also, one letter from Eddie Saylor. Had a couple of drinks to celebrate the New Year.

1 January 1945—Had very good chow. Turkey and all the trimmings. Played pinochle this afternoon. Bingo tonight. Received a Christmas card from Emily (sister). Wrote six letters today. Rations issued today. Shall read Bible and go to bed.

2 January 1945—Was on detail today digging a ditch around the mess hall. Received ten letters and one package today. Played pinochle tonight. Got a new summer flying suit.

3 January 1945—Slept until 1000. Cleaned up my bed. Played a couple of games of pinochle. Also had a caricature made. Had a portrait made of Helen's (other sister) picture. Will be ready the 8th. Turned in my cleaning.

4 January 1945—Had to go to gunnery class this afternoon. Received two letters from Emily. We had midnight snack of salami on toast and crackers and tea. Cleaned stove pipe. Got two cans of water.

5 January 1945—Slept until 1000. Had chow at 1100. Received laundry. No school today. No letters. Played pinochle. That T.P. looks like he hasn't showered for a month. Read a couple of stories.

6 January 1945—Wrote four letters tonight. Played pinochle. Received rations today. No mail. Cleaned up tent. That Troth has been going to bed with hat on. Zig got a double run in pinochle. Shall read the Bible and retire.

*(Continued on page 12)*

*(Continued from page 11)*

7 January 1945—Went to morning chow. Read and played pinochle. No mail today. Wrote two letters. I had some excitement. A tent burned up. Had fried spam sandwiches and apricots before retiring. Also, went to church this morning.

8 January 1945—Cleaned guns on ship 55. Henry's first anniversary tonight. Celebrated with snack. Played pinochle. Received letter from Leroy Wilcox. Answered it.

9 January 1945—Was runner today. Lt. Hall, Ursem and Troth went to Gioia. Rained all afternoon. No mail. Played Hearts. Played bingo in Service Club. Won \$8.00.

10 January 1945—Snowed all day. It is now 11:00 and 1½ feet of snow. No mail. Lt. Coangelo came back from Bari. Pilot, co-pilot and engineer still in Gioia. Saw Pat O'Brian and Carol Landis in "Secret Command". Very good. Wrote four letters.

11 January 1945—Slept until 1030. Went to town at 1300. Had ice cream & cookies at Red Cross. Bought a basket. Had some champagne. Very good. No mail today. Pilot, co-pilot and engineer still in Gioia. Retiring at 1940.

12 January 1945—Went to town today. Got a souvenir and my battle jacket. Saw a show, "Follow the Boys". Good. Bought a kerosene lamp and ash tray. No mail today.

13 January 1945—Received rations today. Cleaned guns on ship 55. New rumor: We are supposed to have only 25 sorties. Ship 54 is now our ship. No mail today. My throat feels like I have been swallowing razor blades. I feel lousy.

14 January 1945—Went to church this morning. Very good sermon. No mail today. Saw Coleman and Marlena Dietrich in "Kismet".

15 January 1945—Mission #7

Target: Triviso, Italy  
Take off: 0830  
Landed: 1535  
Flak: moderate and inaccurate

Fighters: None

Injuries: None

Damage: None

Altitude: 20,000-24,000 feet

Over target: 1340

Ship #: 49

Note: Briefed for Vienna but Mickey apparatus would not work so bombed this target which was 3rd alternate. Temperature -45°. No mail today.

16 January 1945—Hurray. Hurrah. Yippee. Hot dog. 2 letters today. One from Virginia, one from Mrs. Kelly. Received Air Medal today. Formation in rain. Electricity on again. Saw Andrew Sisters in "Always a Bridesmaid". Wrote a letter to Ginna and Dad.

17 January 1945—T.P. received a letter & picture from Hazel today. He's still drooling. Received 5 letters. Wrote four letters. Had some popcorn.

18 January 1945—Received one Christmas card from Helen & wrote one letter. Also a letter from Helen. Wrote a letter to Stan. Cleaned the guns on ship 55. Had coffee & donuts at Red Cross on line. Saw Abbot & Costello in "Lost in a Harem". Very funny.

19 January 1945—Went to town & took my cleaning. Saw one of the fellows on my first crew. Saw G.I. Training film. Received 2 letters from Ginna. Played pinochle. Wrote a couple of letters.

20 January 1945—Cleaned guns on ship 55. Read the "Punch & Judy Murders". Very good. Fixed air mail for sending home. No mail today. Wrote Pop a letter. Mission tomorrow.

21 January 1945—Awoke 0425. Briefed 0555. Was just taking off & red flares gave us stand down. Returned & went to church. Slept this afternoon. Had chicken & ice cream for chow. Received one letter from Emily.

22 January 1945—Awoke 0415. Briefed at 0545. Stand-down at 0615. Snowed all last night & this morning. Some rain. No mail today. Played pi-

*(Continued on page 13)*

*(Continued from page 12)*

nochle. Am going to see, "Stage Coach".

23 January 1945—Awoke 0445. Briefed on Vienna at 0555. Mission stand-down at 0630. Slept until 1100. Went to town in afternoon. Saw "Hollywood Canteen".

24 January 1945—Cleaned guns on ship 48. Received 4 letters, 1 from Emily & 1 from Aunt Kate. Saw "In the Meantime Darling" Jeanne Crain. No good. Played some pinochle.

25 January 1945—Went to town this morning. Played some ping pong at Red Cross. Had 2 pictures taken. Got my cleaning. Received 3 letters. 1 from Christine, 1 from Helen, 1 from Mrs. Wilcox. Saw Donald O'Connor & Peggy Ryan in "The Merry Monahans". Wrote Christine 1 letter.

26 January 1945—Read this morning. Played pinochle & ping pong in the afternoon. Received three letters.

27 January 1945—Received a letter from Kay. 1 from Mary B. Received another letter from Kay. Answered one. Read a book. Played pinochle.

28 January 1945—Received a letter from Emily. Went to church. Went to town to get paid. Had a squad lecture on censorship. Picked for journey to Capri tomorrow.

29 January 1945—Weather did not permit us to leave for Capri. Stayed in tent and read. Went to bed early. Received 2 letters.

30 January 1945—Weather did not permit us to go to Capri. Actually we are on leave. Wrote letters and read. Unpacked. Received 1 letter from Dad.

31 January 1945—Called off & cancelled till Monday. Lost all my dough in a crap game. Scheduled for mission tomorrow. Received 1 letter.

1 February 1945—Mission #8

Awoke: 0450

Briefed: 0615

Target: Graz Marshalling Yards

Place: Graz, Austria

Take off: 0920

Time over target: 1320

Landed: 1700

Fighters: None

Injuries: None

Flak: Moderate and inaccurate

Damage: None

Altitude: 26,000 feet

Temperature: -35 to -40°

Note: Briefed for Moosbierbaum, Austria, but because of numerous aircraft accidents on ground slowed us up to 1½ hours late. 1 heated suit worked good - was not cold.

Lower back hurt and went on sick call. It is now 2000 and am retiring. No mail today.

Mission was all screwed up.

2 February 1945—Was paid this morning. Cleaned guns on ship 6. Received a V-mail from Aunt Alice and Mayoue. Played 2 games pinochle. The fellows made Sergeant today. No promotion for me.

3 February 1945—Went to a show. Read a book. Received no mail. Played some pinochle.

4 February 1945—Was on detail today. Shoveled sand and rock. My back is hurting me. Supposed to go to Capri tomorrow. Received one letter from Emily.

5 February 1945—Left group at 1000. Arrived Naples 1050. Had lunch at a nice hotel in Naples. Left Naples at 1300. Arrived Capri 1530. Registered at El Capano Hotel. Spring mattress, sheets, desks and running water. Sure is swell. I ate at La Palma. Tonight the Ritz. Orchestra while we eat. Waiters & waitresses. There is a lot of WAC's here. Went to Luigi's and had champagne. Then to seaside Club for dance. More champagne. Then sat in front of hotel and drank three bottles of champagne. I got drunk and later got sick. Oh my head!

*(Continued on page 14)*



*(Continued from page 13)*

6 February 1945—Awoke with a hangover at 0800. Had breakfast at La Palma. Bought presents for the girls, Kay & Ginna. Spent about \$50 so far. Went to Anacapri in a hack, had quite a lot of fun. Fellows went to Blue Grotto. Guess I'll go tomorrow. It is now 1800. Went to Valentine Club. Returned at 2230 and went to bed.

7 February 1945—Awoke at 0730. Got dressed and went around town before breakfast. Went shopping this morning. Went around Capri. Saw bell of St. Michael. Had dinner with a WAC. Alice was name. Cute girl. Going to bed at 0015.

8 February 1945—Slept late. Did some more shopping. Saw a movie. Had dinner with Lt. Ursem. Movie was "Winged Victory". Came home early, played pinochle & went to bed.

9 February 1945—Awoke 1000. Went to see the Blue Grotto. Beautiful. Took boat trip around Capri. Went to see Marina Picolla. Went to a dance then to a show.

10 February 1945—Got up for breakfast. Went shopping. Saw U.S.O. show. Very good. MC Cy Reeves. Had birthday dinner for Glenn. Very nice, swell cake. Dinner was prepared by Jeanne Newkirk. Had it at a Princess of Italy's home.

11 February 1945—Awoke at 0800. Had breakfast. Looked at war news room. Played T.P. checkers. Went to church. Protestant service in a little German church. Went to show in afternoon. Old Oklahoma. Went to a Mardi Gras. Had a lot of fun. Leaving for Bari tomorrow.

12 February 1945—Awoke 0630. Had last breakfast at La Palma. Franslaw is waiter. Caught boat at 0830. Arrived at Naples at 1100. Left Naples at 1530. Arrived back 1615. Received 13 letters. Went to chow. Sure is different compared to Capri. Going to bed early as I'm tired.

13 February 1945—Awoke at 0600. Had breakfast. Shoveled sand & gravel all day. Received letter from Helen. Also 1 package from folks. Saw a bomber explode after 3 & 4 bombed out. Went to

a V.D. lecture by Chaplain Rasmussen. Mission tomorrow.

14 February 1945—Mission #9

Awoke: 0430

Briefed: 0615

Target: Moosbierbaum Oil refinery

Place, Moosbierbaum, Austria

Take off: 0855

Landed: 1558

Altitude: 25,000 feet

Temperature: -30°

Flak: Moderate and inaccurate

Fighters: None

Damage: None

Ship #: 56

Note: Flew an "L". Really nice. Was surprised at the inaccuracy of the flak today. Usually very rough. Received one letter from Gloria Nurmi.

15 February 1945—Awoke at 0900. Went to A/C recon at 1030. Wrote 5 letters. Cleaned guns on ship #53. Received 2 letters from Ginna. Mission tomorrow. Played some ping pong.

16 February 1945—Mission #10

Awoke: 0500

Briefed: 0600

Target: Rosenheim Marshalling Yards

Place: Rosenheim, Germany

Take off: 0819

Landed: 1608

Flak: None

Fighters: None

Over target: 1245

Ship #: 55

Altitude: 20,000-22,000 feet

Temperature: -30°

Note: Briefed for Neuberg Airdrome but because of overcast we hit 1<sup>st</sup> alternate. Escort did not arrive. However picked up some P-38s. A nice mission. No mail today.

17 February 1945—Awoke 0730. Had a combat picture taken today. Took some snap shots. Went

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to town and mailed Helen & Emily's, Ginna's & Kap presents. Receive one letter from Emily. Said they received Air Medal.

18 February 1945—Awoke at 0700. Went to Group Armament until 1100. Cleaned guns at 1300-1500. Wrote 2 letters. No mail.

19 February 1945—Awoke at 0730 & ate. Washed clothes all day. Rest of fellows went to town. Was going to USO show but Colonel took away transportation. I was tired so went to bed at 2000. 1 letter from Ginna.

20 February 1945—Mission #11

Awoke: 0500

Briefed: 0630

Target: Vienna South Rail Station

Place: Vienna, Austria

Take off: 0840

Landed: 1608

Time over target: 1340

Flak: Intense and accurate

Damage: Hole by co-pilot's foot. Hole thru front plexi-glass between pilot & co-pilot.

Hole thru nose turret.

Injuries: None

Fighters: None

Altitude: 24,000 feet

Temperature: -38°

Ship #: 55

Note: Very accurate flak. Ship 49 missing.

Wolf on ship. No mail today.

22 February 1945—Awoke at 0700. Went to Group Armament at 0800 and shot skeet. I hit 18. We won 82-74. Went to town this afternoon and took film in. Saw a movie. Received 3 letters tonight.

23 February 1945—No entry

24 February 1945—Awoke: 0400. Briefed: 0545. Took off: 0915. Landed: 1500. Bad weather prohibited us from bombing target or its primaries. Returned with bombs. No credit for mission. My ear is very painful.

26 February 1945—Went to see Group Surgeon.

Says ear is ruptured. Cleaned guns on ship 48. Took some snapshots. Received 4 letters & 1 package. Wrote a couple of letters.

27 February 1945—Saw Group Surgeon this morning. Says membrane is ruptured. Muscles beat up. Have to wait and see. Went on guard duty.

28 February 1945—Had the entire day off. Read a book and played some cards. Was paid \$12 for pay. I owed \$12 so I am broke. Saw a show. "Mark of Whistler". R. Dix. Received 3 letters from Ginna. Mission tomorrow. Still grounded.

29 February 1945—Leap year

1 March 1945—Fellows went to Moosbierbaum. I saw Flight Surgeon. Says ear is better. Doesn't feel any different though. Cleaned up tent today and aired clothes. Played some football this afternoon. Received 1 letter from Emily.

2 March 1945—Awoke 0630. Ate breakfast and went on sick call. Ear getting better according to Doc. I had gas mask cleaned. Was on gravel detail all day. Received one letter from Helen & V-Mail from Ginna.

3 March 1945—Ate breakfast and saw Flight Surgeon. Ear better. Read in afternoon and did washing. Had a tail gunners meeting last night. 1 letter from Emily.

4 March 1945—Awoke at 0730. Ate breakfast and saw Flight Surgeon. Will fly soon. Went to church. Cleaned up tent. Read a book. Fellows went to Graz today. No mail.

5 March 1945—No entry

6 March 1945—Awoke at 0500, still grounded but will be on flying status tomorrow. Cleaned up tent for inspection. Crews stood down. Saw a movie tonight, "Gildersleeve's Ghost". Very funny. 1 letter from Bubba (brother), Ginna, Emily.

7 March 1945—Awoke 0430. Briefed 0600. Stand down 0800. Went to movie in town, "Iron Major".

*(Continued on page 16)*

*(Continued from page 15)*

No mail.

8 March 1945—Mission #12

Target: Hagyesalom Marshalling Yards

Place: Hagyesalom, Hungary

Altitude: 23,000 feet

Temperature: -30°

Take off: 0750

Landed: 1503

Over target: 1238

Flak: None

Fighters: None

Damage: None

Injuries: None

Ship #: 40

Note: Target was loaded with cars filled with supplies. Direct hits. 1 letter from Ginna today.

9 March 1945—Awoke 0730. Cleaned up tent. Played football in afternoon. Cleaned guns at 1800. No mail. Mission tomorrow. Saw movie.

10-11 March 1945—No entries

12 March 1945—Mission #13

Target: Florisdorf Oil Refinery

Place: Vienna, Austria

Take off: 0948

Over target: 1402

Landed: 1717

Escort: 50 P-51s

Flak: S-M, Barrage

Fighters: None

Injuries: None

Damage: None

Altitude: 25,000 feet

Temperature: -36°

Ship #: 46

Note: Surprised at inaccuracy of flak. No mail.

13 March 1945—Reported on detail for cleaning of barn. Finished at 1100. Played a little football. Received a letter from Grandma Han and 1 from Helen. Hall & Ursen & Glenn & Zip left for a week to fly cargo to Yugoslavia. Snack bar tonight.

14 March 1945—Went to Group Armament. Came back and ate. Went to town. Had ice cream & cookies. Saw movie & got laundry. Returned and had one letter. Saw movie tonight.

15 March 1945—Stayed in the sack and read. Played some ping pong. Received 2 letters from Ginna.

16 March 1945—Went to town in afternoon had ice cream. Saw some G.I. shorts. Played some craps last night. Lost \$10. Received 3 letters.

17 March 1945—Played ping pong this morning. Got rations this afternoon. Also some G.I. movies. Received 3 letters. Played some craps. Won \$25.

18 March 1945—Cleaned guns on ship 46 at 0930 so was unable to go to church. Played ping pong & read in afternoon. Played some craps at night. Won \$75. No mail.

19 March 1945—Read in the morning. Played ping pong in afternoon & went to town to get money order. Also got stamps & envelopes. Received 1 letter from Ginna. Answered it & sent \$75 money order to her.

20 March 1945—Awoke at 0730. Ate breakfast and cleaned tent. Played ping pong in morning. Was on detail pitching hay in afternoon. Hall, Ursen, Troth & Zip returned from Foggia. Mission tomorrow.

21 March 1945—Mission #14

Target: Graz Marshalling Yards

Place: Graz: Austria

Take off: 1000

Over target: 1356

Landed: 1620

Flak: Moderate and inaccurate

Fighters: None

Injuries: None

Altitude: 22,000 feet

Temperature: -30°

*(Continued on page 18)*

## **461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association Membership**

For membership in the 461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association, please print this form, fill it out and mail it along with your check for the appropriate amount to:

Dave St. Yves  
5 Hutt Forest Lane  
East Taunton, MA 02718

If you have any questions, you can E-Mail Dave at [treasurer@461st.org](mailto:treasurer@461st.org).

The 461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association offers three types of membership:

- **Life Membership** – Men who served in the 461<sup>st</sup> during World War II and their spouses are eligible to join the Association for a one-time fee of \$25.00. This entitles the member to attend the annual reunions held in the fall each year, receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reunion.
- **Associate Membership** – Anyone wishing to be involved in the 461<sup>st</sup> Bombardment Group (H) Association may join as an Associate member. The cost is \$10.00 per year. No renewal notices are sent so it is your responsibility to submit this form every year along with your payment. Associate membership entitles you to attend the reunions held in the fall each year and receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider. You are not a voting member of the Association.
- **Child Membership** – Children of men who served in the 461<sup>st</sup> during World War II are eligible to join the Association as a Child Member. The cost is \$10.00 per year. No renewal notices are sent out so it is your responsibility to submit this form every year along with your payment. Child membership entitles you to attend the reunions held in the fall each year, receive

Type of membership desired:		Life <input type="checkbox"/>	Associate <input type="checkbox"/>	Child <input type="checkbox"/> Father's name:	
First Name:		Last Name:			
Street Address:					
City:			State:		Zip:
Phone number:				E-Mail address:	
Squadron #:		Crew #:		MOS:	ASN:
Check No.:			Amount:	\$	

(Continued from page 16)

Bomb load: 4, 1000# E.P.

Escort: 16 P-38s

Ship #: 40 in #3 position

Note: Briefed for Munich, Germany. Target changed to Bruach before take off. Overcast at Bruach so bombed Graz P.F.F.

22 March 1945—No entry

23 March 1945—Mission #15

Target: Kagan Oil Refinery

Place: Vienna, Austria

Take off: 0730

Landed: 1440

Temperature: -38°

Note: Dropped bombs on a place 40 miles from Vienna. We aborted because of #1 super charger went out. Right foot frost bitten. 7-500#. 2 P-38s escorted us to Zora. No 3 pos. Plane #49.

24 March 1945—Mission #16

Target: Budejovice Marshalling Yards

Place: Budejovice, Czechoslovakia

Take off: 0710

Over target: 1135

Landed: 1459

Flak: None

Fighters: None

Injuries: None

Temperature: -32°

Altitude: 21,000 feet

Bomb load: 36-100#

Note: No escort. Plane #46

25 March 1945—Went to Palm Sunday Services then went to town this afternoon. No movie. Played ping pong. 2 letters.

26 March 1945—Stayed in yesterday. Got rations. Read all day. Wrote some letters. Received 3 letters.

27 March 1945—Got my laundry. Was suppose to have flown but stand down. Read a book. Received letters from Aunt Hallie, 1 from Dad.

28 March 1945—Awoke 0700 and had breakfast.

Read 2 books today. No mail today. Saw a movie, "Animal Kingdom" w/Ann Sheridan, Dennis Morgan, Alexis Smith.

29 March 1945—Had inspection today. Played some ping pong with Rouch. Went to town this afternoon. Picked up Henry's laundry. Saw a G.I. movie and lecture. Very intensely short subject. "Nostradamus IV. Prophesied that Hitler would have his throat cut either by Goering or Himmler. War news is hitting climax. War seems nearly over. I hope so. God grant that we may return to our homes & loved ones. It's a great country that our land of liberty, Amen.

30 March 1945—Stayed in and read today. Played a little catch in the afternoon. Saw a movie, "Gent of Barnaby Rast". Wallace Berry. Good.

31 March 1945—Read some in morning. Went to town in afternoon. Saw a movie, "Strike Up The Band". Judy Garland, Mickey Rooney. Had some cookies and ice cream at Red Cross. Got paid. Won \$60 in crap game.

1 April 1945—Awoke at 0700, ate breakfast, sent \$60 home. Went to church. Played Black Jack in afternoon. Lost \$31. Played Black Jack at night. Lost \$41. Had a cheese sandwich at snack bar.

2 April 1945—Slept until 0900. Played Craps. Won \$8. Went to town & had cookies and ice cream. Saw "Winged Victory". Saw "Mr Sheffington" tonight. Mission tomorrow.

3 April 1945—Played some poker yesterday. Won \$10. Dom went to see Grandma in S. Italy.

4 April 1945—Awoke 0700. Ate breakfast. Stand down. Cleaned tent for inspection by Colonel. Troth, Morris & Brooks flying. Played pinochle with Clyde. Played some poker. Lost \$6. Saw V.D. film then movie, "My Pal Wolf". Mission tomorrow.

5 April 1945—Mission #17

Target: Brescia Marshalling Yards

Place: Brescia, Italy

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(Continued from page 18)

Take off: 0930  
Landed: 1506  
Over target: 1243  
Fighters: None  
Flak: None  
Injuries: None  
Ship #: 55  
Escort: 6 P-51s  
Temperature: -20°  
Altitude: 20,000 feet  
Note: One letter from Emily.

Briefed: 0700  
Target: Troop concentrations  
Place: Lugo, northern Italy  
Take off: 0916  
Landed: 1445  
Over target: 1223  
Flak: Marker  
Fighters: None  
Damage: None  
Injuries: None  
Bomb load: Frags  
Note: One letter from Aunt Aggie.

6 April 1945—Awoke at 0630. Went on detail at 0800. Played some ping pong in afternoon & read. Went to see a show tonight, "Broadway To Bowery". Very good cast & play.

7 April 1945—Received rations today. Rather skimpy. Went to town. Saw "Laura". Gene Tierney, Dana Andrews. Very good mystery. Took in my clothes and picked up Morris. Received 4 letters.

8 April 1945—Awoke at 0730. Ate breakfast. Cleaned up tent. Roosh & crew went to Rome. We flew gunnery mission so didn't get to church. Received 5 letters.

9 April 1945—Mission #18—Italian D-Day

Awoke: 0700  
Briefed: 0945  
Target: Troop concentrations  
Place: Lugo, northern Italy  
Take off: 1230  
Landed 1st time: 1405  
Landed: 1645  
Flak: Slight  
Fighters: None  
Damage: None  
1st Ship #: 48  
2nd Ship #: 67  
Note: 48 had some problems. Reached target in 1 hour but too late for group. Went out twice, and returned twice with bombs. No mail today.

10 April 1945—Mission #19  
Awoke: 0530

11 April 1945—Around all day. Zip returned. Saw "Atlantic City".

12 April 1945—Cleaned guns on ship #50. Got gas.

13 April 1945—Was stunned to hear that Roosevelt died yesterday. Went to town and saw movie. Picked up cleaning.

14 April 1945—Played football this morning. Got rations today. Received four letters. Dad, Helen, Ginna, dada. Answered three.

15 April 1945—Mission #20

Target: Troop concentrations  
Place: Bologna, northern Italy  
Take off: 1055  
Over target: 1425  
Landed: 1700  
Flak: Marker  
Fighters: None  
Injuries: None  
Altitude: 20,000 feet  
Temperature: -25°  
Bomb load: 20 250# RDX  
Ship #: 40  
Note: Henry, Hall, Troth made 25 (missions) today. Received 2 letters, Bob Laird & Aunt Agnes. Lost \$10.

16 April 1945—Mission #21

Target: Troop concentrations  
Place: Bologna, northern Italy  
Take off: 1015

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461st BOMB GROUP  
FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
FOR THE TEN MONTHS ENDED OCTOBER 31, 2010

Cash Balances - January 1, 2010

Checking account	\$520
Vanguard investments	20,403
	20,923

Income

Interest and dividends	510
Unrealized gain on investments	489
Reunion income	12,966
Dues and memberships	578
Total Income	14,543

Expenses

Reunion expenses	15,941
Liberaider expenses	824
	16,765

Net loss for period	(2,222)
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Cash Balances - October 31, 2009

Checking account	301
Vanguard investments	18,400
	\$18,701

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Over target: 1325

Landed: 1610

Ship #: 40

Note: Did not drop bombs due to weather.

Received two letters, one from Stan, one from Emily

Fighters: None

Altitude: 18,500 feet

Ship #: 40

Bomb load: 5 1000#

Note: Saw "The Conspirators" Hedy Lamarr & Paul Henreid. Very good. No mail.

Morris is at dispensary - bad tooth.

17 April 1945—Mission #22

Target: Troop concentrations

Place: Bologna, northern Italy

Flak: None

Fighters: None

24 April 1945—Mission #25

Target: Rovereto Marshalling Yards

Place: Brenner Pass, Italy

Awoke: 0315

Briefed: 0500

Take off: 0700

Landed: 1445

Fighters: None

Flak: Moderate and inaccurate

Altitude: 23,000 feet

Ship #: 55

Note: Flew replacement with Curtis crew.

E.M. off the ball. R.O. pulled off oxygen.

Received 1 letter from Christine, 1 from Aunt Hallie, 2 from Emily. Saw a USO show tonight, "Corn's A Poppin". Had salami sandwich & lemonade.

18 April 1945—Went to show. Saw G.I. shorts.

Saw movie at base, "Bride By Mistake". One letter from Ginna. On guard duty last night. Received package from home. Salami, fish, and crackers.

19 April 1945—Washed hat. Read reports in Intelligence. Slept until 1100. No mail today.

20 April 1945—Mission #23

Target: Lusitania Road Bridge, northern Italy

Place: Po Valley, northern Italy

Take off: 0805

Over target: 1215

Landed: 1405

Flak: None

Fighters: None

Escort: 24 P-51s

Ship #: 41

Note: New movie, "Hollywood Canteen". 62 stars.

25 April 1945—No entry.

26 April 1945—Mission #26

Awoke: 0530

Briefed: 0645

Target: Linz Marshalling Yards

Place: Linz, Austria

Take off: 0850

Over target: 1320

Landed: 1605

Flak: None

Fighters: None

Injuries: None

Ship #: 45-Mic

Bomb load: 10 250#

Note: Made 2 runs. Bombed at 14,000 ft. due to weather. Mts. were 18,000. Good results. No mail.

21 April 1945—Had inspection by the wheels.

Played ping pong & read. No mail.

22 April 1945—Stand down. Went to church. Saw Humphrey Bogart & Lauren Bacall, "To Have And Have Not". No mail.

23 April 1945—Mission #24

Target: Badia Bridge, northern Italy

Place: Po Valley, northern Italy

Take off: 0815

Over target: 1240

Landed: 1410

Flak: Intense and accurate

27-28 April 1945—No entries.

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*(Continued from page 21)*

29 April 1945—Went to church in morning. Went to town in afternoon. Received 3 letters.

30 April 1945—Went to briefing but had stand down. Saw movie, "Home In Indiana". Was paid \$83.40. Won \$10 shooting craps.

1 May 1945—No passes today. Played ping pong and read today. Was promoted to Staff Sergeant. Good deal. Won 17 bucks shooting craps. Paid Burke \$20, Dominick \$10, Glenn \$9. Received one letter from Dad.

2 May 1945—Awake at 0700. Went on detail. Cleaned theater and service club. Was screened by the wheels. Wrote four letters. Received two from Emily. Paper said Hitler is dead. Northern

Italy surrendered all Italian and German troops to-night. Sent \$50 home.

3-4 May 1945—No entries.

5 May 1945—Went to a lecture. Got rations, saw ball game. Received letters from Peg & Kay.

This was last entry in diary.

*(Continued from page 1)*

Vienna and Linz, our number one engine caught fire so we had to feather it and extinguish the flames.

We were forced to fall behind the group but continued to hold our same altitude. Just as we crossed over the first hills of the Alps, we lost power in our number two engine and had to feather it as well. We flew on for approximately fifteen minutes losing some altitude. We intended to reach the other side of the Alps and fly south to an emergency landing field. However as we flew over St. Michaels, Austria, we encountered an intense amount of flak and lost a third engine making it impossible for us to clear the last peaks of the Alps – so Ray, our pilot, told the crew to bail out.

I took off my oxygen mask and hose and my heated flying suit. I was in the nose of the plane just behind the nose gunner position so I opened the hatch. I sat down on the floor of the plane with my feet hanging out. I slid down in the opening a little and let go. I was surprised to find that I was facing upwards with my stomach on the under side of the plane. Something had caught on something and the airplane still had a hold of me. I pulled myself back up and tried it again. This time I made it clear of the plane. I started out feet first and pulled the rip cord. I felt like my head was downward and when the chute opened, my head was at the top. I was sure my back was broken,

however it really wasn't. I had no further trouble on the way down except that the wind was blowing strong and I was afraid that it would swing the chute enough to release the air and let me drop.

Because of the delay in getting free of the airplane, I was separated from the rest of the crew. I did count eight chutes way back from me and I saw Ray bail out and his chute open. I saw the airplane spin into him so Ray was the only one of the crew that didn't survive.

About twelve minutes later I was approaching a small clearing and thought I was in luck to not be landing in the trees. However I forgot that Murphy's Law was alive and well in Europe. There were two trees in the clearing and I landed right between them. This spilled the air out of my chute letting me drop about twelve feet straight down. I was on the ground at 15:30 British double daylight saving time. The fall resulted in jamming both ankles but there were no other injuries.

I took off my parachute and harness and hid them in a snow bank. I had strapped a pair of GI shoes on my parachute harness before I left the airplane but I lost one of them when the chute opened so I had to wear my flying boots.

Traveling generally south and east, I started walking

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up the slope of a mountain. When I reached the top of the mountain, I saw a river which I located on the map as the Murz. I walked southward along the west bank of this river until I reached its junction with the Mur River.

I crossed it on the night of March 28 around midnight. I walked over a bridge into the small town of Kafenberg, Austria.

On 29 March at about 1730, I reached a hotel or hunting lodge on top of a mountain. Up to this time I'd been walking three days and three nights. I hadn't been able to sleep because of the cold and rain and had no food except what was in the escape kit.

I decided to go to this hotel to see if these people would help me. As I approached the building I was met by the biggest meanest looking German Shepard dog I had ever seen. Someone called the dog off and I showed them my identification card. When they learned that I was an American airman, they took me in and gave me food and hot tea.

About a half hour after I went into the hotel six Nazi SS soldiers came there to stay. The lady who ran the place took me to a room upstairs and hid me. Those Nazis stayed in the hotel on the same floor as I was for six days. I stayed in bed most of the time, partly to keep warm, but mostly to keep them from hearing me move around. Several times while the Nazis were there American planes bombed the marshaling yard at Bruch six kilometers away.

After the six Germans had gone I thought my worries would be over but I found that the Germans at St. Michaels had counted the chutes that left the plane and had accounted for all but one American airman so every day they would search through the area for me.

Sometimes I had to stay out in the barn and once the man of the house and I stayed in the woods for two days and one night. Several times I was still in the room and had to hide under the mattress on the bed until the searchers had gone.

The lady that ran the hotel was a Greek and her husband was a Yugoslavian. They really risked their lives by hiding me. On 9 April, they sent me with

three boys of about my age (two of which had deserted from the German army and one from the German navy) to a farmhouse further down the valley not far from the town of Kafenberg.

I stayed at this farmhouse for three days. Before daylight on 12 April, German soldiers (I was told they were SS) approached this house intending to search it so two of the boys helped me evade them before taking me into the town and turning me over to the regular German army.

I was taken to a large factory and kept there all day while the area was bombed by American planes. That evening they took me to a prisoner of war camp just outside of town where I was the only American among the French and Russian prisoners.

After two days I was moved to the prisoner of war camp for Englishmen at Wolsberg. These men were mostly Canadians and Australians and were quite friendly. On the morning of 18 April at 2:30, I was joined by six other American airmen and we were taken from there to Klagenfurt, Austria. We stayed at the air base there and I talked to several Luftwaffe men the Germans had drafted from the Baltic countries. We had some problems understanding each other but they were quite friendly.

The next afternoon at 1630, we left the air base at Klagenfurt and started for the base at Frieman 7 kilometers north of Munich. We traveled on trains for two days and two nights but we did more walking than riding because each time we came to a bridge or a town that had been bombed, we had to get off and walk to another train on the other side. Just before we left Klagenfurt the marshaling yard there was bombed by about forty B-24s.

A number of times while on the train, we had to hide in tunnels until the bombers passed. Several times we had to abandon the train while fighters strafed it. We arrived in Salzberg about 0600 on the morning of 22 April. We stayed there all day because the next train didn't leave until evening. It rained most of the time, but we didn't worry much as we spent most of the time down in an air raid shelter. Two groups of bombers came over, but neither dropped their bombs because of the clouds.

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That night at 1730, we left on a train and reached Rosenheim, Germany at about 0700 the next morning, the 23<sup>rd</sup>. While we were there, two air raids occurred in the daytime and two at night. On the afternoon of 25 April, we walked seven kilometers out of Rosenheim and spent the night in a barn. On the 26<sup>th</sup>, we continued walking toward Munich and covered about ten kilometers and then rode about twenty-five in a truck to the outskirts of Munich. That night we stayed in a barn on the edge of town.

In the afternoon of the 28<sup>th</sup>, we left the barn and traveled out to the airport at Frieman which had been a prisoner of war camp for American airmen. We thought perhaps we were through traveling for a while and could get some rest, but when we arrived we found all the prisoners had been evacuated three weeks before. After staying there all night, we went back to the same barn we'd stayed in before going to Frieman. When we left that morning we could hear the American artillery in the distance. Our guards told us the American troops were only about ten miles away.

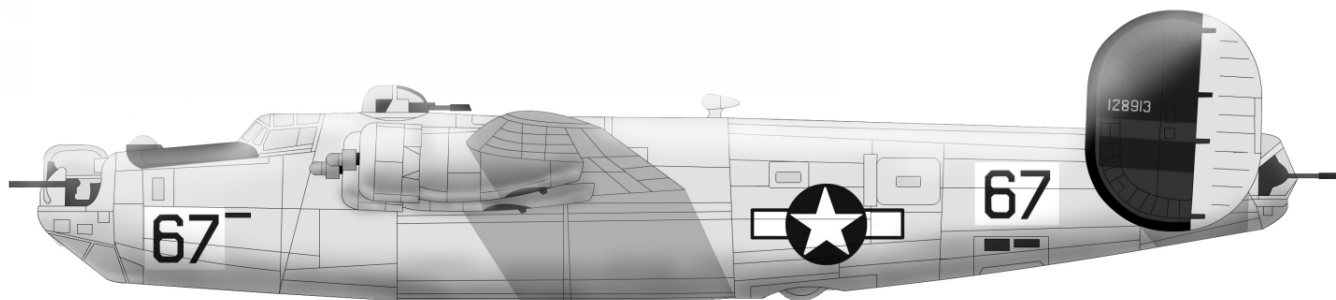
In the evening of the 29<sup>th</sup>, the guards started to take us away from Munich back toward Austria. We complained about this. It was very cold and rainy and we were all cold and tired. The guards were as bad off as we were so they took us to a schoolhouse in Munich

where there were seven hundred English prisoners.

On 1 May at 0730, the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 45<sup>th</sup> divisions of the American 7<sup>th</sup> Army arrived and took over the area. During the night all the German guards disappeared completely. That night the German forces were in the marshaling yard south of the schoolhouse and the American forces were across the river to the north of us. All during the night they were firing at each other and the shells were going over the top of the schoolhouse where we were.

That afternoon we located the Headquarters of the 157<sup>th</sup> Infantry and stayed there the night of the 1<sup>st</sup>. The next morning they loaded us in a truck and took us to a prisoner of war collection center where I was for two days. I had developed some physical problems so I was flown to France. My first stop was at a hospital near Reims and then to one at Verdun. I was released from the hospital on May 21 and was to report to a R.A.M.P. Detachment in Paris. I was able to spend two days sightseeing in Paris before going to Camp Lucky Strike near LaHarve.

On 9 June, myself and 50 enlisted men were taken by truck to LaHarve where we boarded the SS Excelsior which left the harbor at about 2100. At about noon on 18 June, we reached Hampton Rhodes, Virginia and then on to Camp Patrick Henry. We left there on 23 June by train and reached Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas on 25 June.



## **Big Fence**

The following was originally published in "YANK, The Army Weekly"

### **Isolated navigation aid outfit of the Fifteenth Air Force proves the role VHF can play in bringing pilots through tough spots.**

by Sgt. August LOEB  
YANK Staff Correspondent

With the Fifteenth Air Force - When in doubt, call Big Fence. That was the custom among Fifteenth Air Force pilots needing advice or information to pull through a tough spot. Like the B-24 pilot over the Adriatic whose bombs were stuck and he wanted to find a way to get rid of them. He called Big Fence. The first sergeant of Big Fence put in a call to an ordnance outfit and had the information relayed over the air. The bombs were released and the bomber came in without further difficulty.

Big Fence was a VHF (very high frequency) outfit that specializes in getting planes out of trouble. It operated in high isolated spots where a few GIs, working entirely on their own, picked messages out of the air and relayed them to headquarters, just as remote as the out stations, where bits of information were pieced together and put into a form that the pilots could understand and use.

Pilots and others in the Fifteenth have done considerable guessing about the meaning of Big Fence. But Lt. Lloyd C. Willrecht of Campbell, Minn., communications officer, said the name is just a call sign and means nothing. It was chosen in North Africa two years earlier when the 12th Air Force set up VHF operations under Capt. Donald P. White of New York City. The name stuck because it was easy to remember and easy to understand over the air.

The pilots had become so well acquainted with Big Fence procedure that the average conversation was terse and matter-of-fact but when you heard it in the busy plotting room of headquarters it would hit you with a dramatic impact. The talk runs like this:

"Hello Big Fence. This is Restless, D for Dog."

"Hello D for Dog. This is Big Fence."

"Hello Big Fence. This is D for Dog. Have two engines out and am low on gas. Give me a steer to nearest base."

"Hello D for Dog. This is Big Fence. Transmit for homing."

"Hello Big Fence. This is D for Dog. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten."

"Hello D for Dog. This is Big Fence. Steer 180 degrees for Fireplug. You have about 80 miles to go."

"Roger, steer 180 degrees for Fireplug."

Pilots looking for a steer to their home base were the main clients of Big Fence. But the VHF outfit also did a large business in "fixes" (giving locations in reference to some known point) air-sea rescue, weather relays and May Day messages. A May Day call (from the French, "m'aidez," meaning "help me") was the Big Fence equivalent of a four-alarm fire. It made everyone around the place leap into action. Things moved so fast that air-sea rescue had reached some pilots 30 minutes after the May Day signal was given.

"Most pilots surprised you by their calm," said

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S/Sgt. Lester Dolgoff of New York City, plotting room chief. "They talked about low fuel and engine damage in a quiet conversational tone. I know of only one case where a pilot got excited. He signaled, 'Hello Big Fence, I'm lost, without giving either his name or the name of the plane.'"

Lt. Clarence J. Cole of Des Moines, Iowa, a former B-24 pilot and then with the unit, pointed out that pilots often imagine a situation to be worse than it was and that Big Fence tried to put them at ease. "The main reasons for a plane's calling in were the lack of fuel or shot-up controls. By giving them exact information, we tried to make them take a brighter view and helped to keep them from ditching when it wasn't necessary. Emergencies frequently came under control."

In one rare instance Big Fence had vital information for a fighter pilot but no way of getting it to him. He made an emergency landing on a small island in the Adriatic and signaled his position. It happened to be the place where a group of heavies was headed for a practice bombing run. The fighter pilot had bombs exploding all around him but came through unhurt and was picked up by air-sea rescue.

Nerve Center of the Big Fence system was in a 13th century castle that looked as isolated from the world as it was in the Middle Ages. The men lived near the castle and work so many shifts that hours for messing and sleeping followed no definite pattern.

Life in the out stations was even less regular. GIs assigned to DF (directional finder) duty often got snow-bound in trucks and had to exist without water and on slender rations until the weather clears. Cpl. Harry J. Burke of Kansas City, Mo., recalled the time snow was banked

almost to the top of his truck and he had to break a window to start the DF motor. Another DF operator, Cpl. Joseph P. Cavalli of Detroit, Mich., remembered sweating out the mule packs that used to bring rations.

T/Sgt. Leon M. Taylor of Leesville, S.C., wire chief and acting first sergeant, pointed out that getting roads through to mountain tops and keeping them cleared was one of the units toughest jobs. When new stations were opened, everyone pitched in on this and other details.

Looking after all the VHF equipment was 41-year-old M/Sgt. Frank H. Kessler of Ridgely, MD., who had his own radio shop for 14 years. Sgt. Kessler had built many intricate gadgets to keep Big Fence on the air at all times. He put together remote control units and rewired panels with the regular equipment was not available; he used a soldering iron to repair matching stubs and coaxial cables damaged when the wind blew down an antenna mast; designed and perfected a visual bearing meter for the DF stations, and eliminated a type of static caused by the beating of raindrops against the antennas.

Big Fence was without a TO. All its men were on DS from fighter squadrons and so many ratings were held open for the VHF unit. A paper transfer was put through every time a man got promoted, piling up work for S/Sgt. Donald E. Talley of St. Louis, Mo., chief clerk in the orderly room.

Lack of a TO and living in isolation might be expected to produce bitching but it was held down by the compensations the men found in their job.

"When pilots called in and thanked us after completing a tour of duty," Sgt. Dolgoff observed, "we felt pretty good."

# NYC Man, 95, Gets Medal for WWII Rescue

**Mission was the largest air rescue of Americans behind enemy lines in any war**

This article appeared on MSNBC recently and I thought it was worth repeating here.

by Verena Dobnik  
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The U.S. government has recognized the World War II architect of a mission to rescue more than 500 U.S. bomber fliers shot down over Nazi-occupied Serbia — the largest air rescue of Americans behind enemy lines in any war.

George Vujnovich, a 95-year-old New Yorker, is credited with leading the so-called Halyard Mission in what was then Yugoslavia.

The 95-year-old New York City man was awarded the Bronze Star in a ceremony Sunday at Manhat-

tan's St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Cathedral. He received a standing ovation from a crowd of several hundred.

"Better now than never," says Vujnovich, a retired salesman who lives in Queens.

He was an officer of the OSS — the precursor of today's CIA — in Italy when about 500 pilots and other airmen were downed over Serbia in the summer of 1944 while on bombing runs targeting Hitler's oil fields in Romania, according to U.S. government field station files, stored in the National Archives.

The airmen were hidden in various villages by Serbian guerrilla fighter Draza Mihailovich — leader of the Chetniks, whom Yugoslav communist officials

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In this Dec. 28, 1944 photo provided by the U.S. National Archives, OSS Capt. George Vujnovich, right, stands in Bari, Italy with a group of Allied airmen he helped rescue after they were downed over Nazi occupied Serbia. On Sunday, George Vujnovich is to receive the U.S. Bronze Star Medal in New York at the age of 95 for his work as head of the rescue effort.



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considered to be Germany's collaborators.

Vujnovich, a Serbian-American and a Pittsburgh native, was stationed in Bari, Italy.

It was no small feat to convince American officials to allow him to work with Mihailovich on the clandestine mission — dubbed Halyard, meaning a rope used to hoist sails. By then, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had decided to follow British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's lead, abandoning support for Mihailovich in favor of the Yugoslav communists — the strongest grass-roots guerrilla force fighting the invading Nazis and Italian Fascists.

Mihailovich had been a prewar military officer who launched the first Balkan resistance to the Nazis in 1941, before also turning against the communists led by Marshal Josip Broz Tito.

"Vujnovich is the one who sold the mission to U.S. officials, he pushed hard," said U.S. Army Lt. Col. Steven Oluic, a former West Point professor who prepared the award submission for the Department of the Army.

Dozens of U.S. military cargo planes flew in over the months to pick up the airmen as they were downed. Serbian villagers had helped them build an airstrip by the village of Pranjani.

"We owe Vujnovich big time," says Charles L. Davis III, 91, of Church Falls, Va., a retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel who was rescued.

As a bombardier navigator, he was part of a crew of 10 on a B-24 Liberator plane crippled after losing three of its four engines.

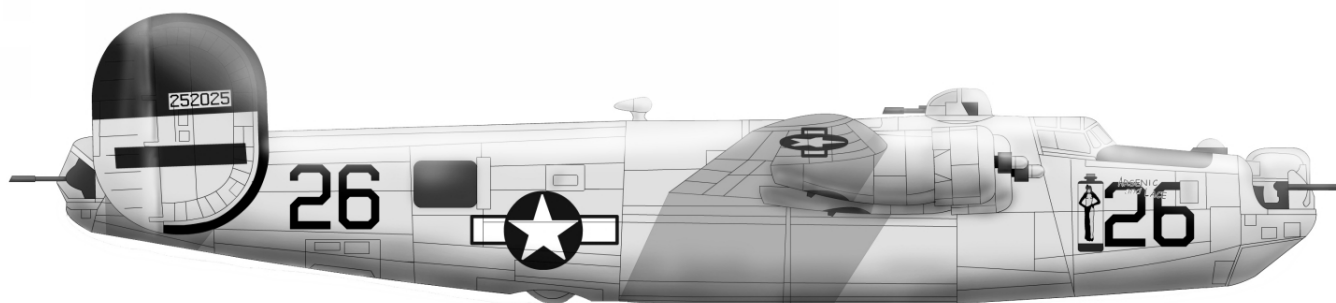
The fliers parachuted into a mountainous region where local farmers brought them to their houses and barns. During the next 66 days, the Americans moved each night to a different location so as not to be captured by the occupying Germans.

Yugoslavia's postwar communist authorities convicted Mihailovich of collaborating with the Nazis in a hasty trial in 1946, and he was executed.

In 1948, U.S. President Harry Truman posthumously bestowed the Legion of Merit on the Serb for the rescue — an honor classified secret by the U.S. State Department for decades, so as not to disrupt the rather friendly U.S. policy toward Yugoslavia.

The secrecy underscores longlasting divisions in Serbia stemming from World War II; some Serbs still believe Mihailovich was a victim of communist repression, while others view him as a traitor.

The story is told in a 2007 book titled "The Forgotten 500," by Gregory Freeman.





# Aircraft #13 on the Doolittle Raid

This is a really excellent firsthand account by the pilot of aircraft #13 on the Doolittle Raid off the Hornet in 1942. Take the time and enjoy a bit of history.

My name is Edgar McElroy. My friends call me "Mac". I was born and raised in Ennis, Texas the youngest of five children, son of Harry and Jennie McElroy. Folks say that I was the quiet one. We lived at 609 North Dallas Street and attended the Presbyterian Church.

My dad had an auto mechanic's shop downtown close to the main fire station. My family was a hard working bunch, and I was expected to work at dad's garage after school and on Saturdays, so I grew up in an atmosphere of machinery, oil and grease. Occasionally I would hear a lone plane fly over, and would run out in the street and strain my eyes against the sun to watch it. Someday, that would be me up there!

I really like cars, and I was always busy on some project, and it wasn't long before I decided to build my very own Model-T out of spare parts. I got an engine from over here, a frame from over there, and wheels from someplace else, using only the good parts from old cars that were otherwise shot. It wasn't very pretty, but it was all mine. I enjoyed driving on the dirt roads around town and the feeling of freedom and speed. That car of mine could really go fast, 40 miles per hour!

In high school I played football and tennis, and was good enough at football to receive an athletic scholarship from Trinity University in Waxahachie. I have to admit that sometimes I daydreamed in class, and often times I thought about flying my very own airplane and being up there in the clouds. That is when I even decided to take a correspondence course in aircraft engines.

Whenever I got the chance, I would take my girl on a date up to Love Field in Dallas. We would watch the airplanes and listen to those mighty piston engines roar. I just loved it and if she didn't, well that was just too bad.

After my schooling, I operated a filling station with my brother, then drove a bus, and later had a job as a machinist in Longview, but I never lost my love of airplanes and my dream of flying. With what was going on in Europe and in Asia, I figured that our country would be drawn into war someday, so I decided to join the Army Air Corps in November of 1940. This way I could finally follow my dream.

I reported for primary training in California. The training was rigorous and frustrating at times. We trained at airfields all over California. It was tough going, and many of the guys washed out. When I finally saw that I was going to make it, I wrote to my girl back in Longview, Texas. Her name is Agnes Gill. I asked her to come out to California for my graduation and oh yeah, also to marry me.

I graduated on July 11, 1941. I was now a real, honest-to-goodness Army Air Corps pilot. Two days later, I married "Aggie" in Reno, Nevada. We were starting a new life together and were very happy. I received my orders to report to Pendleton, Oregon and join the 17th Bomb Group. Neither of us had traveled much before, and the drive north through the Cascade Range of the Sierra Nevada's was interesting and beautiful.

It was an exciting time for us. My unit was the first to receive the new B-25 medium bomber. When I saw it for the first time I was in awe. It looked so huge. It was so sleek and powerful. The guys started calling it the "rocket plane", and I could hardly wait to get my hands on it. I told Aggie that it was really something! Reminded me of a big old scorpion, just ready to sting! Man, I could barely wait!

We were transferred to another airfield in Washington State, where we spent a lot a time flying practice missions and attacking imaginary targets. Then, there were other assignments in Mississippi and Georgia, for more maneuvers and more practice.

We were on our way back to California on December

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7th when we got word of a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. We listened with mixed emotions to the announcements on the radio, and the next day to the declaration of war. What the President said, it just rang over and over in my head, "With confidence in our armed forces, with the un-bounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph. So help us God." By gosh, I felt as though he was talking straight to me! I didn't know what would happen to us, but we all knew that we would be going somewhere now.

The first weeks of the war, we were back in Oregon flying patrols at sea looking for possible Japanese submarines. We had to be up at 0330 hours to warm up the engines of our planes. There was 18 inches of snow on the ground, and it was so cold that our engine oil congealed overnight. We placed big tarps over the engines that reached down to the ground. Inside this tent we used plumbers blow torches to thaw out the engines. I figured that my dad would be proud of me, if he could see me inside this tent with all this machinery, oil and grease. After about an hour of this, the engines were warm enough to start.

We flew patrols over the coasts of Oregon and Washington from dawn until dusk. Once I thought I spotted a sub, and started my bomb run, even had my bomb doors open, but I pulled out of it when I realized that it was just a big whale.

Lucky for me, I would have never heard the end of that!

Actually it was lucky for us that the Japanese didn't attack the west coast, because we just didn't have a strong enough force to beat them off. Our country was in a real fix now, and overall things looked pretty bleak to most folks. In early February, we were ordered to report to Columbus, South Carolina. Man, this Air Corps sure moves a fellow around a lot! Little did I know what was coming next!

After we got settled in Columbus, my squadron commander called us all together. He told us that an awfully hazardous mission was being planned, and then he asked for volunteers. There were some of the guys that did not step forward, but I was one of the

ones that did. My co-pilot was shocked. He said "You can't volunteer, Mac! You're married, and you and Aggie are expecting a baby soon. Don't do it!" I told him that "I got into the Air Force to do what I can, and Aggie understands how I feel. The war won't be easy for any of us."

We that volunteered were transferred to Eglin Field near Valparaiso, Florida in late February. When we all got together, there were about 140 of us volunteers, and we were told that we were now part of the "Special B-25 Project."

We set about our training, but none of us knew what it was all about. We were ordered not to talk about it, not even to our wives..

In early March, we were all called in for a briefing, and gathered together in a big building there on the base. Somebody said that the fellow who is head of this thing is coming to talk to us, and in walks Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle. He was already an aviation legend, and there he stood right in front of us. I was truly amazed just to meet him.

Colonel Doolittle explained that this mission would be extremely dangerous, and that only volunteers could take part. He said that he could not tell us where we were going, but he could say that some of us would not be coming back.

There was a silent pause; you could have heard a pin drop. Then Doolittle said that anyone of us could withdraw now, and that no one would criticize us for this decision. No one backed out! From the outset, all volunteers worked from the early morning hours until well after sunset. All excess weight was stripped from the planes and extra gas tanks were added. The lower gun turret was removed, the heavy liaison radio was removed, and then the tail guns were taken out and more gas tanks were put aboard. We extended the range of that plane from 1,000 miles out to 2,500 miles.

Then I was assigned my crew. There was Richard Knobloch the co-pilot, Clayton Campbell the navigator, Robert Bourgeois the bombardier, Adam Williams the flight engineer and gunner, and me, Mac

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McElroy the pilot. Over the coming days, I came to respect them a lot. They were a swell bunch of guys, just regular All-American boys.

We got a few ideas from the training as to what type of mission that we had signed on for. A Navy pilot had joined our group to coach us at short takeoffs and also in shipboard etiquette. We began our short takeoff practice. Taking off with first a light load, then a normal load, and finally overloaded up to 31,000 lbs. The shortest possible take-off was obtained with flaps full down, stabilizer set three-fourths, tail heavy, full power against the brakes and releasing the brakes simultaneously as the engine revved up to max power. We pulled back gradually on the stick and the airplane left the ground with the tail skid about one foot from the runway. It was a very unnatural and scary way to get airborne! I could hardly believe it myself, the first time as I took off with a full gas load and dummy bombs within just 700 feet of runway in a near stall condition. We were, for all practical purposes, a slow flying gasoline bomb!

In addition to take-off practice, we refined our skills in day and night navigation, gunnery, bombing, and low level flying. We made cross country flights at tree-top level, night flights and navigational flights over the Gulf of Mexico without the use of a radio. After we started that short-field takeoff routine, we had some pretty fancy competition between the crews. I think that one crew got it down to about 300 feet on a hot day. We were told that only the best crews would actually go on the mission, and the rest would be held in reserve. One crew did stall on take-off, slipped back to the ground, busting up their landing gear. They were eliminated from the mission. Doolittle emphasized again and again the extreme danger of this operation, and made it clear that anyone of us who so desired could drop out with no questions asked. No one did.

On one of our cross country flights, we landed at Barksdale Field in Shreveport, and I was able to catch a bus over to Longview to see Aggie. We had a few hours together, and then we had to say our goodbyes. I told her I hoped to be back in time for

the baby's birth, but I couldn't tell her where I was going. As I walked away, I turned and walked backwards for a ways, taking one last look at my beautiful pregnant Aggie.

Within a few days of returning to our base in Florida we were abruptly told to pack our things. After just three weeks of practice, we were on our way. This was it. It was time to go. It was the middle of March 1942, and I was 30 years old. Our orders were to fly to McClelland Air Base in Sacramento, California on our own, at the lowest possible level. So here we went on our way west, scraping the tree tops at 160 miles per hour, and skimming along just 50 feet above plowed fields. We crossed North Texas and then the panhandle, scaring the dickens out of livestock, buzzing farm houses and many a barn along the way. Over the Rocky Mountains and across the Mojave Desert dodging thunderstorms, we enjoyed the flight immensely and although tempted, I didn't do too much dare-devil stuff. We didn't know it at the time, but it was good practice for what lay ahead of us. It proved to be our last fling. Once we arrived in Sacramento, the mechanics went over our plane with a fine-toothed comb. Of the twenty-two planes that made it, only those whose pilots reported no mechanical problems were allowed to go on. The others were shunted aside.

After having our plane serviced, we flew on to Alameda Naval Air Station in Oakland. As I came in for final approach, we saw it! I excitedly called the rest of the crew to take a look. There below us was a huge aircraft carrier. It was the USS Hornet, and it looked so gigantic! Man, I had never even seen a carrier until this moment. There were already two B-25s parked on the flight deck. Now we knew! My heart was racing, and I thought about how puny my plane would look on board this mighty ship. As soon as we landed and taxied off the runway, a jeep pulled in front of me with a big "Follow Me" sign on the back. We followed it straight up to the wharf, alongside the towering Hornet. All five of us were looking up and just in awe, scarcely believing the size of this thing. As we left the plane, there was already a Navy work crew swarming around attaching cables to the lifting rings on top of the wings and the fuselage. As we walked towards our quarters, I looked

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back and saw them lifting my plane up into the air and swing it over the ship's deck. It looked so small and lonely.

Later that afternoon, all crews met with Colonel Doolittle and he gave last minute assignments. He told me to go to the Presidio and pick up two hundred extra "C" rations. I saluted, turned, and left, not having any idea where the Presidio was, and not exactly sure what a "C" ration was. I commandeered a Navy staff car and told the driver to take me to the Presidio, and he did. On the way over, I realized that I had no written signed orders and that this might get a little sticky. So I walked into the Army supply depot and made my request, trying to look poised and confident. The supply officer asked "What is your authorization for this request, sir?" I told him that I could not give him one. "And what is the destination?" he asked. I answered, "The aircraft carrier, Hornet, docked at Alameda." He said, "Can you tell me who ordered the rations, sir?" And I replied with a smile, "No, I cannot." The supply officers huddled together, talking and glanced back over towards me. Then he walked back over and assured me that the rations would be delivered that afternoon. Guess they figured that something big was up. They were right. The next morning we all boarded the ship.

Trying to remember my naval etiquette, I saluted the Officer of the Deck and said "Lt. McElroy, requesting permission to come aboard." The officer returned the salute and said "Permission granted." Then I turned aft and saluted the flag. I made it, without messing up. It was April 2, and in full sunlight, we left San Francisco Bay. The whole task force of ships, two cruises, four destroyers, and a fleet oiler, moved slowly with us under the Golden Gate Bridge. Thousands of people looked on. Many stopped their cars on the bridge, and waved to us as we passed underneath. I thought to myself, I hope there aren't any spies up there waving.

Once at sea, Doolittle called us together. "Only a few of you know our destination, and you others have guessed about various targets. Gentlemen, your target is Japan!" A sudden cheer exploded among the men. "Specifically, Yokohama, Tokyo, Nagoya,

Kobe, Nagasaki and Osaka. The Navy task force will get us as close as possible and we'll launch our planes. We will hit our targets and proceed to airfields in China." After the cheering stopped, he asked again, if any of us desired to back out, no questions asked. No one did, not one. The ship's Captain then went over the intercom to the whole ship's company. The loudspeaker blared, "The destination is Tokyo!" A tremendous cheer broke out from everyone on board. I could hear metal banging together and wild screams from down below decks. It was quite a rush! I felt relieved actually. We finally knew where we were going.

I set up quarters with two Navy pilots, putting my cot between their two bunks. They couldn't get out of bed without stepping on me. It was just fairly cozy in there, yes it was. Those guys were part of the Torpedo Squadron Eight and were just swell fellows. The rest of the guys bedded down in similar fashion to me, some had to sleep on bedrolls in the Admiral's chartroom. As big as this ship was, there wasn't any extra room anywhere. Every square foot had a purpose. A few days later we discovered where they had an ice cream machine!

There were sixteen B-25s tied down on the flight deck, and I was flying number 13. All the carrier's fighter planes were stored away helplessly in the hangar deck. They couldn't move until we were gone. Our Army mechanics were all on board, as well as our munitions loaders and several back up crews, in case any of us got sick or backed out. We settled into a daily routine of checking our planes. The aircraft were grouped so closely together on deck that it wouldn't take much for them to get damaged. Knowing that my life depended on this plane, I kept a close eye on her.

Day after day, we met with the intelligence officer and studied our mission plan. Our targets were assigned, and maps and objective folders were furnished for study. We went over approach routes and our escape route towards China. I never studied this hard back at Trinity. Every day at dawn and at dusk the ship was called to general quarters and we practiced finding the quickest way to our planes. If at

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any point along the way, we were discovered by the enemy fleet, we were to launch our bombers immediately so the Hornet could bring up its fighter planes. We would then be on our own, and try to make it to the nearest land, either Hawaii or Midway Island .

Dr. Thomas White, a volunteer member of plane number 15, went over our medical records and gave us inoculations for a whole bunch of diseases that hopefully I wouldn't catch. He gave us training sessions in emergency first aid, and lectured us at length about water purification and such. Tom, a medical doctor, had learned how to be a gunner just so he could go on this mission. We put some new tail guns in place of the ones that had been taken out to save weight. Not exactly functional, they were two broom handles, painted black. The thinking was they might help scare any Jap fighter planes. Maybe, maybe not.

On Sunday, April 14, we met up with Admiral Bull Halsey's task force just out of Hawaii and joined into one big force. The carrier Enterprise was now with us, another two heavy cruisers, four more destroyers and another oiler. We were designated as Task Force 16. It was quite an impressive sight to see, and represented the bulk of what was left of the U.S. Navy after the devastation of Pearl Harbor. There were over 10,000 Navy personnel sailing into harm's way, just to deliver us sixteen Army planes to the Japs, orders of the President.

As we steamed further west, tension was rising as we drew nearer and nearer to Japan. Someone thought of arming us with some old .45 pistols that they had on board. I went through that box of 1911 pistols, they were in such bad condition that I took several of them apart, using the good parts from several useless guns until I built a serviceable weapon. Several of the other pilots did the same. Admiring my "new" pistol, I held it up, and thought about my old Model-T.

Colonel Doolittle called us together on the flight deck. We all gathered round, as well as many Navy personnel. He pulled out some medals and told us how these friendship medals from the Japanese gov-

ernment had been given to some of our Navy officers several years back. And now the Secretary of the Navy had requested us to return them. Doolittle wired them to a bomb while we all posed for pictures. Something to cheer up the folks back home!

I began to pack my things for the flight, scheduled for the 19th. I packed some extra clothes and a little brown bag that Aggie had given me, inside were some toilet items and a few candy bars. No letters or identity cards were allowed, only our dog-tags. I went down to the wardroom to have some ice cream and settle up my mess bill. It only amounted to \$5 a day and with my per diem of \$6 per day, I came out a little ahead. By now, my Navy pilot roommates were about ready to get rid of me, but I enjoyed my time with them. They were alright. Later on, I learned that both of them were killed at the Battle of Midway. They were good men. Yes, very good men.

Colonel Doolittle let each crew pick our own target. We chose the Yokosuka Naval Base about twenty miles from Tokyo. We loaded 1450 rounds of ammo and four 500-pound bombs. A little payback, direct from Ellis County, Texas! We checked and re-checked our plane several times. Everything was now ready. I felt relaxed, yet tensed up at the same time. Day after tomorrow, we will launch when we are 400 miles out. I lay in my cot that night, and rehearsed the mission over and over in my head. It was hard to sleep as I listened to sounds of the ship.

Early the next morning, I was enjoying a leisurely breakfast, expecting another full day on board, and I noticed that the ship was pitching and rolling quite a bit this morning, more than normal. I was reading through the April 18th day plan of the Hornet, and there was a message in it which said, "From the Hornet to the Army - Good luck, good hunting, and God bless you." I still had a large lump in my throat from reading this, when all of a sudden, the intercom blared, "General Quarters, General Quarters, All hands man your battle stations! Army pilots, man your planes!!!" There was instant reaction from everyone in the room and food trays went crashing to the floor. I ran down to my room jumping through the

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hatches along the way, grabbed my bag, and ran as fast as I could go to the flight deck. I met with my crew at the plane, my heart was pounding. Someone said, "What's going on?" The word was that the Enterprise had spotted an enemy trawler. It had been sunk, but it had transmitted radio messages. We had been found out!

The weather was crummy, the seas were running heavy, and the ship was pitching up and down like I had never seen before. Great waves were crashing against the bow and washing over the front of the deck. This wasn't going to be easy! Last minute instructions were given. We were reminded to avoid non-military targets, especially the Emperor's Palace. Do not fly to Russia, but fly as far west as possible, land on the water and launch our rubber raft. This was going to be a one-way trip! We were still much too far out and we all knew that our chances of making land were somewhere between slim and none. Then at the last minute, each plane loaded an extra ten 5-gallon gas cans to give us a fighting chance of reaching China.

We all climbed aboard, started our engines and warmed them up, just feet away from the plane in front of us and the plane behind us. Knobby, Campbell, Bourgeois and me in the front, Williams, the gunner was in the back, separated from us by a big rubber gas tank. I called back to Williams on the intercom and told him to look sharp and don't take a nap! He answered dryly, "Don't worry about me, Lieutenant. If they jump us, I'll just use my little black broomsticks to keep the Japs off our tail."

The ship headed into the wind and picked up speed. There was now a near gale force wind and water spray coming straight over the deck. I looked down at my instruments as my engines revved up. My mind was racing. I went over my mental checklist, and said a prayer? God please, help us! Past the twelve planes in front of us, I strained to see the flight deck officer as he leaned into the wind and signaled with his arms for Colonel Doolittle to come to full power. I looked over at Knobby and we looked each other in the eye. He just nodded to me and we both understood.

With the deck heaving up and down, the deck officer had to time this just right. Then I saw him wave Doolittle to go, and we watched breathlessly to see what happened. When his plane pulled up above the deck, Knobby just let out with, "Yes! Yes!" The second plane, piloted by Lt. Hoover, appeared to stall with its nose up and began falling toward the waves. We groaned and called out, "Up! Up! Pull it up!" Finally, he pulled out of it, staggering back up into the air, much to our relief! One by one, the planes in front of us took off. The deck pitched wildly, 60 feet or more, it looked like. One plane seemed to drop down into the drink and disappeared for a moment, then pulled back up into sight. There was sense of relief with each one that made it. We gunned our engines and started to roll forward. Off to the right, I saw the men on deck cheering and waving their covers! We continued inching forward, careful to keep my left main wheel and my nose wheel on the white guidelines that had been painted on the deck for us. Get off a little bit too far left and we go off the edge of the deck. A little too far to the right and our wing-tip will smack the island of the ship. With the best seat on the ship, we watched Lt. Bower take off in plane number 12, and I taxied up to the starting line, put on my brakes and looked down to my left. My main wheel was right on the line. Applied more power to the engines, and I turned my complete attention to the deck officer on my left, who was circling his paddles. Now my adrenaline was really pumping! We went to full power, and the noise and vibration inside the plane went way up. He circled the paddles furiously while watching forward for the pitch of the deck. Then he dropped them, and I said, "Here We Go!" I released the brakes and we started rolling forward, and as I looked down the flight-deck you could see straight down into the angry churning water. As we slowly gained speed, the deck gradually began to pitch back up. I pulled up and our plane slowly strained up and away from the ship. There was a big cheer and whoops from the crew, but I just felt relieved and muttered to myself, "Boy, that was short!"

We made a wide circle above our fleet to check our compass headings and get our bearings. I looked down as we passed low over one of our cruisers and

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could see the men on deck waving to us. I dropped down to low level, so low we could see the whitecap waves breaking. It was just after 0900, there were broken clouds at 5,000 feet and visibility of about thirty miles due to haze or something. Up ahead and barely in sight, I could see Captain Greening, our flight leader, and Bower on his right wing. Flying at 170 MPH, I was able to catch up to them in about 30 minutes. We were to stay in this formation until reaching landfall, and then break on our separate ways. Now we settled in for the five hour flight. Tokyo, here we come!

Williams was in the back emptying the extra gas cans into the gas tank as fast as we had burned off enough fuel. He then punched holes in the tins and pushed them out the hatch against the wind. Some of the fellows ate sandwiches and other goodies that the Navy had put aboard for us. I wasn't hungry. I held onto the controls with a firm grip as we raced along westward just fifty feet above the cold rolling ocean, as low as I dared to fly. Being so close to the choppy waves gave you a true sense of speed. Occasionally our windshield was even sprayed with a little saltwater. It was an exhilarating feeling, and I felt as though the will and spirit of our whole country was pushing us along. I didn't feel too scared, just anxious. There was a lot riding on this thing, and on me.

As we began to near land, we saw an occasional ship here and there. None of them close enough to be threatening, but just the same, we were feeling more edgy. Then at 1330 we sighted land, the Eastern shore of Honshu. With Williams now on his guns in the top turret and Campbell on the nose gun, we came ashore still flying low as possible, and were surprised to see people on the ground waving to us as we flew in over the farmland. It was beautiful countryside.

Campbell, our navigator, said, "Mac, I think we're going to be about sixty miles too far north. I'm not positive, but pretty sure." I decided that he was absolutely right and turned left ninety degrees, went back just offshore and followed the coast line south. When I thought we had gone far enough, I climbed up to two thousand feet to find out where we were.

We started getting fire from anti-aircraft guns. Then we spotted Tokyo Bay, turned west and put our nose down diving toward the water. Once over the bay, I could see our target, Yokosuka Naval Base. Off to the right there was already smoke visible over Tokyo. Coming in low over the water, I increased speed to 200 MPH and told everyone, "Get Ready!"

When we were close enough, I pulled up to 1300 feet and opened the bomb doors. There were furious black bursts of anti-aircraft fire all around us, but I flew straight on through them, spotting our target, the torpedo works and the dry-docks. I saw a big ship in the dry-dock just as we flew over it. Those flak bursts were really getting close and bouncing us around, when I heard Bourgeois shouting, "Bombs Away!" I couldn't see it, but Williams had a bird's eye view from the back and he shouted jubilantly, "We got an aircraft carrier! The whole dock is burning!" I started turning to the south and strained my neck to look back and at that moment saw a large crane blow up and start falling over! Take that! There was loud yelling and clapping each other on the back. We were all just ecstatic, and still alive! But there wasn't much time to celebrate. We had to get out of here and fast! When we were some thirty miles out to sea, we took one last look back at our target, and could still see huge billows of black smoke. Up until now, we had been flying for Uncle Sam, but now we were flying for ourselves.

We flew south over open ocean, parallel to the Japanese coast all afternoon. We saw a large submarine apparently at rest, and then in another fifteen miles, we spotted three large enemy cruisers headed for Japan. There were no more bombs, so we just let them be and kept on going. By late afternoon, Campbell calculated that it was time to turn and make for China. Across the East China Sea, the weather out ahead of us looked bad and overcast. Up until now we had not had time to think much about our gasoline supply, but the math did not look good. We just didn't have enough fuel to make it!

Each man took turns cranking the little hand radio to see if we could pick up the promised radio beacon. There was no signal. This is not good. The weather

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turned bad and it was getting dark, so we climbed up. I was now flying on instruments, through a dark misty rain. Just when it really looked hopeless of reaching land, we suddenly picked up a strong tailwind. It was an answer to a prayer. Maybe just maybe, we can make it!

In total darkness at 2100 hours, we figured that we must be crossing the coastline, so I began a slow, slow climb to be sure of not hitting any high ground or anything. I conserved as much fuel as I could, getting real low on gas now. The guys were still cranking on the radio, but after five hours of hand cranking with aching hands and backs, there was utter silence. No radio beacon! Then the red light started blinking, indicating twenty minutes of fuel left. We started getting ready to bail out. I turned the controls over to Knobby and crawled to the back of the plane, past the now collapsed rubber gas tank. I dumped everything out of my bag and repacked just what I really needed, my .45 pistol, ammunition, flashlight, compass, medical kit, fishing tackle, chocolate bars, peanut butter and crackers. I told Williams to come forward with me so we could all be together for this. There was no other choice. I had to get us as far west as possible, and then we had to jump.

At 2230 we were up to sixty-five hundred feet. We were over land but still above the Japanese Army in China. We couldn't see the stars, so Campbell couldn't get a good fix on our position. We were flying on fumes now and I didn't want to run out of gas before we were ready to go. Each man filled his canteen, put on his Mae West life jacket and parachute, and filled his bag with rations, those "C" rations from the Presidio. I put her on auto-pilot and we all gathered in the navigator's compartment around the hatch in the floor. We checked each other's parachute harness. Everyone was scared, without a doubt. None of us had ever done this before! I said, "Williams first, Bourgeois second, Campbell third, Knobloch fourth, and I'll follow you guys! Go fast, two seconds apart! Then count three seconds off and pull your rip-cord!"

We kicked open the hatch and gathered around the

hole looking down into the blackness. It did not look very inviting! Then I looked up at Williams and gave the order, "JUMP!!!" Within seconds they were all gone. I turned and reached back for the auto-pilot, but could not reach it, so I pulled the throttles back, then turned and jumped. Counting quickly, thousand one, thousand two, thousand three, I pulled my rip-cord and jerked back up with a terrific shock. At first I thought that I was hung on the plane, but after a few agonizing seconds that seemed like hours, realized that I was free and drifting down. Being in the total dark, I was disoriented at first but figured my feet must be pointed toward the ground. I looked down through the black mist to see what was coming up. I was in a thick mist or fog, and the silence was so eerie after nearly thirteen hours inside that noisy plane. I could only hear the whoosh, whoosh sound of the wind blowing through my shroud lines, and then I heard a loud crash and explosion. My plane!

Looking for my flashlight, I groped through my bag with my right hand, finally pulled it out and shined it down toward the ground, which I still could not see. Finally I picked up a glimmer of water and thought I was landing in a lake. We're too far inland for this to be ocean. I hope! I relaxed my legs a little, thinking I was about to splash into water and would have to swim out, and then bang. I jolted suddenly and crashed over onto my side. Lying there in just a few inches of water, I raised my head and put my hands down into thick mud. It was a rice paddy! There was a burning pain, as if someone had stuck a knife in my stomach. I must have torn a muscle or broke something.

I laid there dazed for a few minutes, and after a while struggled up to my feet. I dug a hole and buried my parachute in the mud. Then started trying to walk, holding my stomach, but every direction I moved the water got deeper. Then, I saw some lights off in the distance. I fished around for my flashlight and signaled one time. Sensing something wrong, I got out my compass and to my horror saw that those lights were off to my west. That must be a Jap patrol! How dumb could I be! Knobby had to be back to my east, so I sat still and quiet and did not move.

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It was a cold dark lonely night. At 0100 hours I saw a single light off to the east. I flashed my light in that direction, one time. It had to be Knobby! I waited a while, and then called out softly, "Knobby?" And a voice replied "Mac, is that you?". Thank goodness, what a relief! Separated by a wide stream, we sat on opposite banks of the water communicating in low voices. After daybreak Knobby found a small rowboat and came across to get me. We started walking east toward the rest of the crew and away from that Japanese patrol. Knobby had cut his hip when he went through the hatch, but it wasn't too awful bad.

We walked together toward a small village and several Chinese came out to meet us. They seemed friendly enough. I said, "Luchu hoo megwa fugi! Luchu hoo megwa fugi!" meaning, "I am an American! I am an American!" Later that morning we found the others. Williams had wrenched his knee when he landed in a tree, but he was limping along just fine. There were hugs all around. I have never been so happy to see four guys in all my life!

Well, the five of us eventually made it out of China with the help of the local Chinese people and the Catholic missions along the way. They were all very good to us, and later they were made to pay terribly for it, so we found out afterwards. For a couple of weeks we traveled across country. Strafed a couple of times by enemy planes, we kept on moving, by foot, by pony, by car, by train, and by airplane. But we finally made it to India.

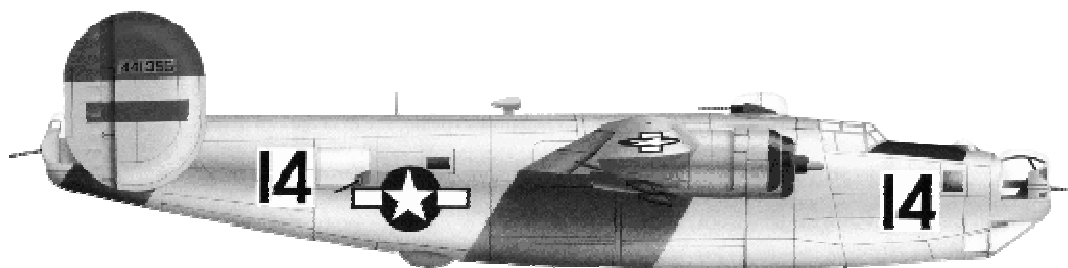
I did not make it home for the baby's birth. I stayed on their flying a DC-3 "Gooney Bird" in the China-Burma-India Theatre for the next several months. I flew supplies over the Himalaya Mountains, or as we

called it, over "The Hump" into China. When B-25s finally arrived in India, I flew combat missions over Burma, and then later in the war, flew a B-29 out of the Marianna Islands to bomb Japan again and again.

After the war, I remained in the Air Force until 1962, when I retired from the service as a Lt. Colonel, and then came back to Texas, my beautiful Texas. First moving to Abilene and then we settled in Lubbock, where Aggie taught school at MacKenzie Junior High. I worked at the S & R Auto Supply, once again in an atmosphere of machinery, oil and grease.

I lived a good life and raised two wonderful sons that I am very proud of. I feel blessed in many ways. We have a great country, better than most folks know. It is worth fighting for. Some people call me a hero, but I have never thought of myself that way. No! But I did serve in the company of heroes. What we did, will never leave me. It will always be there in my fondest memories. I will always think of the fine and brave men that I was privileged to serve with. Remember us, for we were soldiers once and young. With the loss of all aircraft, Doolittle believed that the raid had been a failure, and that he would be court-martialed upon returning to the states. Quite to the contrary, the raid proved to be a tremendous boost to American morale, which had plunged following the Pearl Harbor attack. It also caused serious doubts in the minds of Japanese war planners. They in turn recalled many seasoned fighter plane units back to defend the home islands, which resulted in Japan's weakened air capabilities at the upcoming Battle of Midway and other South Pacific campaigns.

Edgar "Mac" McElroy, Lt. Col., U.S.A.F. (Ret.) passed away at his residence in Lubbock, Texas early on the morning of Friday, April 4, 2003.



## The Ball Turret Gunner

by  
Louis F. Duchinsky  
765<sup>th</sup> Squadron

I flew a total of fifty missions of which twelve were doubles. Several missions in the beginning were over Ploesti. There was very heavy flak. The Germans were still fighting back at that point! We would come in at 30,000 feet. At about twenty-five miles away from Ploesti we'd pick up a 100 MPH tail wind almost all the time. Our speed would be boosted by 100 MPH. The bombardier had to compensate for this. The bombardier would control the aircraft while on the bomb run. He'd line it up, go across the target, press a button, and bombs would fall. He had to drop the bombs at the exact correct second. If you were flying next to another formation/group, it was something to see, all those bombs falling!

When Eighth Air Force flew out of England, they didn't use the British tactics of flying night missions. The Brits would go out with a group of 30 to 40 big heavy bombers, but would go around the edges of the target. They wouldn't go across the target at all, but just fly around the edge, one guy takes off and goes around the target and the rest follow him. Then he'd come around and might go home. Then another guy would fly around the target, go home. They didn't fly over the target and just clobber the whole target like we did! If a guy missed, you'd have a hole here and a hole over here. At night it had to be really tough! At night the Germans had those big search lights, and they'd shine them right on the planes. And the British didn't fly as high as us, maybe only 20,000 feet. They were just perfect targets. It was the British men and their planes. So, we wanted to do it in daylight.

All the fighter planes in Europe were designed for short distances. No range at all. Even the British fighters, they would fly over to Germany, which was about 300 miles across France, and the German airfield would be right there ready to stop

them. So they had no range! We'd fly to Austria, 1200 or 1500 miles one way!

Our missions typically took about ten hours. We'd get back early afternoon. We always took off around sun up. We'd get in formation as you saw the sun coming over the horizon. It might be dark on the ground still. We usually had lights to take off, but up in the air you'd have some light on the horizon so you could see the formation. Once in formation, we'd head north toward our target.

One guy was telling me that in England, he was flying on B-25s. They were the medium bombers—Mitchell B-25s – two 1200 HP engines. They only had like 4 or 5 guys on a crew. They flew low-level missions. Most times they flew in carrying bombs designed for low-level. Anyway, this guy was telling me he took off and the pilot was complaining "I can't get in formation!" The pilot finally got up to where he could see. Everyone was breathing real hard – couldn't catch their breath. After he got up to where he could see, he saw he was flying with 4 P-38s!!!! Hahah!! He was flying with P-38s! He was pushing the hell out of the plane, and they were way up over 15,000 feet. Of course, P-38s could go 20- to 25,000 feet before they even leveled off, and he's getting up there with P-38s!!! And he didn't know where his group was at all! Hahah!

We all wore those electric suits because it was cold up at 25,000 to 30,000 feet. There was no heat on those planes, just aluminum. We were getting ready to return from a mission or on the way, not sure which. Anyway, it was 65F below zero. Ed Stevenson, our ball turret gunner, was saying he was freezing to death. He called on the intercom, "My suit went out! I'm freezing to death!" Well, I was sitting 5 feet from the turret where he was. And so I jumped up right away. I don't know why Jack Jones, the other waist gunner, didn't get up; I couldn't understand

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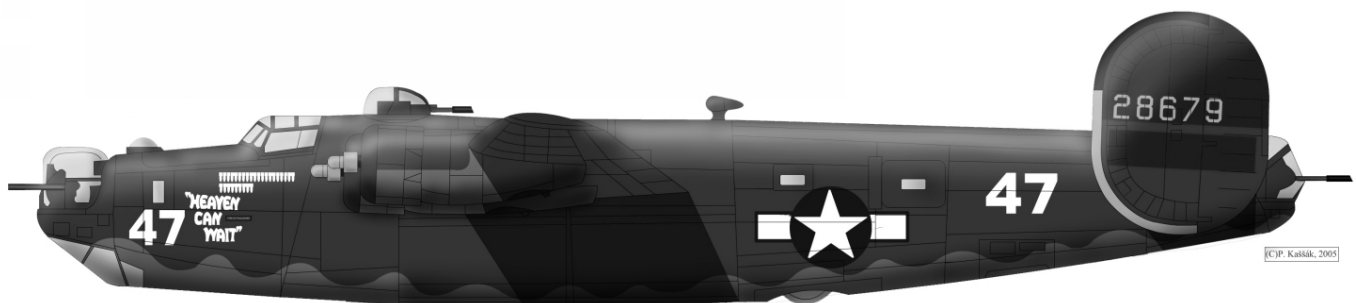
that—why nobody else did anything. I cranked the ball turret up with the hand crank. Steve rolled the turret over to where we could open the door and get him out. We had some sheep-lined suits in the plane that we carried along for safety. So we got one of those on him and then he got warmed up enough so he was okay. We didn't use the turret anymore that mission.

I was sitting on a box or something because we didn't have anything to sit on. When I got up I saw dust fly. I thought, "At 30,000 feet, how could dust be flying up here?" I didn't think much of it until we got on the ground. I got ready to get my stuff out of the plane and I looked around and there's a hole, right where I was sitting on the right side of the plane. I thought, "That's a round hole, looks like a .50 caliber bullet hole to me." It went through a little frame part of the aluminum. Maybe a couple inches wide, a strip of some kind. I guess that's where the dust came from - when it hit that strip it vibrated and dust was flying up behind it. Anyway, I was looking for another hole, and there it was, on the left side above me. From where I was sitting on the box, it would have gone right through me. I would have been dead in seconds. It would have gone through my kidney and out my chest. I wouldn't have known what hit me and I would have been gone.

I never said a word to anybody. The crew didn't put any value to it. They didn't think about it at all. I thought, "Okay, well I ain't gonna say anything about it anyway." They never patched the holes. They were insignificant. They didn't hurt anything. But uh, I really be-

lieve my guardian angel, in both of those instances, was helping me some way. There are so many things. I lay awake at night, I think about that, and I wonder why it was that particular mission? It was the same thing with Steve in the ball turret. I had to move when he said, "I'm freezing to death", and I jumped up, and I saw dust fly. I had to move 2 or 3 feet, that's all. In other words, I was that close, maybe less than a second even, to when that bullet went through there, until when I was out of position.

And the same thing in the front of the plane: how long did it take me to find that master switch off? When I jumped up (the first story), your instinct would be "If we're gonna pile up, I gotta find some place safe to hold onto." But instead I looked, and I had no idea what I was looking for at all. I looked at all the instruments, and I couldn't see anything that was bad because I had always been in the back of the plane when they read off the checklist. But I had been chosen to be 2<sup>nd</sup> operator that day. I had been chosen that day, and I was never chosen to fly 2<sup>nd</sup> operator again. It was the only time in 50 missions I was chosen to fly 2<sup>nd</sup> operator. Now why was it that particular time and everything? And it was hidden between a bunch of stuff, but I didn't even think about turning it on, I just yelled "Master switch!" And all of a sudden he turned the switch on, and the plane jumped up! And you know, on any gas powered engine, if you load it up, and push it real hard, it could stop or lock up just like that. One or two of the engines could've locked up and we'd have been down on the ground in a matter of 30 seconds or less. So, I didn't even think of any of that stuff at all, I just reacted.



[CJP: Katsik, 2005]

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**[www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org)**

## Webmaster Comments

In the last issue of the Liberaider, I told you I had combined all the information I have about the Fifteenth Air Force and the units that made up this organization under one large web space—[www.15thaf.org](http://www.15thaf.org). I was able to keep the address for our website so you can still get to the 461st by typing in [www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org), but you end up being in the Fifteenth Air Force website. Hopefully this isn't too confusing. The major benefit is that the cost of the 461st website has gone down. We still pay for our domain name—461st.org, but not the web space we paid for before.

The real benefit of this change is that I can now show the overall structure of the Fifteenth Air Force and the relationship of the 461st to the other units. For example, if you go to [www.15thaf.org](http://www.15thaf.org), you will see a list of bomb wings and other support units down the left side. If you click on the 49th Bomb Wing, you'll see that it was made up of the 451st, the 461st and the 484th Bomb Groups. If you're

interested in learning more about the other units within the 49th Bomb Wing, you can click on each unit to go to that section of the website. For example, there is a lot of information available for the 484th Bomb Group. This is the bomb group that shared Torretta Field with the 461st. The 461st flew a number of missions with the 484th and the 451st. The 451st flew out of a field a little north-east of Torretta Field, but in the same general area of Italy.

I can still make a CD with all of the 461st material. If you are interested, the cost is \$25 for the first copy and \$15 for a replacement. Send me a check along with your address and phone number and I'll make a CD with the latest information.

I'm looking forward to our next reunion in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. I hope everyone is making plans to attend. It should be a great time