

## 2015 Bomb Group Reunion

The 2015 Reunion was held in Kansas City, MO September 24, 2015 through September 27, 2015. Our reunion home was the newly renovated Hilton Hotel Kansas City Airport. The Hilton Hotel Management and their entire staff were over the top with customer service and dedication for our veterans and families.

Some of our reunion committee members arrived Tuesday,

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## Toward Sanctuary

*This is the first letter which we will include to Beans. Several others will follow, because Beans was Bill's most intimate pal at the time he went into the service. He wrote to Beans frequently. Beans has sent us sixteen complete letters and parts of five others which Bill wrote to him during this period.*

*great deal of the flavor will be left in the quoted parts of the letters. A little will have been omitted! We certainly are grateful to Beans for letting us share these letters.*

*This first letter is from Bill while in his Primary School and tells us a great deal about his early flying.*

*There is a slightly different flavor in these letters from that in the ones to his family. This can readily be understood when we remember they are letters from one red-blooded college boy to another. A*

Lodwick Military  
Aviation Academy  
Avon Park, Florida  
June 27<sup>th</sup>, 1943

*(Continued on page 8)*

## Bruce Wilkin

Bruce Wilkin  
Co-Pilot  
Courtney crew #50R  
766<sup>th</sup> Squadron  
461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group

Harvey Dominick, Nose Gunner  
(Original Singbiel)  
Clifford Upham, Ball Gunner  
Robert Peace, Tail Gunner

### September 1944

Charles Troy Courtney, Pilot  
Bruce Wilkin, Co-pilot  
Bernard Smukler, Navigator  
Ralph L. Lewis, Bombardier  
Chris Stiefvater, Engineer/Gunner  
Curtis P. Nelson, Radio Operator/  
Gunner  
Ellis P. Bergman, Waist Gunner/  
Photographer

Our original Pilot, Smokey Gundersen was a heavy smoker, as his name implies. He was relieved for medical reasons. He was replaced by Charles Courtney so after crew was assembled at Pueblo, Colorado, Charles Troy Courtney was our

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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>
Bertrand, Robert M.	North Syracuse, NY	1092	08/21/13
Taylor, James G.	Broken Arrow, OK	1092	08/25/12

## **765th Squadron**

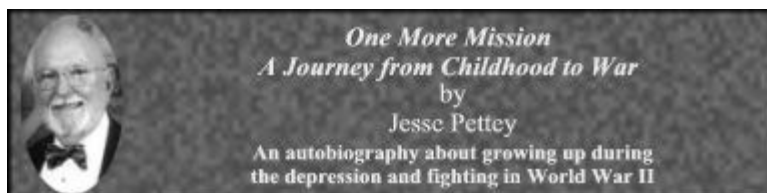
<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>DOD</b></u>
Wariner, Eugene E.	Irving, TX	555	

## **766th Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>DOD</b></u>
Brady, Alexander	Willowick, OH	687	11/11/09
Harley, Leo M.	Clarklake, MI	612	01/28/15
Holscher, Franz F.	Gastonia, NC	612	05/23/15
Long, Raymond E.	Easley, SC	612	08/30/14
Milby, Michael H. Jr.	Edna, TX	1035	12/26/14
Remp, Carl H.	Middletown, DE	612	10/18/15

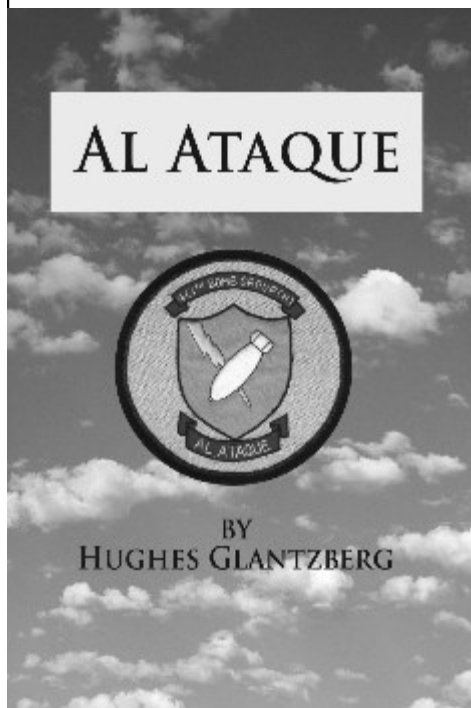
## **767th Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>DOD</b></u>
Arrotta, Albert T.	Lynn, MA	612	01/11/13
Pifer, Wayne E.	Streetboro, OH	747	08/07/15
Roberts, William F.	Mound, MN	757	04/23/15
Thorne, Robert F.	Claremont, CA	1034	03/24/15
VanDenHeuvel, Clarence N.	Little Chute, WI	612	05/10/14



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.

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September 22, 2015, and our attendance grew to 250 guests by Saturday night.



Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel  
8801 NW 112th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64153

Wednesday, the reunion packets were assembled, and the snacks and beverages purchased for the hospitality revelries. At 5:45 PM the Hilton Hotel Shuttle departed for the Smokehouse BBQ restaurant located in the Zona Rosa District for some traditional, hickory-smoked Kansas City barbeque, ribs, and steak. Dinner with friends and families, was a great way to kick off our 2015 reunion!

Thursday, check-in was located in the hospitality room which was quick and easy. As the day progressed, more and more World War II Memorabilia was displayed on the tables, walls and hallway to reminisce or teach another generation about life in Italy during 1943-1945.

Gerald Weinstein, the son of Seymour S. Weinstein the Group Photographic Officer, 485<sup>th</sup> BG (Heavy) displayed a room full of black and white photographs mounted on poster boards and easels depicting rural Italy during the war years. These wonderful time period photographs spilled out into the adjoining hallway.

The 461<sup>st</sup> Business Meeting was held at 4:00 PM where a slate of officers was presented by Linda Titus and a motion was made to hold the election after dinner Friday evening.

Thursday evening at 7:00 PM there was an informational meeting where Hughes Glantzberg welcomed all of the Bomb Groups (376<sup>th</sup>, 451<sup>st</sup>,

455<sup>th</sup>, 461<sup>st</sup>, 465<sup>th</sup>, 484<sup>th</sup>, and 485<sup>th</sup>) in attendance. Dave Blake welcomed all to Kansas City, MO, his home town, and introduced the Reunion Committee. Dave gave brief overview of the scheduled events for the 2015 Reunion Weekend.

There was a great hot breakfast buffet comparable to a breakfast buffet on a cruise ship to be had in the Hilton Restaurant. As you walked through the dining area you could feel the excitement and energy of the vets and their families.

No time to goof off as the Friday morning departure time was 9:30 AM.

The two buses and two 15 seat vans (driven by Lee Cole and Dave Blake) departed the Hilton hotel parking lot at 9:30 AM. Our destination was The National World War I Museum and Memorial located in downtown Kansas City, MO.



National World War I Museum  
Kansas City, MO

We began our tour of the museum at the Glass Bridge over a field of Poppies, representing combatant deaths during WWI. Visiting the Galleries of the museum we took a walk back in time. We experienced a 12 minute introductory film which offered insight into world events that led to WWI. Modern technology provided interactive tables where we were able to listen to music, poetry, prose and historic voices in the "Reflections" audio alcoves. A stop in the Hori-

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zon Theater had a 15 minute program that illustrated America on the threshold of war and what incidents led to the decision to enter the war.

The "Over There Café" provided our box lunch and beverage. There was a museum gift shop with items to reflect the WWI time period. Magnets, t-shirts, postcards, found their way home with us. The museum provided a wonderful panoramic view of Kansas City, MO and the weather was at its best for our visit.

Our buses arrived at 12:30 PM for our return trip to the Hilton Hotel. There was a bit of noise in the air and American flags flying... The Patriot Guard Riders arrived and gave our fly boys and families an added thrill to remember their trip to Kansas City, MO. The local police joined in the escort, by closing off all entrance/exit ramps along the highways and local roads for our return route to the Hilton Hotel.

Once we arrived at the hotel parking lot, there was plenty of time to mingle with the Patriot Guard Riders and Police officers. All were invited into the hospitality room for fellowship, and The Patriot Guard Riders presented a Thank you Certificate to the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force; "Your Sacrifice Will Never Be Forgotten."



Gathering for afternoon presentations

During the 2:00-4:00 PM time frame there were several presentations led by our veterans/families which were very interesting. Others

spent time in the various lounge areas within the Hilton hotel, and the hospitality room.

The Social Hour began at 5:00 PM with a cash bar prior to the individual Bomb Group's Dinner.

After our dessert, there was an election of officers. The approved roster of 461<sup>st</sup> Officer's:

President: Hughes Glantzberg, Vice-President: Glenda Price, Secretary: Mary Jo Hayes, 766-Barbara Alden; Hdqtrs-Lee Cole, 765th-Dave Blake, 767-Linda Titus

After dinner many of us filtered back to the hospitality room or gravitated to a TV to watch the Kansas City Royals in the pre-world series playoffs.



Harry S. Truman Library and Museum

Saturday greeted us with a warm sunny smile and we departed the Hilton Hotel at 9:00 AM in caravan style for Independence MO. "The Buck Stops Here", "If You Can't Stand the Heat, Get Out of the Kitchen." Yes, we were on our way to visit the Harry S. Truman Library and Museum. The major issues and events of Harry Truman's Presidency are highlighted here. We watched an introductory film of HST, visited a great replica of his Presidential Office in the White House, saw a large lighted animated map of the United States which illustrated HST "Whistle Stop Tour of the Nation" during his re-election campaign.

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A box-lunch was available in a lovely indoor atrium overlooking a beautiful outdoor courtyard. Many chose to eat lunch outside and enjoy the wonderful weather and scenery.

We had a few minutes left to spend some money in the museum gift shop. One could purchase a replica of "Pete the White House Squirrel." So the story goes, Pete was a grey squirrel that accompanied the president on many of his walks on White House grounds. "Pete" was also known by the reporters as their "inside source."

Back on the buses and a short ride to visit the house Bess and Harry Truman called home. This house is affectionately referred to as the "Summer White House" during 1945-1953.

Back to the hotel for another round of interesting talks, tales, and oration.

Danny Wasserman was instrumental in gathering our veterans for a group picture prior to the evening banquet. Great job Danny!

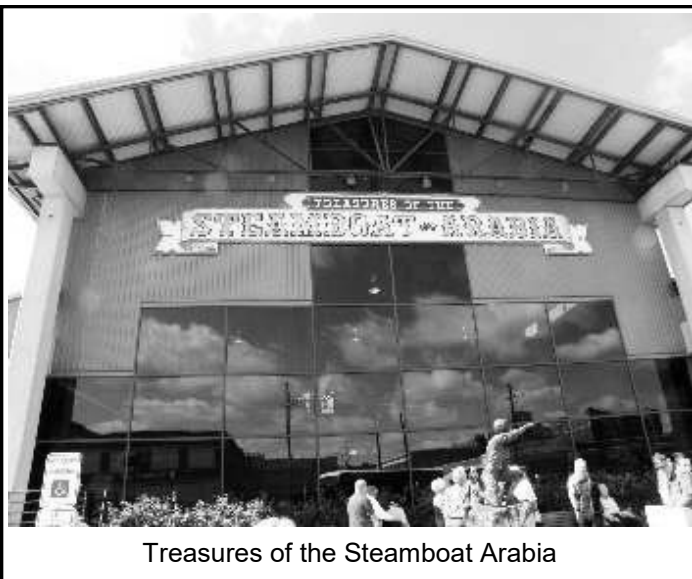
The Shawnee Room was our mess hall for the evening meal. We had the privilege of listening to Roger Locher, a Vietnam War POW describe his experiences after our meal.

Sunday morning memorial service was led by Chaplain Chris Cairnes, who is a Captain stationed at Fort Riley located about 100 miles from Kansas City. His grandfather was one of the Commanding Officers of the 485th BG.

TAPS: 2015 Bomb Groups Joint Reunion: "They Flew Together, and Fought Together, We Mourn Their Passing, Then and Now." "Never Forget." "The Missing Man Table" and the poem: "High Flight by John Gillespie Magee, Jr." are some of the highlights from a moving memorial service.

We departed at noon for our next adventure. Our attendance was reduced, but our camaraderie remained strong. Off to visit a unique Kansas City attraction. A quick lunch, a few more postcards, pictures for Facebook and we

were ready to explore a treasure found in a cornfield.



Treasuries of the Steamboat Arabia

The contents of the Steamboat Arabia, are a time capsule of life on the American frontier. When she sank on September 5, 1856, 200 tons of cargo was lost for 133 years. Using a metal detector and old maps to guide the search, five men and their families began an adventure of a lifetime. From fine china, to carpentry tools, glass buttons, children's toys to the world's oldest pickles, the Arabia's artifacts kept us a captivated audience.

Back to the Hilton Hotel one last time. The clock was ticking way too quickly as we approached our last official event of the 2015 reunion, the Casual Farewell Dinner.

Our reunion was coming to a close. This is the part the reunion committee members' dread, when we have to dismantle the hospitality room for another year.

Once strangers, but because of our veterans we have become friends and family, this reunion bonds us together; we are bound to each other for life.

# **2016 REUNION**

## **Dallas, Texas**

### **Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>—Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>**

### **?????? Hotel**

Details are all undetermined at this time but the likely format is as follows. This is the basic format that was used this year in Kansas City and by all accounts was quite successful so it will likely remain mostly the same.

#### **Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup>**

Arrival and check in day. Evening Informational meeting.

#### **Friday, October 14<sup>th</sup>**

Morning tour then return to the hotel early afternoon then afternoon Veteran led presentations and discussions.

Individual Group Banquets Friday evening.

#### **Saturday, October 15<sup>th</sup>**

Morning tour then return to the hotel early afternoon then afternoon Veteran led presentations and discussions.

All groups banquet Saturday evening.

#### **Sunday, October 16<sup>th</sup>**

The Memorial Service in the morning with possible tour or other activity in the afternoon.

A casual farewell dinner Sunday evening.

Complete details and a registration form will be available in the June 2016 issue of The Liberaider. Information will be posted periodically on your website, [www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org). It has proven to be a very rewarding experience to meet with other heavy bomb groups that were also based in the Cerignola area. Many new friendships have begun.

***Dave Blake***

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  
Mary Jo Belak, Secretary, 692 Harbor Edge Drive, Apt. 201, Memphis, TN 38103-0811  
Hughes Glantzberg, Historian, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230

**Directors**

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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.  
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Dear Beanser,

Got your last card promising blow by blow description when you got home, but I really mustn't wait till it arrives to get off a belated letter to you. So much has happened in one week. I supposed you noticed the postmark which will undoubtedly be Jacksonville. I arrived here only a few hours ago and am waiting to be able to get a room in the biggest and bestest hotel here. We have already feasted on the first real breakfast since entering the state of Florida and are now waiting impatiently to start an indefinitely long period of – “sack time”.

But let's start at the beginning. Let's see now – Barely over a week ago I was worried sick 'cause I was told I flunked my 40 hour check. The next day, however, the Lt. ha reasoned things out with another Lt. with more experience in PTs, and things added up favorably enough for a reversal of the verdict and little Willie had squeaked through his 40-hour check ride.

Since then I can hardly count all the numerous obstacles crossed, failing any one of which would have kept me here another month or washed me out flat – and I'm darned if I know *which* would have been *worse!* We had finals in Ground School with no review and not much learned to fall back on. Navigation and Meteorology were down my alley, though, but I was just lucky in Engines. The test was a corker, too, and my brain-child roommate who can practically teach the instructor only got 78, so my 74 didn't seem so bad. As lack of review time wasn't bad enough, I had to stay up until 2:00 for night flying the night before my most doubtful exam. 2:00 doesn't sound so bad in a Haverford schedule like our old one, but we can never cut classes the next day in the Army or sleep through breakfast and the schedule we have around here is exhausting enough without going down to 4 hours sleep at night. But it was well worth it as a novelty to get the hour of night flying I did. I like it a lot and get a terrific kick out of it. I did pretty well, too, on getting close to the ground before leveling off. Some of the

boys really dropped 'em in high. I wouldn't have given a plug nickel for the instructor's job that night! It's a wonderful thrill, though, to be up in that black expanse – the air's as smooth as glass – seeing only the lights on the ground of houses, factories – and the airport. Coming down that line of sidelights on the runway is the best of it, though, and I just can't wait to do some more of it, coming down that black path bordered twinkling lights and sitting down so smoothly.

Then in the daytime added to our 60-hour check worries, they began to try to crack us up instead of just playing around. That is, we had tests that took considerable nerve and luck to pass – much less to keep from ground looping – or straight cracking up. I think I mentioned the different kinds of “stages” they ran before where we had to shoot spot landings and overshoots and undershoots first from 90° away from the landing leg – then 180° - without throttle. That is we'd cut the gun on the base leg or later on the downwind leg of a rectangular pattern around the field and could not use throttle all the way in – to pass – although safety first is the rule always if you think you'll miss your mark. We had to sit down on a row of flags on the field or just over or under as the case called for – never two of the same kind in a row. We thought that was hard, and I even took considerable risk on my overshoots once or twice, when they appeared too short and it took all the tricks in the book to reach and flop over that fence without using throttle.

But the latest is to put up a hurdle in place of a row of flags which must be cleared, but you have to stall out over it in order to land inside a row of flags 100 ft. beyond – and I mean land – not just bounce. Boy that is the thing – and do you ever get thrills doing that stuff. The trick is to go way the hell out on your downwind leg – then line up with the hurdle on your base leg and come in just skimming the tree-tops. Needless to say little Willie went between the tree-tops on the first try – not over them – and almost passed out on the spot. You drag in with

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just a little throttle, and the plane starts stalling out. Ordinarily you'd put the nose down and add throttle to get out of that predicament, but here you can't or you'll never be slow enough to get inside those flags after the hurdle. Then it's all throttle. You've got to stay off that ground but you can't increase speed – boy it's ticklish – and you should see those planes wobble and squirm when the stick is almost useless because of lack of flying speed! Then you cut the gun and hope you missed the hurdle – and from then on fight to stay on top of the fool plane. It's more darn fun, though. Most everyone was afraid to stall, though, and came in gliding and flunked 'cause they couldn't get anywhere near the flags after clearing the hurdle. – Even my H. P. (hot pilot) roommate!

Then there was the 60. I really creamed the low altitude stuff – and sweated it out on the coordination and thoroughly approved of the results of it, if I do say so myself – but the acrobatics *stunk!* I mashed up my snap-roll and split – out of my slow roll. Even the simple loop was too slow and wobbled up on the top. He did them all and some more afterwards, though, (the check-rider, that is) and, boy, they were good! But I passed – and yesterday I really had me a time with a short victorious dog-fight (my first – solo) and then everything in the books. We're not supposed to do immellmans solo, I hear now, because of the danger of a flat spin, but I didn't know – and had me some real fun. I think I must have done about everything that plane will do. I almost made myself sick after an hour straight in the cold, high altitude, though, and had to come in. Finished 5 hour link. Took some corks of Army Ground School tests. Am now on 4 day rest and binge before Thursday's graduation – and *Basic!* More soon –

Happily –  
Willy Ham

*Parts of two letters from Courtland, Alabama, his Basic Flying School, in which he shows concern from his fellowmen in the land of his present sojourn.*

Courtland, Alabama  
July 3, 1943

Dear Mom,

\*\*\*\*\*

I was ever so depressed soon after, though, by the ugly sight of Birmingham, and then the poverty stricken country around it. Georgia had kinds laid the foundations for more prejudice toward the South. But I have never seen the likes of some of Alabama – most of it – and was quite sick at heart.

I wish I were civilian now – I know I should take up writing on it right now. There is such a clash – and even then – there's something proudly American in the look of those people's faces sitting in front of their warped, unpainted shambles. There is much need down here to fulfill bare necessities, but even as things stand – we know that even these people have representatives on the list in "Life's" latest – they, too, have boys in the service, - and are proud of them and have hope and faith. I don't yet know completely how and why, but they do believe – they do not look up as weak, beaten, subordinates when you come into the station. They all turn out to see their friends on and off the train – it is a real occasion – and they look up as equals to any of those in the car above them regardless of their tattered garb and bare feet. There are many that someday will be on the other side of the big fence from me; but now in war – when all they see is my uniform – we are both Americans and have a common unspoken kinship.

\*\*\*\*\*

Love to all,  
Bill

Courtland, Alabama  
July 17, 1943

Dear Daddy,

Thanks ever so much for your letter. I'll try to get off a note to you now, but I'm so suffocat-

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ingly hot I may not be able to keep the paper dry enough to write on! It is really hot here. We're about 400 miles from the Gulf, so we receive none of its breezes as was the case in Florida very often, and I guess it's considerably more humid here. At any rate, Mom would feel cool as a cucumber if she could see me these days soaking through this khaki in a hurry. "Red" is always kidding me about it, and I guess I do seem to give off several more buckets than the rest of the gang – specially the Rebels who are used to it.

It's cooler upstairs, though, so I do have some relief to look forward to each day, which is more than a lot of people can say, I guess. The sun's just as bright though, and maybe it's just the slipstream that seems cool, because in spite of my good tan already, I come down every day with new splotches of sunburn on my arms and nose. I'm glad I seem to be able to take it so well without any soreness at all.

You can imagine what calisthenics are like at 3:00 in the afternoon around here, but they're fun. The exercises feel good and then we play basketball or baseball or something, too, with just shorts and sneakers which is a healthy feeling even if we do get "woozy" once in a while in a fast basketball game.

I'm sorry to have disturbed you folks at home about my views of "Red's" super-wonderful Alabama, but I have to let off some steam once in a while and I know you are interested. I hate to let go at "Red" 'cause he's so good natured. He has a very sarcastic wit, but his goon-child antics take all the sting away, and since he directs most of his ribbing in an intentionally helpful line – try to get me "on the ball" for things like being on time for formations, etc., I really shouldn't say much to him.

Did I tell you about the clipping – got from his Mom while we were in Avon Park? It seems that some negroes were shipped to Mobile to work in the shipyards, and, being skilled workers, expected to take their jobs that they had been trained for. But in Mobile negroes are only allowed in certain parts of the yards and only

for unskilled menial tasks. I guess some friction arose right off the first day – the result of which was that the rebel workers proceeded to do "justice" to these upstarts – they killed 29 negroes, and in true barbaric style they chopped off their heads and threw them into the Mobile River. His Mom just happened to mention it matter-of-factly when she was reminded of the decapitated portions now rising to the surface! I was *stunned*! He had no idea what it would do to me when he told me. He was just demonstrating how negroes were kept in their "proper place" down here. The clipping was a little paragraph from a back page of a *Tampa* paper, mentioning that there had been a little trouble in the yards that was being settled by the workers satisfactorily! So that was all that was heard of that neatly hushed-up affair. And didn't they shout about the Detroit affair – which got such different publicity in spite of the fact that it only had about two-thirds as many fatalities! So I don't open my mouth any more about anything concerning the South. I still see and hear and remember., but it's a cinch that arguing will do no good now, so, as you suggested I'm more or less biding my time till a future date when conditions are different.

\*\*\*\*\*

I didn't mean to be too gruesome about that Mobile incident, but you can imagine how I felt. I just wanted to pick up a tommy-gun and even the score if it was the last thing I did. Of course that wouldn't do any good or prove anything, but I certainly boil when I think of it and all it signifies. Don't let it worry you, though. As you said, you were afraid I might have a lonely time ahead of me. How true – but then it's nothing new. I have always been more or less on my own at Choate and Haverford with only one or two people to count as real pals like Trig and Bob and Beams. But they're worth most of the rest – and the feeling of standing up for right instead of following the crowd is not entirely a sad one.

And I've a reputation for being a "mouse" at times as Molly will tell you, when I know I'm in a

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“different” crowd where criticism or correction is out of place at the time. So I’ll get along O.K. and there are loads of things like flying that we have in common which will provide sufficient distraction to prevent friction.

Besides here in Courtland, we have left the rebel majority behind. There are lots of Joisey boys and Brooklyn – Connecticut – Boston – and more. Sadly enough, though, I can’t use them as gleaming examples agin’ the rebels, since I wouldn’t care to probe into the code of ethics of most of them with a twenty-foot pole! I have almost got one point across, though, to my rebel antagonists – that you can’t pin anything all good or all bad on any one class, group, or party. Of course, adding race to that rule is still difficult, but headway is being made.

Goodness, I didn’t mean to drag all this out in a letter to you all – but I’ll send it anyway, since it does represent my thoughts these days. If sometimes I sound depressed or not very coherent – don’t be disturbed. It’s just that momentarily the pressure inside is excessive and rather than let loose I must exert extra willpower to forget and remain silent – so I must naturally forget some other events of the day, too.

Flying is just as wonderful as ever. It never really becomes dull routine. There’s a new thrill every time I leave the ground, and the sense of exhilaration never leaves till we’re back on the line. I soloed the BT over a week ago, and I guess I was one of the first. Everything went well and is still O.K., although there are always a million and one imperfections. It’s no end of fun in this BT now that all the new gadgets and feelings are becoming familiar. I wish I could peel off on a cloud over Englewood just once!

I really must close, so I will have something to say to the rest of the tribe. I hope you’ll get a little rest this summer. More soon –

Lots of love,  
Bill

*From Courtland – some flying talk, and a party.*

Courtland, Alabama  
August 5, 1943

Dear Mom,

I have a few minutes now, at least, and must get off some news to the family. I feel awful not having written in so long to any of you, but I just haven’t had a chance. Now I’m waiting for a dental appointment! This is my third and last, I hope, of repair jobs G.I. style for the present. Well, that’s one more big bill that won’t have to be paid at home!

As I said in my note the other day – lots has happened lately that is worthy of account. But those few things weren’t just a few unusual days, it appears. Things have been popping fast and furious for a week now without a sign of let-up.

I guess the first thing was instrument flying “under the hood.” That was very dull and trying – and confusing – and I rather envisioned the next week or so full of hard drudgery trying to master the tricks of blind flying.

Next in order came the weekend, I guess. Picturing rather trying days ahead and being rather over-full of Courtland Army Air Base, it didn’t take much persuasion from Red and Ramon to pack me up after the last of Saturday’s inspections for the wilds of deepest, darkest, equatorial Alabama. They had been out together two weeks before and came back bubbling over with stories of a nearby town of Blanktown, its attractive girls, and hospitable people. They claimed it was the *A#1* example of “Southern hospitality” - which had come to be merely a figure of speech in my mind. So I decided that, with all the black marks I had chalked up to the South in my mind’s eye, it was only fair to give the South a chance to show its better points. So off we went to Blanktown. The town was dirty and old looking, - that is, most of it. The *best* hotel was a sad affair, but I decided I’d see it through anyhow. If these two could be enthusiastic about the place, I could at least endure it and try to find out why they liked it. I soon

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found out that the beds were the whole thing. They were tremendous and ever so soft. You just disappeared in them! So in spite of the rest of the shabby hotel – we'll give it a dull pass – 'cause the sack time was superb! As soon as we were all set and had called perspective dates, we set out in the general direction of one of their houses. There was no end of amusement and raising of spirits for all three of us before we got there about two hours later! The boys got lost, and didn't we have a time getting back on the beam – but you just don't know how funny those two are, and the time passed quickly.

I'll have to cut this short as my time's up – we arrived at a very pretty and well-to-do-looking, modern white house. You see we had somehow or other fallen in with the elite of the town – the pick of the crop. The lady of the house – Mrs. Virginia, we called her in honor of her daughter – was a very cordial, palsy-walsy, bridge-playing American gossip-woman. She put us at rest immediately, and we were old pals from the first minute on. Virginia was *something!!!* Boy, is she purty! Quiet, demure, smart, and maybe coy would fit, too. But she was a perfect hostess, and, Ramon, who had her for his date, had certainly swung the best part of the deal at first glance.

Something happened and Red's date didn't arrive. That left one. She was very young – I mean she acted so and was only 17, too. I guess there's considerable difference in Englewood's 17-year-olds and Blanktown's. Rose Mary was not half so polished as Betty who is just her age – but she has a lot of knowledge and intuition about people. Anywho I had a wonderful time talking to her – the first sober talk I've had in a long time. She reminded me very much of Molly sometimes. She likes to draw – copying being her specialty – and won some sort of national competition for a scholarship to some Art School in Baltimore, but her parents haven't let her go yet into the strange land of unfriendly Yankees up North. She has had a heavy inferiority complex, which she is just beginning to conquer. Ill at ease at parties

– a bit too frank – hard to approach. But when we got a chance to talk quietly a while she broke down and had a good time and so did I.

\* \* \* \* \*

As for flying this week, we've done everything. Not just a taste of this or that, but full time hard work and just as much as 24 hours will hold. Yesterday, for instance, I was #1 man on a short cross country hop. We flew at three minute intervals. The fields were nothing but short narrow strips in the middle of little inlets from the Tennessee River. We had to land right on the end in order to not run off the other end – brakes and all! Needless to say without pointers or description – just a general heading – it was not too easy to pick out these little specks on the landscape, although the rest of the gang could spot each other circling overhead. Still and all I made very good time and arrived back with more than my three minute lead on #2. Did I have time to think about that? Heck, no! Off to the Link trainer. Then back just in time to run back and eat and get back for more night flying, more solo, etc., this afternoon, and tomorrow I think we'll get our first real long cross-country up into Tennessee! And so it goes. Needless to say I am a wee bit tired, but still alive and kickin! Last night I flew solo all the time – no dual instruction at all. The first landings were flood light landings – but now all I have is smudge-pots outlining the boundaries of the runway and my wing lights. So when you see a big plane land again at night with those two big, feeler-like fingers of light dropping from the wings – think of me – I've do'd it now! It's lots of fun and easy as pie. Once again I thank my lucky stars for all the factors that brought me up to date in A-1 condition – eyes especially – since it's have been a heart-breaker if my judgement had been bad and trouble had started now.

We have a pretty swell bunch of young Lieutenants for instructors and our two Captain CO's (Flight and Squadron) are good, too. They're all a little slap-happy and wish they were anywhere but in BT's but they stick to it pretty well

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– my instructor has a very catching, whimsical was of putting points across with considerable expression, oodles of sarcasm, and a minimum of cussing and heckling. He's young, but somewhat more sober and quiet than some of his rowdyish fellow instructors, perhaps because he's married. He's a Georgia boy, but tolerates his Yankee students pretty well.

He really cut up the other night, though, when we were going over to another field for night flying. There was a beautiful sunset in its last stages and we took off in close formation with two of his pals. Halfway over we had pretty nearly exhausted the tricks of close formation and we peeled off into a "rat race." That was a thrill I've dreamed of since I was 4 or 5. Peeling off, one after another – and that glorious sunset was a perfect setting. What went on from then on nobody knows. We just followed the leader – and other joined us – even the C.O. Boy, it was fun!

I'm afraid I haven't a chance now of getting into single-engine advanced, but I am certainly going to try now. Maybe I can still get a P-38 for Rickie!!!

I am nearly ready to drop now from no sleep – so I'll stop. Pleas thank Boof for her letter. I shall try to write to you all soon. Don't forget to send *me* an *invitation*, too. I'm particular about those things, you know, even if I can't accept. Hope Molly's celebrating well before leaving for captivity. 'Bye now.

Love to all,  
Bill

*From Stuttgart, Arkansas – Advanced Flying School.*

*"I feel about things. \* \* \* \* \**

Stuttgart, Arkansas  
Sunday, September 5, 1943

Dear Mom,

\* \* \* \* \*

At any rate, I feel about things very deeply and strongly and cannot derive the faintest pleasure out of many of the superficial things that other kids my age spend their time on. I try to do the same things they do once in a while, for one thing, so that they won't notice I'm different, since I'd rather be unnoticed, or a pal, than somebody stared at when I have no chance to remove myself as I would as a civilian. And I try once in a while to see if I can't get the same pleasure, too, since I know it not good to be too moody. But down inside, the things that give me pleasure at intangible. They're not the Wild West double feature Friday night, or liquor, or "indulging in local women", or gambling. I am stirred terribly by beautiful music or beautiful scenes such as I encounter ever so often when flying. And I love gracefulness, beauty, refinement, perfection, warmth. I find those things in art, in nature, in music, and in people. What fun I get in a dance is watching colors blend and whirl, listening to a coordinated team in an orchestra play as though there were nothing to it at all, and soaking up the warmth of gay friendship that is brought home at such affairs – or used to be. It was much stronger when we were kids, and no one had airs and complexes, etc. There was real laughter, and sincere friendship and well-meaning.

Oh, I could go on. But you see how many things I have to imagine and remember, and when one is preparing to do the dirty work of war, I must at least have more than the ideals and principles to keep me on the beam. I must have someone on whom I can plant these ideals, - someone I can fight to protect as though he were just behind me and if I fail I leave him open to the mercies of the enemy – except that I have faith that my pals will fall in behind me if I should be lost. So I think of people. Each one of you in the "fambly" individually is standing for those different qualities and many more. And as a unit you're a family which is something in itself – and I'm fighting for the right to be proud of my place in it. And the family of its own accord is part of a community, a church, a school, a nation, and more. But it is people I know and think about that drive the point home.

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\* \* \* \* \*

*This one is written to Beans from Stuttgart and includes a little flying but more of delightful reminiscing.*

Stuttgart, Arkansas  
Sunday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 1943

Dear Beanser,

Since you have been so neglected these last weeks I shall have to put you at the head of the list this week even if I don't get any other letters off. I know how hard these days must be for you *waiting* – because I have not forgotten last fall either – but now you know “when” anyway so a great deal of the tension must have been released. Isn't it Fate after all these months to have you called just a week before I get home! For goodness sakes, write where you are on a card as soon as you get there, 'cause maybe you won't be out of reach anyhow. You'll be at some college probably, won't you?

Things have been cooking around here with the usual TNT. We finished up our basic instruments with a check-ride on Thursday and now have only one more week of instruments and the resultant check-ride between us and a pair of silver wings! Although I'm under no delusions concerning the simplicity of that approaching week, at least it'll be more fun than the last one, I think, since we'll be working on radio, beams, let-downs, and *cross-country* – and, brother, that's no cinch. We won't be able to see drift or anything – just instruments and listen to a lot of different kinds of static! And, mind you, we're supposed to end up right on the end of the landing runway with flaps and wheels down for landing!

Right now we're enjoying a short “rest period”. We're finishing up our navigation and formation time. Four to five hours in each afternoon flying time and ground school and officer's lectures to fill up the rest of the day. We even flew yesterday – Saturday afternoon! Formation cross-country. 4 hours steady tight formation in rough weather – boy! I never had such a headache in

my life as the one I had when I came down after that, but strangely enough, I greased in one of the sweetest landings I've made in this old junk-box to finish it off. Then I had a small hour “sand-bag time (co-pilot) with my buddy, Ramon, while he fought the battle of Stuttgart up in the traffic pattern, trying to shoot a landing or two. Why in hell someone doesn't get killed every two second around here is beyond me – Brooklyn has nothing on the finals of this field when they decide they'll all land first on one runway – and I declare, I think we'd even scare those New York taxi drivers – if *they* dent a fender or so, *they* can always get out and fight it out!

- Jeepers, I just stopped a moment to hear Gladys Swarthout finish up the Prudential program with the old familiar “Bless this house, oh Lord, . . .” Does that bring sweet memories to you? This time of year I was probably coming in from good old MerionField from a thrilling battle when that old Matlack – Barnes combination dusted off another game. And you'd be rushing 'cause you were late for waiting. We'd probably pass John G. on the stairs, who would no doubt confront us with one of his most caustic and climactic “Ughs”, when we nearly demolished him with some of our usual clowning and two-story bullet passes. Or maybe we'd have spent a quiet day sleeping, reading the Sunday papers (New York and Philadelphia ones, God bless them), a little unstudious studying, several expensive trips to the Pharmacy, several letters like the one of last week-end looking very dejected and useless in their dissected glory in the waste basket. How much would you give to sit again in one of those two decrepit chairs of ours, smoking the sworn-off cigarettes we were rewarding ourselves with for our distinguished martyrdom on the practice fields and in the class rooms? And right now I'd come close to the “right-arm” estimate just to sit around in a heavy sweater and open collar and slacks – and saddle-shoes – and maybe even just that football sweater I've never seen. But most of all – no matter what clothes or room – how I'd love to have quiet Willy Ambler walk in for the Span-

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ish assignment – or Bill Lee (wasn't that our Boston Rhinie's name?) come in to say hello – or John G. come in to recruit a delegation to the Pharmacy or points "moister" – or John Carey drop in to have us drop over to the "Straw" for a quick Sunday supper. And do you miss just a little a bull session or tantrum from Renee, a session in the hated labs, the bustle and hidden sparkle of Dean Mac and Felix, an afternoon of sweat on the ball field, a Youth concert, a whistle at a passing vision straight from Heaven, a fried-egg sandwich –

(Chow interrupted me here and I got distracted – I think you know the climax of my yearnings was the constant "us" which is the strength of all these memories.)

I guess you kinda picture my mood, can't you! Same old wistful, moody guy. Those things are gone now forever out of reach, but there are new things to distract us. I guess someday I'll miss my flying and some of my buddies, although as usual the present seems pretty empty in comparison with the past and the dreamed-of future.

Well, honey-chile, believe it or not, my time has flitted by again, and I must be up at 5:00 again tomorrow to fly as soon as it gets light. I am still anxiously awaiting the reply to my invitation to my best-beloved which I finally composed and got off last Wednesday. I do hope she'll be able to come down to good old "Engleberry" while I'm home, and I only wish you and Ruthie could join us for a double-date. In a couple of weeks, if the weather hold out, I hope I won't have anything left but night flying, so I may have a little more time for writing. More soon anyhow – Have loads of fun –

Lonesomely,  
Willy Ham

*Just a fragment of another letter to Beans telling of one hairbreadth escape. It helps us to understand how accidents can easily happen while these boys learn to fly.*

Stuttgart Army Air Field

Stuttgart, Arkansas  
Sunday, October 17<sup>th</sup>, 1943

Dear Beanser,

\* \* \* \* \*

The Air Corps is full of excitement and thrill for me, but there are so many of them and no pause at all in schedule that many of them slip by unrecorded. I've quite given up lately trying to recount each event for each person, but if some of my letters are kept, someday I might get a tremendous kick out of seeing some of them and then recounting the events that are brought to mind by them. One such occasion occurred last Tuesday night. I had intended to write to you about it since you will soon be up against the same things, but there is one other who has even better priorities on those matters just now since she's on the spot right now – that's my sister Molly in the WAFS. She's going through the mill of Primary now, and it's probably tougher for her a hundred-fold than it was for me. So she needs all the support she can get. She'll be past that stage by the time you get up against it.

It all had to do with *bad weather*. A warm front moved in in the middle of the night and we were all flying. Storm, fog, and rain all came in like a bat out of whoopee and brother, were we scared! Miraculously enough we all got in alive and unscathed, but there were some mighty close calls, including Ramon who made it just in time, his engines coughing out before he could park – out of gas! We all were scared stiff, and you never saw a more quiet and awe-struck bunch of hoodlums in your life than that bunch in the chow hall in the wee small hours, still trembling by the stoves with hot coffee in 'em and all. The toughest rowdy there spilled more than one tear in his coffee, and the dirtiest and lowest of any were openly admitting their calling to the Powers that Be for help that night.

Gotta run now –

Devotedly,

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Willy Ham

*From Salt Lake City to Molly in Texas – a lovely account of his leave.*

Salt Lake City, Utah  
Friday, November 19, 1943

Dear Molly:

Thanks a million for the money and the telegrams. I'm back in the old G.I. again now, but I sure had a wonderful time while I was home and your gift certainly was apropos. I can't see how you can have had that much to part with, and I certainly appreciate the sacrifice and unselfish devotion it represents.

Golly, it was swell to see everyone again. I certainly missed you, though, and pray that it won't be long before we can be home together again.

According to schedule Betty was coming down for a weekend. I had sorta lined things up with Mom who had done all the work, and altogether we had one super weekend lined up. I had reservations in the Café Rouge to see Tommy Dorsey on Friday night. And when I got home I found that Mr. Van Alstyne had gotten a couple of tickets to the Army-Notre Dame game for us through some colonel – fifty yard line, front row stuff – or almost!

But when I got home I found out something else, too. Betty had sent down a note saying that something was amiss – some smoking rule or something – and no one could leave school! Well, you can imagine how much I had dreamed of such a weekend in a year in the G.I. away from home – so it was pretty hard to take that news.

But, of course, Daddy was pleased as Punch when I asked him to go to the game with me, although they really tried to get me to get another gal to go. We had a good time. The game wasn't very close – the Army boys getting pushed around right from the start, but Notre Dame was good and was quite something to

watch.

I went up to Choate Sunday and saw Rickie. I could almost cry, I'm so proud of that little kid, and how big a job he is doing as though it were nothing. And he is so touchingly devoted and proud of you and me. It is one of the biggest sacrifices I make for the war not being near him where I can watch him grow and be near him just in general. But then he is one of the biggest reasons why I must go to war. For a child of his possibilities must have the opportunity to have the happy, intelligent development he is getting now.

And it was nice to see the garden and chickens you all have seen and talked about, and that mean so much to Daddy and Richie. It was swell to sit in the kitchen and munch on fried egg sandwiches, bananas, and quarts of milk while Mom hustled and bustled around as she always has. Daddy put most of his business out the window while I was home, so I saw a lot of him – more than I've seen of him before I left home for a long time. He and Mom were so proud, so loving, - and I could hardly bear to see the look in their eyes and Richie's when I had to leave. All of them were taking that last moment hard – as they knew it very well may be the *last* time, and it was almost too much for them and me, but we all managed to hang on until we had separated. Richie was allowed to come down Friday afternoon and see me off Saturday. I could hardly take it when I left him on Tuesday morning. He was so grown up and proud and, oh, my Lord, he has the power of few old people already, and it was only just at the very last few minutes that the sunny, proud front wavered and broke. The tears just poured down his face, but his eyes were open and his chin still up. I have seldom been more affected than I was then when I knew how deep was his understanding and love, and yet I had built up a resistance so that I could appear to take those hard situations well, and I was so afraid he wouldn't know how hard it was for me to leave him just as it was hard for him to let me leave.

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## **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 \$15.00 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 \$15.00 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 the newsletter for the Association, The 461<sup>st</sup> Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reun-

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)*

He had Mom and Daddy with him, though, when I left him Saturday in the station and it was they who took it hardest then.

Such sadness as I have put here! But it's only to show the strength of our beautiful family love and pride which is the big thing in my life and which made my leave so wonderful. You are just as much a part of that miracle as any, Molly, and your dear telegrams and the efforts and sacrifices behind them only made it more clear. Oh, how I wish you could have been there! They have exactly the same pride and love for you and so do I, and I thank God that you need not go overseas, for I fear they could not take your departure as well as mine. Goodness knows your life is constantly at risk, but you will not have to see and partake in and perhaps receive the horrors of war. I look up to you as big sister, and I am so proud I almost bust, that I shall go across specifically so that courageous and beautiful people like you, who would if you could, will not.

Everyone was wonderful about admiring my beautiful uniform, my bars, and my wings. That's the order of their notice usually much to my quiet scorn since I would have been proud had I had nothing but those wings to show off. "Gee, what do those make you – a bombardier?"!! I could have kicked Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ for that. He knew darn well I flew, but, of course, he didn't know the pride and significance we pilots attach to ourselves.

The first day I was home I went into N.Y.C and got some wings from Lord & Taylor so that I could pin my G.I. ones on Mom. She was so proud. And I got Daddy a little, little pair that will not embarrass him in size, but so that he can express his pride, too, and Richie has a middle-size pair. He's like the big kind, of course, but I didn't think he ought to have them to possibly lose at school, and, when I told him that we wore the same sized ones on our shirts so's not to tear them, he was quite satisfied. And I got him a big, plaid flannel shirt, a la Mom and N.Y.C. on which he has put an Air Corps arm patch insignia. I'm so afraid he'll rub it in

on the other boys up there by so much display, but he's so desperately proud of you and me, and Mom and Daddy seem to think he'd be O.K.

He's been wearing two silver stars for us, and now he wears my wings and still the star for you. I hope I haven't stolen the show from you – maybe you'll be able to find a small pair of WASP wings which he can alternate with mine after you graduate.

Salt Lak City and the Rockies are beautiful, but the Army base is God-awful! We are restricted now for the bad conduct of the bombardiers who preceded us here, but we'll be shipped before many weeks go by. The rumor and fact are painfully similar – co-pilot on banana-wagons for all of us! I'm afraid that's it, but I shan't gripe to you, too. More soon, honey chile. Thanks again for your gift and greetings.

Your loving brother,  
Bill

*While Bill was writing this lovely letter to his sister whom he loved so deeply, and of whom he was so justly proud, she herself was being handed an utterly crushing defeat, if one can call what happened to her a defeat. She was being eliminated from the WASP training in Texas.*

*After progressing excellently through the first half of the course, she ran afoul of the crookedness which apparently so completely engulfed the organization that the tiny group of fearless men who protested in her behalf were powerless to help. The official explanation was a stereotyped routine one. Molly and Bill and the rest of us were convinced that it was a cheaply fabricated falsehood, but we could get no other, not even from the highly placed official in the War Department who was presumably responsible.*

*The news of this disaster was a devastating blow to Bill. Foul play always scorched his sportsman's soul, and, of course, enormously*

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*so when it involved one so intimately dear to him as his sister. And it caught him at a time when he was having his own troubles. He was at a dispersal point awaiting assignment – after the strenuous business of advanced training he was cooped up with nothing to do. He was also confronted with the likelihood, which soon became an actuality, that he would not be allowed to fly a fighter plane. He never changed his feeling of deepest disappointment over this assignment.*

*Just what happened to him in the way of his Army experiences in those few weeks we do not yet know, but within a few weeks he was sent from Salt Lake City to Colorado Springs to Boise to Fresno so fast that most of the time no one knew where he was or was to be. No mail reached him for a long time, and his Christmas things went to a place from which he had already been moved and from which they could not be forwarded in time.*

*Some of the letters he wrote during this period blaze with the anger we should expect Bill to exhibit, particularly with respect to Molly's situation. We are not printing them. Several letters to his chum, Beans, tell more frankly than do those to the family of the depths of bitterest despair through which his tortured soul was dragged during those few weeks. It was clearly his time of greatest danger. And through it all he was utterly alone – out of touch with family and friends and confronted by human relations in which, to use the most remote negative, he could find no inspiration.*

*So it is important to remember that some of the following letters were written just after these experiences which could permanently have embittered a lesser soul. All of them were written within the next short half year.*

Peterson Army Air Field  
Colorado Springs, Colorado  
Thursday, December 2, 1943

Dear Mr. Niehaus:

I wish I had time to tell you of all the many little things that I noticed and absorbed while I was at Choate a few weeks ago. But I can't let another day go by without at least a word or two to let you know what a thrill it was to go back again and how pleased I was the lovely way Choate seems to have taken these serious days in its stride. There is such an important job for a school like Choate to do these days, and I was awfully afraid that most of the men who could see that job clearly and know how to tackle it would no longer be at the school's disposal.

At any rate, the school seemed to me to be just as I left it – or perhaps *more so!* The only visible evidence that war was knocking at the door was rather a noticeable difference in the average age of the Choate boy, and I think there was just a little more serious and down-to-earth atmosphere prevailing, which is all to the good to my way of thinking. But more than ever I was impressed with "the Choate Boy". They're such a distinct kind of boy. They come from all over and from different backgrounds as could be, I guess, although most have had the benefit of good homes behind them. But it only takes a short time at Choate and they all are Choate boys. They are courteous and at ease all at once and so on the ball! And I can't help feeling that the source of the whole thing is in the Choate Chapel. The feeling of unity and companionship that the Head makes in those simple services just can't help develop an attitude of receptiveness in the boys, and there is no better guidance and more valuable teaching than what is said in that lovely building by the Head and the wonderful visiting speakers he seems to have a knack of selecting.

And the dining hall there is something unique, too, I daresay. Seldom has the hearing of a few simple words struck deeper in my heart than hearing again those familiar words of Grace before each meal by the Head or Mr. Pratt. And I actually did choke when we sang the Sunday Prayer before dinner. I remembered nearly every word, but the beauty and simplicity of them struck me with new depth. It

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**461st BOMB GROUP  
FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
FOR THE TWELVE MONTHS ENDED OCTOBER 31, 2015**

**Cash Balances - November 1, 2014**

Checking account	<u>\$7,195</u>
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**Income**

Reunion income	37,051
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Dues and memberships	<u>200</u>
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Total Income	<u>37,251</u>
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**Expenses**

Reunion expenses	34,286
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Liberaider expenses	936
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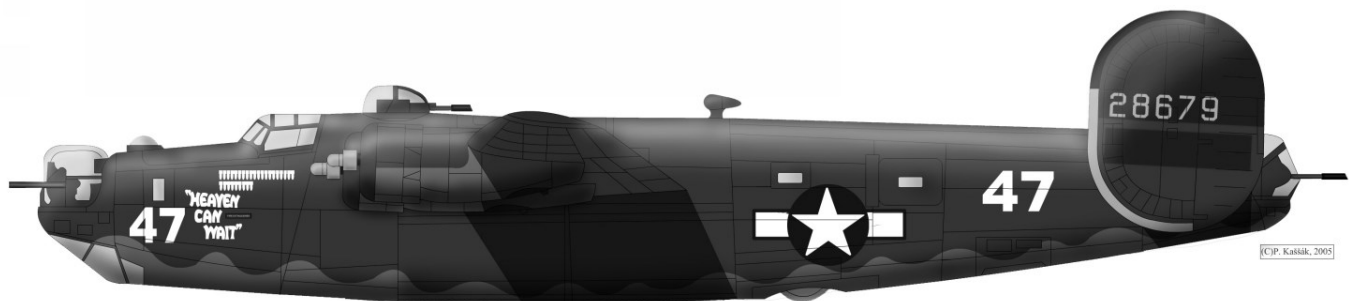
Other expense	<u>241</u>
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Total expenses	<u>35,463</u>
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Net loss for period	<u>1,788</u>
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**Cash Balances - October 31, 2015**

Checking account	<u><u>\$8,983</u></u>
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[C.P. Kubiak, 2005]



*(Continued from page 19)*

was quite a communion for me.

I doubt if any other school has such a friendly and courteous atmosphere at meal time, with the beautiful manners second nature and really no trouble for anyone. There is an example of the devoted guidance of the Masters, too. Oh, It must be somewhat dull to you once in a while since you have the same routine every day and will have had it so for so long. I know my first impressions were soon dimmed by repetition when I was there, but after being away for a while everything stood out so clearly – what a treasure Choate is, and how few people will ever know it out of the millions in this country and the world over!

I have no more time to let my mind wander, but I did want to let you know how deeply thrilled I was to live again just a few hours the wonders that are Choate. Never in your most discouraged moments fear that you have worked to no avail, for just the fact that you are such an integral part in the production and maintenance of the treasure that is Choate is enough for any man to live and die for. If some come and go without appearing to receive what you offer, or even declaring to the contrary in rash moments, do not let it faze you. Even the least of them takes away some traits of the Choate atmosphere that he will never lose, and though you may never see them for what they are, there are many that carry Choate away with them in their hearts, and their whole lives will be built on the strength and ideals and faith of our school.

No four star General has more right to a feeling of pride and inspiration in the job he has done and is doing for his organization, for his country, and for all men than the Head for his job. Like the general he has reached the maximum degree of honor and confidence that those who believe in him and his work can express to him, and yet each new day a new wonder is performed by him and every day he is with us we may be most thankful for the lives saved and the new focus for good in the world that have survived or are born anew.

And no lesser ranking officer has more right to the same feeling of pride and inspiration for the integral part of the whole big job that he is doing that he is sustaining and excelling in than you and the other Masters of Choate who have devoted in the past, and continue to devote, their whole lives, loves and faiths to Choate's special brand of wondrous and infinitely potential phenomena called Youth.

I am so impressed with and proud of your letter that I'm going to take back what I said at first. I shall not enclose your letter, but shall send it to you via home.

You do not know how hard it has been to cling to the ideals and purposes I have cut out for myself during this past year in the Army. It is sometimes discouraging when one so young as I observes soberly for the first time what a minute fraction of civilization people like Choate and my family and my "best gal" are. But I know there are millions of us and I have faith that the numbers will increase because of the ceaseless, life-long efforts of people like you. My faith is as strong as granite now for I have believed, been exposed to the opposite point of view and nearly thrown into an attitude of doubt, and then I have seen proof beyond all doubt that my ideals and intentions are not utterly fantastic and are worth living and dying for if necessary.

My parents have passed a good part of their lives away with the same faith and untiring effort, and, although they are already quite convinced that they have established a growing band to carry the torch afresh when the time comes, they will be ever so proud, as I am, to know that someone as important as you has also lent encouragement to me in recognition of my young, but sure faith in the common good.

I don't know why I seem to trend toward elaborate phrases at times like this, because I have not those powers. Mr. Fitts would have a fit at my split infinitives and prepositions ending sentences, but, if I can convey the feeling in my

*(Continued on page 22)*

(Continued from page 21)

heart, my purpose is accomplished, and even dear old Dudley might look the other way when he was tempted to hack away with the sensor's scissors and send the remains back with a sarcastic rebuke like his "awfully sleep-provoking!" – if he recognized the intent behind this.

Thanks ever so much for your hospitality while I was there. I'm sorry we had that phone call to make so that we had to leave so quickly, but I'm glad I got to say hello at least to Mrs. Niehaus and I was ever so intrigued by your cute daughters. Your cider and cookies were really appreciated, 'specially as it's the only cider I've had this season.

Thanks again for everything – long ago, recently and in the future 'til I see you again. I'll send the letter home tonight and they'll send it on to you right away. Until another time, then, I am –

Very sincerely yours,  
Bill Barnes

*From Hammer Field, Fresno, California. A pretty lovely Christmas Eve letter to the family at home.*

Fresno, California  
Christmas Eve, 1943

Dear Daddy,

I haven't written you a special letter in ages, and the time approaches when my opportunities are likely to be even further apart, so I mustn't let this chance go by to say hello and let you know that you are never out of my thoughts either.

I'd been kinda lonesome heckling the mail clerk these last few days when I got no mail, but today I was rewarded amply by several cards, a government check, a letter from Mom, and a note from Molly a la Christmas card. I ate up every word and was a lot more contended to look at the approaching day ahead unflinchingly.

\* \* \* \* \*

It must be nice to have Molly around again. And certainly Richie must inspire an extra spring in your step with his lively presence these days. Perhaps he cheers Molly, too. Anyway, Christmas may not be as reflectively merry as we should like it to be this year, but it will be considerably warmer from the homey companionship point of view. Of course, there will be two places at the dinner table that will remain silent this year, but it will not be so long before they shall be filled again with a gayer, more carefree chatter and laughter than you will have heard for many years. Until then we shall have to commune in thought and spirit and each try to be content with the little things God puts in our lives to make them bearable till better days.

I have had two offers for Christmas dinner and know of one or two more that are there if I take the initiative. I think tomorrow noon will probably find me in company with Bob Simons, my pilot. We have been almost inseparable since we met, and I hesitate to hang around him too much for fear of becoming a nuisance. He has had no leave since he came into the Army 16 months ago and probably will not get one till he comes back from "over there" but his mother, brother, and one sister have come out to be with him for a week or so if he's around. They arrived this morning and I have not yet met them, but he has asked me to go to dinner with them tomorrow. He's so nice, his family can hardly help be the same kind, so I've picked that as the nicest atmosphere available since he's been quite insistent, although I think a great deal of it is just being decent. I don't think he'll mind my company, though, and perhaps he even does really want it. At any rate, we shall see, what we shall see.

Weather has kept my experience in my new ship with my new crew far below expectancy recently, but they are pretty well finished with everything anyway until we get *our own*, brand new ship. Then there'll be a lot of work to do upstairs and down and probably no time, in contrast to now. But where I have missed one thing I've gained on lots of others. I've gotten

(Continued on page 23)



*(Continued from page 22)*

to know the whole crew pretty well and we've done lots more things together where I can get to know them than if we'd been flying all the time. I've also gotten a million and one little things out of the way, that must be done before I can clear P.O.E. (Port of Embarkation), which everyone else has long since taken care of. I've got one shot left which comes tomorrow and then I'll be completely medical clear. I've already been through the various physicals and inspections and other record qualifications necessary. I have picked up a lot of equipment and have the rest ordered. My pay is finally all taken care of and all up to date. The check I got today was for travel pay from Boise to Fresno and I've turned in all the million and one papers and documents and vouchers necessary to get paid at the end of this month – paid for everything including November and December's flying pay.

\* \* \* \* \*

I'm sitting in the Officers Club now – a lonely, well-furnished room with quite a warm friendly atmosphere prevailing. There are favorite records in a record machine here to add their help in my case. And everyone is quite friendly. It's Christmas Eve, and I should love to be home now, slowly rising from the traditional feast, gazing on the rosy, happy, contented faces of those I love around me. I should soon be busily at work trimming the tree with Kitty and Richie. Richie and I should have set it up this morning and Kitty would be getting her special kick out of supervising the trimming down to every last single strand of shiny tinsel. Then we would retire to the sofa in front of the fire in the parlor and talk a while – perhaps sing a Christmas Carol or two – then open the one traditional present apiece and slowly climb upstairs to a lovely sleep, reminiscing pleasantly on Mom's wonderful turkey dinner, the talk, and the pretty scenes, and anticipating the happiness and serenity of the morrow.

I cannot be there, nor can Kitty, but we shall always remember those scenes and pray for more. I know Kitty cannot let that season and its many strong emotional ties to home pass

without sincere longing, and, if that is the case, you may be sure that it will not be long till she is back again for that occasion. There will probably be a new young face then, or maybe more. That face will shine with the wondrous awe of Christmas as brightly as any other when the day comes. We cannot deny him even a little when he comes – or she – for you know Who said, "Let the little children come to me" – and so they will. Let us pray that Christmas will be that way someday.

I am afraid my inner thoughts are not well concealed or perhaps it's just my present occupation, for several friendly pals have offered their best to cheer me up. I am not unhappy. I am ever so content inside to be able to sit and think these things and write a few of them to you on this special eve. My navigator has offered his rum! A captain – one of the Group Staff – who has passed several smiles in passing finally came over and offered a long list of different alcoholic beverages, putting them at my disposal in the bar. He knew my name without asking. That is one of the nice things of my present set-up. We are at last in a unit preparing to fight together – from the Colonel of the Group through the Squadron and Flight Commanders down to my pilot and my crew. All the officers are sincere and interested and no longer out of reach. It's their necks if they are, and so they've picked up a congenial attitude that is pleasant beyond compare after the awful happenings of the last month. Needless to say, I have not taken advantage of their offers, although I do take them sometimes in moderation since it seems advantageous to pleasant atmosphere with my companions.

Instead of turkey dinner, my appetite was content with a sandwich and milk. And instead of trimming a tree I must go fly a Link Trainer now – yes, at *this* hour. I am already almost late, so must run. I shall think of you all tomorrow and do not worry that I shall be sad over my loneliness. I miss you, but I shall divert sadness and as I've said there are many who have it at heart to be friendly. My crew is already nearly devoted and will probably help the day by a lot.

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More soon, Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Lots of love to all,  
Bill

*From Hammer Field, Fresno, to his family. Among other things he tells of very cold hands while flying formation at high altitude. In the next letter, to Beans, Bill explains more fully that this flight was his second time up, and some other reasons why he was not going to be stopped by cold hands!*

Hammer Field  
Fresno, California  
Friday, January 7, 1944

Dear Family,

I am so awfully sorry for my long period of silence of late, for surely by now you must have assumed something that is not true yet, and you will have to "wonder" all over again. I'm terribly sorry, I kept meaning to send a card, but then I had to say "no, I'll be here tonight to write a letter", and so it went, for I was no more on my own at night than in the day. This time no matter how short this is, I shall send off word at least that I am still here, safe and sound, and absorbing great quantities each day of things that give me and nine other men a better chance "over there" soon. Please excuse the hen-tracks, and try to decipher them as well as you can.

My hands are numb cold and I can't hold the pen tight or even hardly feel it yet. I trust I shall thaw out soon. While we're on the subject I really froze my left hand fingers the first day I went up. We flew high altitude formation, and I could hardly believe the pilot would trust me that soon in such circumstances. However, my formation practice in Advanced came in handy and he let me fly most of the time. It was terribly cold, though, around minus 10° F! I was afraid, if I told him how cold my hands were that I wouldn't get any more flying that afternoon, so I kept quiet. It was rather painful, but the formation was fun and I was really getting hot after

sunset! When we got down, though, and he took over to peel off and go in to land, I couldn't move my hand from the forearm down. It was quite amusing to see, and the pilot gets a great kick out of describing it over and over. My hands and fingers were just frozen stiff over the throttles and I had been working by pushing from my shoulder. Anyhow, I was intent on formation, it being one of my most dogmatic practices never to take my eyes off the lead ship in formation. So he tapped my hands to take over and nothing happened – I didn't feel a thing. Then he slapped it – even that didn't attract attention. So he had to lift my wrist and arm up and off the throttles. My fingers were grooved right to the shape of the throttles and remained in that exact same shape. We both had a good laugh at that and have had many since when he reflects upon the scene. As you can imagine, though, it was rather painful in the freezing process and likewise in the thawing process. I still have a funny numbness under my fingernails and sort of a deadness in the nerves of the fingertips. I've burned myself with matches several times and seen the results but never felt them. More fun! Don't worry, though, - just laugh sympathetically. There is no permanent damage, I'm sure, since everything is pretty normal again – but it was some experience!

That's a fine way to start a short note when there are so many more important things to say before my time runs out. But count that for the flying story of the day, and, if I don't have a chance now, remind me to tell you of the trip to Guadalupe Island some time and of my unexpected view of "Niagara Falls" a la a weather-front.

As for any further freezing hands, you may rest assured that such will never again be the case. The Army came across with some big wooly gloves. But yours are ideal and far the best. That brings me to the Christmas presents for which I must take this belated opportunity to thank you. Those gloves were wonderful, and I'll get them through P.O.E. somehow, even if I must send my G.I. ones home.

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(Continued from page 24)

Of course the big joy of them all was the pictures. I shall be so proud every time I look at Molly beside her P.T. And it won't be long till she will be in the same clothes and atmosphere again, I'm sure. And the picture of Richie in his plaid and Air Corps insignia and wings – oh, that's such a wonderful picture of him! It is Richie all over as I want to remember him till I can see him again. And the picture of Mom and Daddy is awfully good and something that has been missing for a long time. Now I have you all where I can see you at any moment. I shall try to go to the PX today and see if I can't find some sort of cellophane-plastic contrivance to put them in. The other pictures are lovely, too, and no less appreciated. They are certainly beautiful shots, a real tribute to Daddy's efforts, and lovely refreshers of pictures never to be washed from my memory . . . . With those treasured pictures to keep me company, I am as well fortified as I could possibly be for the long dreary months ahead.

I was a little depressed, but very deeply touched and ever so grateful for Molly's gift of her Ray-Bans. It was painful to think that she might mean she wouldn't be using them again, but I know that's not true, and that makes me just doubly touched by the spirit behind such a treasured gift. I shall try to take good care of them and bring them back soon. Meanwhile perhaps she'll find some almost as good in N.Y.C. to substitute while I'm gone. I'm very proud of them and think of their original owner every time I put them on. And I really use them often, too. For that sun is bright up there in the high altitudes where it's so clear and where often there is a floor of reflecting clouds below. In formation up there they are invaluable, since I cannot afford to look away or close my eyes or anything for even a fraction of a second – not the way I fly formation anywho! And the wallet is beautiful, too. I'm keeping the pictures in it now till I find a more suitable place, since it's so clean and soft. So I have it with me all the time. And you can't imagine how the food disappeared! Richie's knife was swell, too, since my old scout knife is pretty battered now and we're supposed to have a pocket knife.

And Boof's present was wonderful, too. I take it you didn't know about it since you haven't mentioned it. I thought perhaps you sent it at first. When she heard that I was to pass Christmas present-less in a new strange place, she wired five dollars to a friend in Oakland who sent a lovely package of assorted candy and cake, etc. It was a wonderful gift, lasting for ages, but the thought was even more beautiful. Thanks to her sweet idea, I did have a package to open Christmas day! I shall try very hard to write her my thanks before I go but please substitute for me until I can get a chance. And thank you all again for all the lovely gifts and letters and thoughts and words that have pulled me back up on top again at such an important time. I can't possibly answer all the lovely letters – but thanks from the bottom of my heart. I say hello through the stars every night.

More about flying, the crew, and my stay at Hammer another time. I love you all very much and think of you constantly. 'Bye now.

Lots of love to all,  
Bill

*Part of the farewell letter to Beans before Bill went overseas. He could talk more freely with his pal about his own accomplishments, than with his family, without seeming to boast.*

Army Air Base  
Hanner Field  
Fresno, California  
Tuesday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 1944

Dear Beanser,

\* \* \* \* \*

To skip any further transition of moods, and similarly deleting for the time being descriptions of my new enlivening of human sensibilities, feelings and interests – not to say desires – for all these started again out of complete beginning as though I was reborn – after those awful weeks – to skip the rest of that – I shall now

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come up to date.

As you see I am a member of a definite Bomb Group and Squadron. This is not a training group, but a combat group – all done and ready for business. I arrived as they were putting on the finishing touches to this and that and having their *big* missions including all the tactics and duties and assignments that had just been learned and practiced separately before. So I got quite a bit of flying time right off the bat. I have never seen an “instructor pilot”! I just went up with the pilot of the crew to which I had been assigned and that was that. His co-pilot had had his appendix out and would not be ready for combat by the time he was needed, so - !

It didn't take long to get the feel of this darn thing, although it certainly was different and took real work and concentration to become quickly adjusted. I was marked “Qualified” on the status board a few days after arrival! The second day up I went on a Squadron high altitude bombing mission and flew formation most of the time we were up, since the pilot strangely sensed my knack of formation flying and without any further ado sat back and was glad to have an eager-beaver to sweat it out – likewise to give all the time possible to this new greenhorn. We flew for long hours in the daylight getting through the last of our “runs” after sunset down on the ground. So I got in some night formation time, too, and I mean *hot* formation, on the *second time up* in the darn contraption! It was even tighter than my pilot dared go, and he's one of the best formation flyers I've ever ridden with! Needless to say that was a break all around, 'cause I couldn't have asked for a better, quicker, and more thorough way of getting the feel of my new ship than that and so soon – without the usual years of red-tape transition – so unnecessary. And the crew knew I was fresh out of gadgets and with no 4-engine time, and don't you think they weren't looking closely with the old chip-on-the-shoulder idea – since they were all set for combat – watching everything I did to see what

they'd drawn out of the unwanted stab at the grab-bag. It helped me no end to gain their confidence and toleration for future hours of mistakes and fumbings while I learned.

\* \* \* \* \*

I liked this being accepted as an equal even before I knew whether I could be or not. It was fun to fly a group mission with 30 or 40 planes around me, accepted as capable a part as anyone else. And my pilot is a cracker-jack good pilot. He really can bring this baby in sweetly. And he knows all that maze of radio equipment and all the rest of his job down to a T. We get along darn well, too, living together right from the start. I'm still too young and radical, still and all I think I've been very lucky in getting successfully established among the crew.

\* \* \* \* \*

My pilot is an A-1, cracker-jack pilot, and as far as air work goes I have no complaints to offer – and many sincere praises. We click well up there, too, never yet running into any friction and cooperating ever-so-pleasingly well. We really get cooking together up there, and believe you me, I am no bystander. There are not just three, but all four of us officers, who have felt the same sense of common accomplishment and precise, enjoyable teamwork playing off with maximum dividends. Evidently in my few weeks I have done no end of things that the other co-pilots who'd been there from the start of the phases some months ago had never been allowed to try. Hard to believe, but apparently true, from the reports of the rest of the crew. *Formation* was one of those things! Ain't that something! And I took it on the second day up! I still can't figure it out. I have already started landings and take-offs, but we finish up the last of our required missions before I got one all to myself all the way in. I hope we can go up and fly the pattern one of these days and then I'll have done everything.

We have our own new plane now. It's ours –

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and no one else can ever come near it – not the Colonel himself – unless we say so. And there are loaded pistols, also our own, to back that statement up. Of course, that's not likely to happen, since we'd soon regret it, but that's how really ours it is. We guard it 24 hours a day and own everything on it. No one else but my pilot and I can fly it. Of course, if it were anything but this damnable, death-trap, the B-24, I could be more happy in my new distinction as second in command of a plane in the USAAF, but I'm still very proud, 'cause it's a *lot* of junk anyway. It couldn't be much bigger. "Aces and aces...and all mine!" But it's still pretty good – full of up-to-date and amazingly wonderful, brand new equipment. The gunners are proud of their guns and the bombardier has his own bomb-sight now. The navigator has calibrated all the instruments and dials on the ship to his own and the pilot's needs and satisfaction. The engineer like the new, up-to-date ship in comparison to the decrepit, old junk boxes he had been training in. And the radio man beams at all that shiny, new equipment – all his. It's a pretty good feeling even at the loss of the last hopes of a pea-shooter, for this time over, anyhow.

And when we rode out into the Pacific on a Navigation mission to an imaginary point of intersection of some "coordinates" and then took off in a different direction for nearly a thousand miles – and hit an island not more than four or five miles long and a mile or two wide – having flown instruments almost the whole time – don't you think there wasn't a pretty contented and slightly cocky crew on the way home! The Navigator was the boy that day and he hit it square! I mean, we hit that island without any possible gypping. His ETA wasn't 00, but then who wants to have everything perfect now! But there was rather a warm feeling around that cockpit, too. We were all "riding" the navigator, but who held the heading and air speed all those long tedious hours! And it was a 50-50 job. The pilot took a chance on me – and- wahoo!

\* \* \* \* \*

I must close now, Beanser. I've turned over a lot of irreplaceable pages, but it's only planted my old self deeper in the old soil. If I don't write as often, I shall still think of you as often or more than before, and I measure the future by the length of time till we may be together again. If you don't get my APO, please write my home and ask for it. I await eagerly fresh news from you after these long months. I'm pulling all the way for you with flying and am confident in you as I still am in my sister. I'll pray for the best of everything for you always –

Devotedly,  
Bill

*Just a fragment of a letter from North Africa.*

c/o Postmaster, New York, N.Y.  
February 19, 1944

Dear Mom,

\* \* \* \* \*

And almost everywhere I turn, I am reminded over and over again of my wonderful parents and all they have done and are doing for me and my brother and sisters to say nothing of millions of other people. I can never thank you enough just for bringing me up to see things as I do and not letting me wander haphazardly into the state of many of my companions. Darned if I'm any goody goody but thank God I believe as Daddy does, for instance, that "womanhood at its best is as near divinity as anything we men encounter on this earth, and we can only worship it and lay the best we have on its altar."

Off to chow, etc., again now –

Loads of love to all,  
Bill

*There is more to the Barnes story, but enough for this issue. I'll continue this story in the next issue of the Liberaider.*

*(Continued from page 1)*

new aircraft commander. He was from West Virginia, bringing with him all the grace and courtliness of his home state. He was recently married to Billie, a vivacious brunette from his home state. They adopted all of us as family, and he was always intensely loyal to everyone on the crew, often defying the wrath of the upper echelon officers. He saw his responsibility to each member clearly, and was an excellent pilot. The original nose gunner was Elmer Singbiel, from Detroit. He was shot through the hand in Tunis with a .45 and spent the rest of the war in the hospital.

Our new nose gunner, Harvey Dominick, had been shot down, evaded capture, and returned to fight another day. He told about hiding for days in a cave, and finally being adopted by a Partisan band and returned. Earl Roylance was the navigator on his original crew, and he also turned up later with tales of a Partisan band, and a hearty woman who nursed him back to health, carrying his pack for him, and generally looking after him.

## The Flight Over

We picked up B-24J, #44-49598, fresh from Ford's Willow Run plant, and powered by four Pratt & Whitney R1830's, sporting the decals of their maker, Chevrolet! The tires were frozen to the runway so our first take-off was rather bumpy. After a short (relatively) flight, we were ready to go. Our route was to be: Grenier, N.H., Gander, Newfoundland, The Azores, Marrakech, across the Atlas Mountains, Oran (unscheduled – weather), Tunis (El Aouina) and finally Torretta, Italy. The first leg was uneventful. At Grenier, the tanks were drained and refilled, and other systems checked. We landed at Gander in the evening in a light snow storm. Taking off early in the morning for the Azores, we encountered the forbidding North Atlantic weather. First, we were between two layers of Stratus which were not horizontal at

all making us continually check our flight instruments to stay level and on course. Icing conditions soon forced us to climb, which the silver bird did with amazing ease considering the load. At 32,000 feet, I looked back and saw the engineer completely unconscious – his oxygen station was empty. Also, calls to the bombardier, Ralph Lewis, were unanswered – he had gone to sleep during the climb and passed out. I quickly called Ellis Bregman, waist gunner, and he brought up a walk-around bottle reviving Steve. The navigator revived Lewis and we felt really relieved. Meanwhile, Courtney had been flying the airplane, threading his way between towering cumulus and trying to maintain a reasonable course.

Our P.I.F.'s had told us that "cumulus-nimbus sometimes reached a height of 30,000 feet." Today we know that they reach 60,000 feet.

Finally, we let down to about 1,000 feet, the icing disappeared, we picked up the ADF from the Azores, and the rest of the flight was easy. In typical British language, the challenge or password was, "Is your cockerel crowing?" which meant "Is your IFF turned on?" I don't remember a challenge as we coasted in over the quaint landscape dotted with the peculiar cone-shaped rock granaries.

The climate here was soft,, misty, and relatively warm. We got to see little of the villages, though some of the crew went swimming on one of the beaches.

Next stop was Marrakech, in Morocco. I remember little of the base because we were busy getting fed, finding a place to sleep, and trying to pick up a few necessities from the PX. About this time we began to realize what it meant to be transient – most amenities were reserved for permanent party, and we were left to do without the usual candy bars, etc.

The leg to Tunis was interrupted by increasingly bad weather – we had a good flight over the Atlas

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Mountains and across some desert to the northern coast, but the weather got very bad until we were a few hundred feet off the water and we finally settled for Oran some distance from Tunis. The field was inundated by several days of rain and following instructions from the tower, we sank into the nearest mud hole. A Limey came out assuring us he would get us out, but all he did was to get us in deeper. Finally a tractor fit for the job came out and freed us and it continued to rain adding to the mud.

After a couple of days, we made the easy flight east to Tunis where it continued to rain day and night.

The flight up into Italy was uneventful as Sicily had already been taken and Mt. Aetna was still smoking away as it had for a thousand years of history.

We arrived late after dark at what our navigator said was Torretta. A jeep found us soon in the blowing rain, the sign "Follow Me" clear in our landing lights. After a short conversation on the radio, we were instructed to fly across the river to the east and land there. We did.

Our reception there was more hospitable – little did we know at the time that they wanted our aircraft, a brand new B-24 J with only an Atlantic flight on the Chevrolet R1830 Pratt-Whitneys. After finding a tent and some blankets and being exposed to some frightening combat photos (for sale by the local ground crew) we went to sleep. Early the next morning, we grabbed some breakfast and were loaded into a covered 6x6. The river had flooded and washed out the nearby bridge so we were to spend all morning riding up river to the nearest usable bridge to be delivered back to the place where we had landed the night before. It was still raining.

We had loaded the B-24 with almost everything we needed including wooden bulkheads to reinforce the bomb bay doors in case we had to ditch.

But one thing we didn't give up was our 20 cases of K-rations. We managed to keep some 10 cases which turned out to be a wise move. The next day, someone flew our ship across the river where it was assigned to a squadron more needy than ours.

A new combat crew, born into an existing squadron, is an orphan of sorts. The older crews are wondering how good you are at flying close formations and how cool you'll be on the first mission. Also, they've been through the experience of losing close friends and they take their good time about making new ones. So unless you meet some old fellow crewmen, it's a gradual process.

We were spread out among several tents, using the beds (cots) of those either on leave or MIA. I was given a bunk in a 4-man tent with Joe Hooper (Pilot), Fred Bennehoff (Bombardier), and Bud Beach (Navigator).

The co-pilot, MacDonald, was on sick call, supposedly because he couldn't fly a B-24. Superstitiously, he was right. I was received in a gracious manner by these fine people, little knowing that I was to fly with them when not flying with my regular crew.

I flew my first mission with a seasoned pilot whose name was Nixon. It was a real initiation. I remember over the target looking up and to the left at a flight of B-17s about 3,000 feet above us, and envying their extra altitude. That didn't help – suddenly there was a direct hit, and three of them exploded in a ball of AV gas aflame, burning chutes emerging too fast to count.

Back at the runway, I had my first stiff drink of something that did little to erase the events of the last 10 hours, but did put me to sleep in the tent.

**Joe Hooper**

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I flew two missions with the Hooper crew. On the second, we had just come off the target and were being led by some expert gunners firing the typical four bursts at a time, when suddenly the cockpit was filled with acrid smoke. I called Arnie, the engineer and told him I could identify the fire as electrical, and to grab an extinguisher, which he did. Glancing over at Hooper, I saw that he was half out of his coffin seat with his chest pack on. With the fire extinguisher's help, Arnie soon cleared the air of smoke and we discovered that Hooper, at the beginning of the bomb run had clipped on one catch of his chest chute leaving the parachute resting on the landing gear solenoid, thus overheating the solenoid and filling the flight deck and nose compartment with smoke. So much for fooling around with electricity as a kid – the smells stay with you for a lifetime.

Two missions later, I was back with my old crew, and Hooper was on our left wing. Coming off the target, their ship had one engine out and one smoking as it left formation, unable to keep up. We called "Pine Tree," which was the fighter cover when it was there, but we never saw nor heard of the Hooper crew again. This was one of our big morale problems, I think, because of the secrecy surrounding escape routes and sympathetic allies. Sometimes crews would vanish only to show up months later with Walthers and scary tales. And sometimes with fragments of the parachutes that had saved their lives.

Merle Schick and co-pilot Calvert were a couple of examples. One of the crews we knew well was also stationed in our general area, but in another group. The pilot and co-pilot were Merle Schick and Calvert. The bombardier was K. D. (Redhead) Limbacher. The others I have forgotten. In February we were visiting the oil refineries up around Vienna several times a week. The Russians were advancing from the east, and heavy guns, as they were drawn back, were concentrated around the most valuable resources, oil refineries. One day we heard that Schick and his

crew were missing. A couple of months later, Schick and Calvert turned up at the squadron, sporting pieces of their chutes and a couple of Walthers (premium German side arms) and with a strange story of survival. They had been badly shot up over Vienna and had headed for the Russian front to the east. Losing altitude fast, they approached the Hungarian border and waiting until the last possible moment, bailed the crew out, and got out last. They landed in the middle of Lake Balaton, a long narrow body of water, and were besieged by intermittent fire from both sides so all they could do was hunker down and wait until dark. Finally, the Russians came out to rescue them. All the rest of the crew survived also, but were on the western side and spent the rest of the war in a Stalag Luft. They visited Budapest and were treated to a concert by their Russian allies though what they had asked for was the Consul, not a concert! Eventually everything was worked out and they were sent back to their squadron to finish out the war.

Hooper and crew never showed up. Without any tent-mates, I and the rest of our commissioned crew were given a tent together. From that time on, we owned a tent of our own.

Forty years later I learned that Hooper and his crew, including MacDonald, were killed on that day and were forever in the cemetery at Epinal.

## People not forgotten

Greg Mazza. One early morning after picking up all our gear and piling into the truck to be taken out to the aircraft, I was sitting across from Mazza. Still half asleep, he took out his .45, cycled the slide and squeezed the trigger. Fortunately he pointed at the floor of the truck and the slug hit just between my feet. That woke all of us up.

Wasil Glushko. Wasil was our substitute bombardier on one mission. Approaching the IP, in attempting to open the bomb bay doors, he acci-

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rentally salvoed the bomb load through the doors. We made the run, then pulled out to the side fearing that the dangling doors would come off and cut the following aircraft in two. Finally the doors, swinging in the slipstream, came off and we finished the mission with the roar of the open bay in our ears. It was colder than usual that day. We were really glad to get our regular bombardier, Ralph Lewis, back from Nose Turret Navigation School in Bari!

Ned Vahldieck. One of the younger captains in our group. I remember he led us around twice at Vienna in order to make a good run. But he really gained fame when he made a low pass over the squadron and blew down a couple of tents. I think he was fined \$10.00 for this transgression.

We used to take our laundry to a poor family in Cerignola three or four miles to the east nearer the coast. One day, walking home, we passed the "bone yard," a junkyard where there was a graveyard of old aircraft wings, fuselages and various parts groaning in the cold wind. The road passed by the end of a runway belonging to another group

and as we walked by, an aircraft was on final re-turning from the oil refineries around Vienna. The waist gunners waved only a few yards away, no doubt glad to be back. The instant the craft touched down, there was a tremendous explosion and a sheet of flame, flowed by a fireball and exploding ammunition. A bomb had hung up apparently, and jarred loose upon touchdown. It was the task of our bombardier, Ralph Lewis, to walk out on the catwalk to make sure nothing had hung up, and if it had, he risked life and limb to somehow kick the recalcitrant object out.

One day we were carrying 100 pounders (quite a few) and when we dropped, there was a terrific explosion immediately below us. Shrapnel came up through the bomb bay bending several shackles and generally raising hell. Our explanation at the time was that at least two of the bombs had tumbled and hit together armed, and done what bombs were supposed to do. This may have been the time the hydraulic tank was hit and our engineer, Christ Stiefvater, patched it with chewing gum which immediately froze. This was not an original remedy, but Steve kept the gum handy.



Courtney Crew #50R

## **Fifteenth Air Force**

The Fifteenth Air Force in its 18 months of existence during the European World War II made a tremendous contribution to the complete and overwhelming defeat of the Nazi enemy.

It destroyed all gasoline production within its range in Southern Europe.

It destroyed 6286 enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground.

It contributed to the attainment of total air supremacy in the skies of Europe by knocking out all major aircraft factories in its sphere.

It crippled the enemy's transportation system over half of once-occupied Europe by repeated attacks by bombers and fighters.

It came on many occasions to the aid of hard-pressed ground forces or spearheaded the advance of the armies of our Allies.

It dropped 309,126 tons of bombs on enemy targets in twelve countries of Europe including major military installations in eight capital cities.

Its combat personnel made 151,029 heavy bomber sorties and 89,397 fighter sorties against the enemy.

The magnificent record of the Fifteenth was not accomplished without cost in the lives of brave men and the loss of 3,379 aircraft.

The Fifteenth has made AFF history in record breaking flights, number of operational aircraft dispatched on a single mission, longest USSTAF B-24 mission, and in numerous other instances which will always

be proudly remembered by its entire personnel.

Brief summaries of the principal operations of the Fifteenth AAF follows:

### **COUNTER-OIL OPERATIONS**

An achievement in which the Fifteenth AAF is justly proud was the drying up of German fuel supplies through attacks on oil refineries. As a result the vaunted 20<sup>th</sup> Century Wehrmacht was forced to run on 18<sup>th</sup> Century transportation. The first attack in the coordinated campaign to eliminate German gasoline supplies began with a mission against rail yards at Ploesti April 5, 1944. The damage done in this and subsequent rail attacks in the great refinery town convinced AAF planners that the Fifteenth's contention that heavy bombardment could profitably be used against oil installations was sound. This commodity then received top priority for the strategic Allied bombers striking at Germany.

When the campaign began over 50 percent of Germany's total gasoline production was located within range of the Fifteenth. On March 23, 1945, an attack on the great Ruhland synthetic plant and a very minor refinery near Vienna dried up the last known source of gasoline for the German Army. And for months before then, German documents prescribing the most stringent restrictions on the use of fuel testified to the continuing success of the campaign.

Oil is a memory of Fifteenth AAF crewmen marked by great names: Ploesti, Vienna, Brux, Blechhammer, Ruhland – where the enemy was determined in his resistance,

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using aircraft before the decline of the Luftwaffe, smoke screens and always some of the heaviest known concentrations of flak. To the intelligence analysts of the Fifteenth, oil meant refineries drawing on four major sources of the crude product.

Within range of the Fifteenth were three major crude oil basins, in Rumania, Hungary and Austria, and a series of synthetic oil plants in Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. First attacked and first eliminated were the Ploesti refineries. After Rumania gasoline production was reduced from 155,700 tons per month in March 1944 to 15,400 tons per month in August, when captured by the Red Army. With unerring precision the Fifteenth's bombers sought out and destroyed what was left.

Hungary followed Rumania: synthetics – six great plants, at Brux in the Sudetenland, Blechhammer North and South and Odertal in German Silesia. Oswiecim in Polish Silesia and Ruhland, just south of Berlin – were battered. Most were knocked out in a series of instrument attacks in December that earned the tribute from Lt. General Ira C. Eaker, "The Fifteenth AAF is undoubtedly the leading exponent in the world today of blind bombing."

Viennese refineries were operating to the final blows in March, an example of German tenacity in keeping going. Some of them were successfully attacked in early assaults by the Fifteenth; high repair priorities given oil by Nazi planners permitted them to resume production but they were all finally destroyed. But no amount of ingenuity could save the German war machine from squeaking to a halt for lack of modern fuel.

## **COUNTER-AIR OPERATIONS**

The first objective of a strategic air force is to assure complete air superiority so that the task of demolishing the enemy's war economy may be accomplished without prohibitive loss. When "Operation Pointblank" was conceived in the winter of 1944, about 50 percent of the greatly increased single-engine aircraft production, present or contemplated, for the German Air Force was within range of the Fifteenth AAF in Italy.

"Operation Pointblank" was designed to break the back of fighter manufacture which offered a threat to the entire Allied bombing effort. The Germans expected to gain some immunity from air attacks by locating many of the biggest assembly and production complexes to the south, out of range of British-based bombers. In a series of missions which began with the first flown by the Fifteenth November 2, 1943, against Wiener Neustadt, a focal point of one of the three main complexes (Regensburg was another heavily hit by the Fifteenth), the elaborate production schemes of the Luftwaffe were frustrated. By May 1944 estimated actual production stood at about 250 aircraft a month within range of the Fifteenth Air Force as against a contemplated production of 650 aircraft.

The part played by the Fifteenth was carried out in attacks on Wiener Neustadt and its satellite plants as far away as Brasov, the major plants at Regensburg, where ME-109s were also made, and the twin-engine fighters complex in Budapest. By May large-scale production was at an end and German fighter planes were being produced inefficiently and of inferior quality in small dispersal plants, some on the sites

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of the old factories. By the time production figures had risen again, the Luftwaffe was outnumbered and outclassed and fuel and pilot shortages made it no longer a major factor in air battle.

Counter air operations continued to a certain extent throughout the summer and fall of 1944, chiefly in attacks on enemy airdromes. The heavy bombers successfully dropped fragmentation bomb carpets on many airdromes, principally in the Vienna area. The fighters added a new trick in strafing fields crowded with Nazi ground support aircraft fleeing from Red Army advances in the Balkans with phenomenal results. The last chapter of this type of operations came in late March when frag bombs destroyed 108 and damaged 54 German planes in one day. Most were concentrated on two airdromes near Prague, whence they flew against Russian troops in Silesia.

In the winter of 1944/45 the German Air Force introduced operationally the revolutionary jet-propelled ME-262 to oppose heavy bomber penetrations of the Reich. This white hope was never effective against the Fifteenth, although there were a number of engagements when the Italian-based Fortresses flew the longest mission over Europe to Berlin and nearly as arduous trips to the Ruhland synthetic oil plant. The score was well in favor of the Fifteenth, with its fighters accounting for twelve jet planes and the bombers an additional handful. Including those knocked out on the ground in destructive attacks on several key airdromes, the Fifteenth AAF destroyed approximately 160 ME-262s.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

Throughout the time that the Fifteenth

AAF helped to destroy first the German Air Force and then German oil production, the campaign against communications was also waged. This was a campaign often overshadowed but never obscured by other operations.

Communications targets were attacked whenever the Strategic situation permitted, and often, when the tactical situation demanded, received the full attention of the Fifteenth Air Force.

Our own ground forces in Italy and France, the advancing Russian armies in southeastern Europe, as well as the Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Partisans were substantially aided by the wide-spread communications attacks of the Fifteenth AAF.

The campaign reached a high point in December 1944, when 108 attacks against communications targets were carried out. Attacks on the same scale continued throughout February, March and April, chiefly against key centers in Austria. This last phase aimed at disruption of German supply movements from industrial areas within Germany,, Austria and northern Italy to the Italian, Yugoslavian, southern Russian, and western fronts.

The Fifteenth's methods of striking at communications involved both fighters and bombers, seeking to cut lines and to destroy rail traffic. Heavy bombers and dive-bombing Lightnings knocked down bridges and cratered tracks and embankments. Attacks on crowded rail yards and strafing of traffic on the lines blew up and burned vast numbers of locomotives and other rolling stock, as well as supplies and equipment.<sup>4</sup> The communications cam-

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paign, in some respects halfway between long-range bombing and destruction of material at source, and operations close to the front lines, vitally affected the power of the enemy to resist the Allied armies sweeping into Germany from all sides.

### **GROUND COOPERATION**

The Fifteenth AAF was the lineal descendant of a strategic air force that learned from its inception the technique of cooperating with ground armies. Following the Twelfth Bomber Command, when the Northwest African Strategic Air Force was activated in February 1943, its medium bombers and the two heavy bombardment groups, the 97<sup>th</sup> and 301<sup>st</sup> Flying Fortress units, which formed the nucleus for the present powerful aggregation, were called upon to repel Rommel at Kasserine Pass. The two oldest Liberator groups, the 98<sup>th</sup> and 376<sup>th</sup>, learned ground cooperation with the Eighth Army in the Western Desert.

This tradition of standing ready to forsake its long range blows at the German war potential for temporary cooperation with the infantry continued and its technique was perfected until the record blows at Lugo and before Bologna by the Fifteenth's formation, the heavy bombers of the Mediterranean struck at German fighting in Tunisia and Sicily. At Salerno, strategic fighters patrolled the skies over the beaches and the bombers battered the enemy in the hills.

One of the Fifteenth's first major campaigns was preparation for the Anzio landing in January, followed by concerted frag bomb attacks against German forces counter-attacking against the bridgehead.

At Cassino monastery in February 1944, at Cassino itself in March, and at the time of the great breakthrough in May, the Fifteenth directly cooperated in response to requests from the Fifth Army mired in the Appennines. On April 15, the Fifteenth AAF sent up 98 percent of its available aircraft to soften the approaches to Bologna, in a historical maximum effort.

Army missions were welcomed by airmen of the Fifteenth because they were thus able to help their brothers-in-arms on the ground. The assistance given seemed more direct and personal than the also important task of a strategic air force in destroying enemy armies at the source of production.

### **GROUND ARMAMENT**

Never a top priority target system, enemy ground armament and ammunition installations have nevertheless been very seriously damaged in the relatively few major attacks directed by the Fifteenth at these targets. The most successful blows delivered from Italy against Armored Force Vehicle plants were those on March 23, 24 and 25 of this year, when the Fifteenth's heavy bombers knocked out three of the most important – the St. Valentine Nibelungen Werks of Hermann Goering in Austria, the Marionfelds Daimler-Benz works in Berlin itself, and the Liben works at Prague.

The St. Valentine plant produced over 1,000 tanks in 1944 and was an important repair center; the Berlin factory was a major producer of the 50-ton Panther tanks; while the Prague works was engaged in the manufacture of self-propelled tank destroyers. The virtual loss through bombardment of these essential military pro-

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ducers was a severe blow to German armies facing the Allied offensives from the West and East.

The over-riding priority of oil and communications as the major assignments for strategic bombing put AFV targets on the alternate list for a long period. As such, the Linz Hermann Goering plant was struck and severely damaged in July 1944, St. Valentine was attacked for the first time in August 1944, and the Skoda works at Pilsen received some damage in October 1944.

Among the ordnance depots, Munich Milbertshofen and Vienna South Ordnance were heavily bombed. On the whole, however, small formations struck targets in this system when weather prevented them from reaching the scheduled targets of greater importance.

The importance and timeliness of the March assaults cannot be over-emphasized. While no shortage of tanks, guns or ammunition was felt to exist in the German ranks prior to the last great Allied offensives of the war, the losses which the Wehrmacht suffered as it reeled back before the sweeping advances of the Allies threw new importance on these targets.

### **RECOVERY OF AIRMEN**

The rescue and repatriation of aircrews shot down in enemy territory was a graphic and distinctive feature of the operations of the Fifteenth in the Mediterranean Theater. No other Air Force recovered so many of its missing pilots and crews, nor undertook escape activities in so many countries. More than 5,650 personnel have been returned, by air, surface vessels or on foot through enemy lines. In

over 300 successful operations, men have been brought safely from Tunisia, Italy, France, Switzerland, Greece, Albania, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany.

### **SERVICE COMMAND**

When the Fifteenth AAF was organized its effective strength was 654 airplanes. On April 15, 1945, 1916 aircraft was assigned to the Air Force and 98 percent of them took to the air to attack targets at the Italian front. These figures illustrate the greatest achievement and the growth of the Fifteenth Air Force Service Command. Less than one half of one percent were out of commission for lack of parts, a fact which measures the efficiency of the command.

During the year and a half that it operated during war time in Italy, the Fifteenth Air Force Service Command repaired and retrieved 1500 aircraft down at emergency fields in Italy and Yugoslavia and has repaired 5,323 that have required major maintenance at regular bases. Modifications of new aircraft, dictated by battle experience, were performed by the command, to the tune of 35,000 heavy bomber changes and 45,000 fighter changes.

Supply was also a function of the Service Command, carried on in Italy against difficulties of inadequate shipping space and poor road communications. Nevertheless, trucks of the Fifteenth Air Force Service Command carried over 1,500,000 tons of supplies and equipment for a total of over 27,000,000 miles. To keep the planes of the Air Force in the air, 482,782,700 gallons of aviation gasoline were supplied since January 1944.



## IN MEMORY OF #11 CHEROKEE

By  
Robert Gilbert  
Ball Turret Gunner  
Rathfelder Crew #16-3  
764<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 461<sup>st</sup> BG  
October 1998

Our crew made the same flight home as hundreds of other B-24 crews of the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force. Our flight was just a bit different.

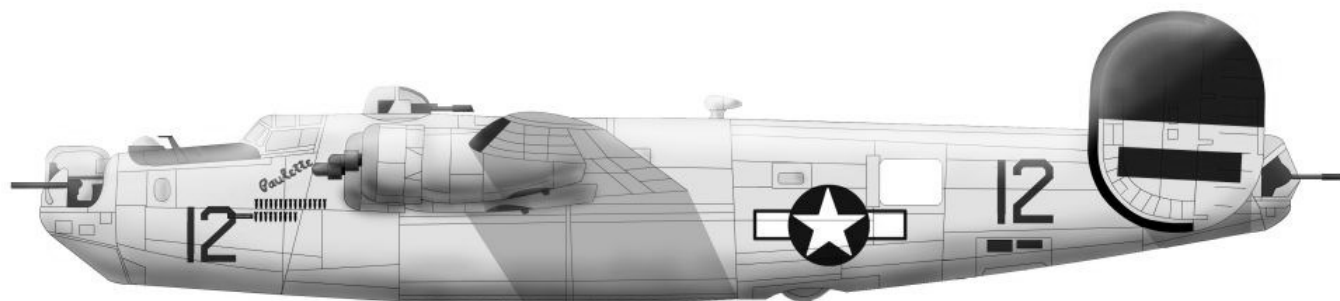
Our crew was assigned to fly home in #11 Cherokee. Old Cherokee was the most recognizable B-24 in the 764<sup>th</sup> and was referred to as "Old Cherokee" by all of the air crews. I don't know why she sported a desert tan paint job complete with a nose art picture of an Indian maiden. We thought she may have come over to Italy through North Africa when the Fifteenth Air Force took up bases in southern Italy. The old girl was a survivor and always brought her crews back on many missions and always returned ready to fly another day.

After returning to the US, I was assigned to a B-29 training group based at Alamogordo, New Mexico. The base was next to the White Sands Proving ground and was receiving all kinds of captured

German rockets and other weapons. It was an interesting experience.

I was discharged from the Air Force on the west coast in late December 1945. A group of us started to drive back to the East and Midwest. Our route took us through Kingman, Arizona, Storage Depot 41 of the War Assets Corporation. It was the world's greatest concentration of aircraft. The storage area covered 5 square miles. This was the last stop for #11, Cherokee, and thousands of other planes returning from overseas. At one time there were 2,567 B-24 Liberators, 1,832 Flying Fortresses, 478 P-38 Lightning's, 200 P-38 photo planes, 141 B-25 Mitchell medium bombers, hundreds of P-47 Thunderbolts, P-40s, A-26s, A-27s and B-29s all waiting to be scraped. All of those beautiful planes and only a few were saved for museums and some private collectors. Air Force records show that the planes were purchased by a salvage firm for \$2,780.00. It is rumored that the fuel drained from those planes was sold for more than the purchase price of the planes.

I shall always remember #11, Old Cherokee, and I carry a picture of her in my wallet to show to my vet friends. Cherokee, long gone but not forgotten.





*S/Sgt. Wayne Habegger was a gun turret mechanic in the 764th Squadron who also flew on a few missions as a waist gunner. He was honored to go on the honor flight from southeast Florida on May 24, 2014. It was only the second time he has been on an airplane since the war. That experience left him with a distaste of flying.*

*I am his son Joe and got to go along as his guardian. I assured him no one was going to be shooting at him this time.*

*The park service had people in uniforms of the time and we took a picture with a man who is doing a masters thesis on the Fifteenth Air Force.*

## President's Corner

After the successful reunion we had this year, I must say that we seem to be doing something right. We continue to have other groups asking to join our reunions. We've had the 484<sup>th</sup> with us for several years. We had some growing pains at first, but those are in the past. Now we have the 451<sup>st</sup> and 455<sup>th</sup> solidly in our corner. The 376<sup>th</sup> is about to make a formal decision to join us next year after a couple of their members joined us this year to see what our reunions were like. The 465<sup>th</sup> and 485<sup>th</sup> joined us this year as well. All total we had about 245 people at the Hilton Kansas City Airport Hotel in September this year. Of that number, we had about 44 veterans. With that number, Dave Blake and the rest of the reunion committee deserve a big round of applause for a job very well done. I'm sure the entire committee was exhausted by the time Monday morning came around and we said our last goodbyes until next year.

Speaking of next year, we don't have a whole lot of details to share at this point, but if this year is any indication, next year should be another exciting time for the veterans and their families. Watch the website for updates as Dave feeds information in. We can at least share that next year we will meet in the Dallas, Texas area and the format for the reunion will basically be the same as it was this year. We'll have shortened tours followed by presentations. The evening gatherings over dinner have been well received as have the tours on Sunday afternoon. Although I can't even tell you the hotel right now, I can encourage every to make plans to join us in Dallas from October 13 through 16. It should be cool enough by then.

I would also like to announce a change in the management of the 461<sup>st</sup>. As most of you are aware, I have been President, Historian, Editor and Webmaster for several

years. Serving our veterans in these capacities has been very rewarding for me and has given an opportunity to get to know all our veterans in a very personal way. I get to hear their stories as well as share their stories here in the pages of the Liberaider. It has also meant a lot of hard work. Fortunately I'm in as position where I can dedicate the time necessary to keep things running smoothly.

I now have some help. Several of you met and talked with Chuck Parsonson at the reunion this year. His father was a pilot in the 764<sup>th</sup> Squadron and is still with us though he's unable to make it to the reunions. He has been working with me to eliminate some of the problems that existed in the aircraft section of the website. He's expanded his interested to find errors that exist elsewhere on the website.

Lately Chuck has agreed to take on the duties of Historian for the Group. I've turned over the [historian@461st.org](mailto:historian@461st.org) E-Mail address to him so he can begin to answer questions about the history of the organization. Feel free to contact Chuck if you have any questions.

Chuck raised an interesting question recently that I was unable to answer. He asked how the hardstands were identified. I had never thought about this, but I guess they had to have been identified somehow. Chuck suggested that they may have been numbered and were perhaps numbered according to the aircraft that was parked there initially. Later as replacements were received, aircraft were just assigned a hardstand and the numbers no longer matched the aircraft number. I'd like to find out if this was true. If anyone knows, please let me or Chuck know. This isn't a big deal, but it's part of the history of the 461<sup>st</sup>.

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We're on the web!  
Visit  
**[www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org)**

## Webmaster Comments

The 461<sup>st</sup> website continues to evolve. Chuck Parsonson, our new Historian, has been researching the aircraft of the 461<sup>st</sup> for the past couple of years and has discovered a fantastic source of documents that correct some of the information we have had on the website concerning our aircraft. I thank Chuck for his help and for his agreeing to serve as Historian. I feel Chuck will be a great asset to the organization.

I have recently put a search function on the main page of the website. If you haven't tried it yet, let me encourage you to do so. You can search for just about anything that may or may not be on the website. This function is based on Google and provides a very accurate picture of where things are on the website. Just as an example, if you search for Parsonson, you will, of course, find Ernest Parsonson as the pilot of crew #14-3. You will also find mention of Chuck Parsonson in a number of places where he has given me corrections and/or additions to the website. Unfortunately, this search function gives you as little more than you might want by tagging all the pages of 764<sup>th</sup> crews where his name would appear. The solution is to provide more information to the search function to try and narrow it down.

I would also like to point out the Site Map page on the website. Have you ever wonder what has changed recently on the website? Every time I make a change to the website, I go to this page and update it to reflect the change(s) I've made. I only highlight the changes that I've made in the last month. This makes it easy to find the most recent ones. As you scroll down this page, you'll see a small new icon next to those pages that have been recently changed. I also put a date on each entry showing the date of the last change was made to each page. Sometimes the change is very minor and might get overlooked, but sometimes I've added a new photo or other important information.