



Vol. 33, No. 2

DECEMBER 2016

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

## 2016 Bomb Group Reunion

Our 2016 Reunion was held in Dallas, Texas Thursday, October 13, 2016 through Sunday, October 16, 2016. Our reunion home was the Wyndham Gardens Dallas North Hotel, which provided complimentary airport shuttles to both Love, and Dallas-Fort Worth airports.

In the lobby of "our reunion home" were two fabulous Welcome banners acknowledging our veterans from the Fifteenth Air Force. One banner was gifted from the

(Continued on page 4)

### Inside this issue:

<i>Toward Sanctuary</i>	1
<i>Balkan Airfield</i>	1
<i>2016 Reunion</i>	1
<i>Paul Tibbets</i>	18
<i>Adriatic Aerie</i>	26
<i>Moe Berg</i>	35
<i>President's Corner</i>	39
<i>Webmaster Comments</i>	40

## Toward Sanctuary

William J. Barnes, Jr. was the pilot of crew #53 in the 766<sup>th</sup> Squadron. His aircraft, Dwatted Rabbit #53, was ditched off the southern coast of France on Mission #60 to the Marshalling Yard at Nines, France. All members of the Barnes crew were lost. The following is part of the book compiled by his family:

*A benediction to Dr. St. John and Choate.*

c/o Postmaster, New York

Wednesday, June 21<sup>st</sup>, 1944

Dear Dr. St. John,

Greetings again from another of your wandering disciples – this time from "sunny Italy" – I think you are reasonably well-informed as to my present occupation through my little brother, Dick, so for the most part I am relieved of the burden of trying to add my two insignificant bits to the many

(Continued on page 8)

## Balkan Airfield

by  
S/Sgt. Lloyd A. Coen

Headquarters, Fifteenth Air Force Service Command in Italy: In November 1944 a small party of American and British air force officers set out from an Eastern Italy seaport in a tiny invasion boat bound for a point on the Dalmation coastline. This group was following up on information received from Yugoslav Partisan who did return brought the intelligence sources concerning an excellent spot for an advanced

fighter base and emergency landing field for the Fifteenth Air Force bombers coming home crippled from the big raids on central and southern European targets.

When, in two weeks, the little party returned home to Italy, they were three less in number. Three of the British officers had been killed in enemy action, but those who did return brought the information that made it possible for

(Continued on page 33)

# *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>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Brey, Robert E.	Manitowoe, WI	612	08/19/16
Frock, Jerome J.	Jefferson City, MO	502	11/15/14
Haas, Howard G.	Glencoe, IL	1035	06/05/16
Haberger, Wayne W.	Vero Beach, FL	678	08/04/16
Parsonson, Ernest C.	Seaford, DE	1092	09/20/16
Veselka, George J.	Houston, TX	612	08/09/15

## 765th Squadron

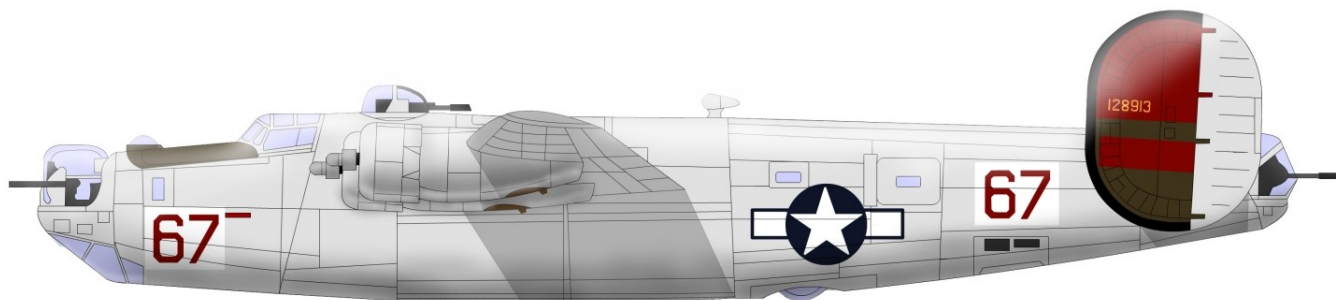
<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Porter, James H.	Albuquerque, NM	1034	09/15/16

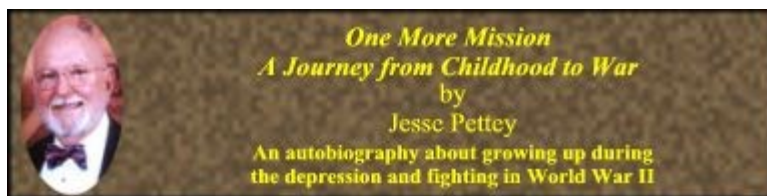
## 766th Squadron

<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
McKnight, Richard F.	Stillwater, MN	612	04/15/15
Moses, Elias E.	Arnold, PA	1092	01/15/16

## 767th Squadron

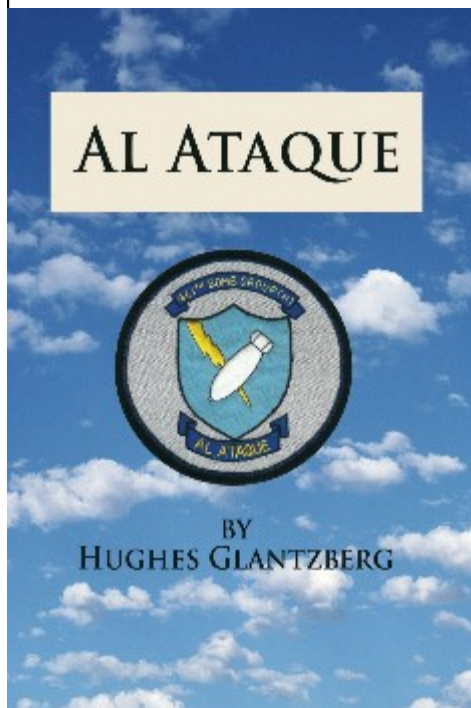
<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Cran, George B.	Modesto, CA	1035	02/25/11





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

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



## Al Ataque

History / General

Trade **Paperback**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$26.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

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

413 Pages

On Demand Printing

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

To order call 1-800-AUTHORS

Trade **Hardcopy**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$36.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

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

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



## Music Bravely Ringing

by  
Martin A. Rush  
767th Squadron

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

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

(Continued from page 1)

hotel, and the other banner was from the town of Farmers Branch, Texas. What a marvelous welcome.



Some of our reunion committee members arrived, Tuesday, October 11, 2016, and our numbers increased by the hour.

Wednesday, keeping with tradition, the snacks and beverages were purchased for the hospitality revelries. Dinner was on your own, with many great places to explore some Texas steak. For those who did not wish to venture off site, the hotel had a casual restaurant, to grab a relaxing dinner and watch some TV.

Thursday, the Dallas weather was kind to us, as it was sunny minus the blistering Texas heat. There was a steady stream of check-ins at the registration desk and the hotel lobby was humming, and not from a vacuum cleaner, but from the excitement of old friends re-connecting and new introductions.

Leaving the registration area, walking under an arch of royal blue, red and white balloons, you arrived in the large atrium where WWII theme music swirled in the air and were welcomed by a team from the municipality of Farmers Branch with gift bags. Next stop, was the reunion packet welcome table. This year we were blessed with bomb groups from the 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>. Wow!

As the day progressed, more and more WWII Memorabilia was displayed in our hospitality room to reminisce or teach another generation about life in Italy

during 1943-1945. As luck would have it, 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 hallways and into the hotel lobby.

The 461<sup>st</sup> Business meeting was held at 4:00 PM and adjourned at 5:20. We concluded just in time to join the rest of our guests in the hotel's atrium to listen to the performance of the Dallas Christian College Choir. The choir paid a wonderful tribute to our veterans singing some songs from the 1940's. The hotel management was behind this surprise, plus a few other time capsule items were to be found. At the hotel bar the drink menu included some favorites of the 1940s, such as Tom Collins, Old Fashion, Manhattan, and the Daiquiri. Cookies, and candy such as bubble gum cigars, pink, yellow and mint green, candy cigarettes, and peanut butter bars to name a few were also available.

At 6:00 PM in the Couture I & II Banquet rooms there was an informal pasta buffet which was well attended by the veterans and their families. Just before 7:00 PM there was another surprise! The Mayor of Farmers Branch was ushered to the stage. He welcomed us and thanked our veterans, the last great generation for their service to their country. We transitioned over to our informal informational meeting where all the bomb groups in attendance were recognized; the Reunion Planning Committee, and the 461<sup>st</sup> Board of Directors were acknowledged, overview of the scheduled events for the weekend and then off to the hospitality room. At the conclusion of the informal meeting, the group dispersed throughout the hotel, some to the hotel bar, some in the atrium, some in the hotel lobby, and some to the hospitality room. We had once again taken over a hotel for a weekend. Late check-ins, conversations, and storytelling was in full swing. Such stamina.

In the atrium the breakfast buffet was established to feed nearly 300 hungry souls some scrambled eggs, bacon, hash browns, biscuits, gravy, and a cup of hot Joe. At 9:00 AM we departed the hotel with three buses for the Cavanaugh Flight Museum. This flight museum had a complex of four hangers filled with an outstanding collection of military aircraft. We actu-

(Continued on page 5)

*(Continued from page 4)*

ally could touch the nose of P-40 Warhawk. Inspect B-25H that was equipped with two .50 caliber machine guns and a 75 mm canon in the nose of the aircraft. For those who were adventurous, some squeezed through the Bomb Bay Doors of the Barbie III. We had a nice box lunch in one of the hangers with plenty of time for camaraderie with our friends. Around 12:30 PM one by one the three buses were inhabited and we departed the flight museum for a quick ride back to our hotel. Around 2:00 PM there were presentations by our veterans and others regarding WWII and life in Italy.

The Social hour with a cash bar commenced at 5:00 PM, and the Individual Group Banquets were held at 6:00 PM.

Saturday after our breakfast buffet, we headed off to visit the historic Sixth Floor Museum, formerly known as the Texas School Book Depository Building. Since this is a small venue, the tour buses departure times were staggered. Two buses departed the hotel at 9:15 AM, and the third bus departed at 10:15 AM. Upon arrival at the venue, in small groups we were given head sets and ushered to the elevator which delivered us directly to the sixth floor. We walked around at our own pace looking at the various displays and exhibits containing over 45,000 items documenting Kennedy's presidency through to his final days. There is the Plexiglas enclosed area where Lee Harvey Oswald is believed to have fired the fateful shot. Whether you are a history buff or a conspiracy theorist, this museum was an interesting source of information about the assassination and legacy of President John F. Kennedy.

After we boarded our buses we drove by the police headquarters where Lee Harvey Oswald was taken after his capture in a nearby theater, and the entrance to the police station garage where Jack Ruby walked right in as Lee Harvey Oswald was being transferred to the Dallas County Jail. We drove by the Parkland Hospital which was another landmark from that day in history. It was interesting and sad to revisit the circumstances surrounding President Kennedy's visit to Dallas on November 22, 1963. Everyone in my generation and older remembers that day in Dallas.

Today we had lunch on our own, and at 2:00 PM additional opportunities for interesting presentations,

tales and oration were held in various breakout rooms throughout the hotel.

Social hour and a cash bar began at 5:00 PM in the Couture Ballroom. The infamous group picture of all the veterans in attendance was taken by Danny Wasserman. Great job Danny! The wait staff was busy with thirty-one tables and ten guests per table. The evening meal was served at 6:00 PM and we ended the dinner program with entertainment provided by The Ladies Liberty. The ladies entertained us by singing popular songs of the 1940s and the Big Band era for an hour and ended their performance to a standing ovation.

Sunday morning after breakfast buffet there was a Worship Service in the atrium which was presented by Reverend Robert B. Oliver who has acted as Group Chaplain for the 376<sup>th</sup> BG for several years. Reverend Oliver is the son of a 376<sup>th</sup> Navigator/Bombardier.

Lunch once again was on our own, and we departed at noon for the Dallas Holocaust Museum. This is a very small and intimate museum and the permanent exhibit gave us a view of the holocaust by focusing on one day during the holocaust, April 19, 1943. This exhibit illustrates wartime heroism, Jewish resistance against all odds, and government and diplomatic indifferences to the fate of European Jews.

We had the honor and privilege to listen to a holocaust survivor Jack Repp who addressed our group. Mr. Repp is originally from Poland where he was a part of the resistance. Mr. Repp was in various ghettos and concentration camps including Kielce, Auschwitz, and Dachau, and a death march. Mr. Repp was liberated by American soldiers and came to the United States in 1949.

After that poignant experience we boarded the buses one last time as the 2016 Reunion family. We had a leisurely Sunday afternoon drive of downtown Dallas with a tour guide. We had the opportunity to get off the buses for a quick photo opportunity at the Pioneer Plaza which is a large public park in the Convention Center area. This park commemorates the nineteenth century cattle drives that took place along the Shawnee Trail which were the earliest and eastern most route by with the Texas longhorn cattle were taken to the northern railheads. This park is

*(Continued on page 6)*

(Continued from page 5)

also adjacent to the Pioneer Park Cemetery which features the Confederate War Memorial.



Pioneer Plaza

Our buses returned to our hotel one last time for Reunion 2016.

The Sunday evening meal featured an informal "Farewell Fajita" dinner buffet with sixteen tables set in the Couture Ballrooms 3 & 4. Chow time commenced at 6:00 PM. After dinner there was one more opportunity to retreat to the hospitality room. It is my understanding that the lights were not turned off and doors locked until after 1:00 AM the entire length of our 2016 Reunion.

Well, here's to another reunion on the books; many old tales retold, many new tales created, and another reunion's memories to treasure. To our veterans who have been coined, "The Last Great Generation", as your sons, daughters, grandchildren, and extended families, we thank you for all your sacrifices for us and our country! We love and treasure you. See you in New Orleans, LA, in 2017.

Respectfully,  
Mary Jo Hayes



2016 Veterans by Danny Wasserman

# **2017 REUNION**

## ***New Orleans, Louisiana***

### **Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup>—Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**

### ***Hotel to be determined***

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 Dallas and by all accounts was quite successful so it will likely remain mostly the same.

#### **Thursday, September 14<sup>th</sup>**

Arrival and check in day. Evening Informational meeting.

#### **Friday, September 15<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, September 16<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, September 17<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 2017 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

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The Liberaider is published twice yearly on behalf of the members of the organization.  
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(Continued from page 1)

descriptions from others of life in this theatre. Things of vital importance are all on your side of the pond, anyway, so I'll go right ahead with some of the things on my mind without further ado.

Since I understand my Mom had considerable to do with the start of the idea, I am chagrined that I have not written much sooner to let you know how I feel about our Choate Community Prayer system. In war time all thing of intrinsic value and depth seem to show themselves more intensely and purely, so that I often wonder if people don't get awfully bored with the exceeding emotion I for one seem to throw into my feelings and reactions. With that idea in mind, I'll not even try to describe my reactions. I think you must have sense how deeply imbedded in my heart is the Choate Chapel. I have always felt, since I left there, that there was always a place reserved in every service for me. I feel that we are all, from the first Choate boy on, included in your mind and heart when we call the School to prayer. So I have often been in one of those seats before you in spirit and have joined with you in supplication and thanksgiving. So, even if not the suggestion for a special period of prayer for Choate people everywhere been suggested, I should have felt myself included in your every service, just as you and Choate are in my every prayer. It is a comfort, however, to know that there is a special time when all Choate is reminded especially of its members, parents and friends, and I want to assure you of the attention and indulgence I send each day.

Choate has progressed another year now and my beloved little brother has been endowed with a large portion of a great treasure. I am so proud to have him there and to hear of his problems and successes. And I am so grateful that he can be there. And I could never

tell you how grateful I feel to Choate, but especially to you and Mr. Niehaus, for all your special attention and gracious, devoted assistance to the struggling little mind and body you have taken into your trust.

It has occurred to me often that Richie has been home quite often this past year considering my Choate career as a comparative standard. But then I remember that such a comparison is a fallacy because the times are so different and he is younger than I was. It is indicative of the caliber of Choate understanding and devotion of its sons that you can understand how much those visits home mean to Richie. He has few friends his age at home (one of the reasons we wanted him at Choate so soon) and until recently none of his sisters nor I were even near enough for him to anticipate seeing during vacation. So his Mom and Daddy are pretty nearly his whole world outside Choate. And I can well imagine, being young, and being a *Barnes*, that things are never simple and ideal for the little fella, despite your every thought and care for his welfare. He's pretty young to be facing the world, and awfully young to be tackling the world of his father. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he has already faced and stood up to more demanding and deeper moral issues than some of his Sixth Formers.

I pray that nothing will stop him continuing life at Choate. It is such a priceless treasure for Richie especially. He will have more time to explore into the vast beauties and depths and varieties in the world before he stands the test against disillusionment and "superficialities". It was quite a shock to me when I left school and college to find that all the people I had lived my life with were the exceptions, the Maximums – exceedingly different from the mass of mankind. So the

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

more indelible his memories and lessons from these people and ideals that are Choate, the more impregnable his fortification and more fiery his inspiration when he is challenged with the temptations, laxities, immoralities and vices common in "the world".

I'm a fine one to be telling *you* of these things; - I am merely showing you how deeply my thought and prayers carry me in my hopes and dreams for my little brother. He's no longer little in anything but the physical sense, and even there much bigger than when I last saw him. But he is still to be protected – and I am content and proud that Choate is his scrimmage line. He'll not get hurt there, outside of the normal, healthy bangs and bruises; he'll learn and be treated in a field of cleanest sportsmanship and the truest gentlemen ever; and his coaches, equipment, and prospects are the best to be had anywhere.

Outside of the perpetual mental hazard and a normal share of homesickness, I am doing well over here these days. I am alternating duties as pilot or co-pilot as occasion demands, but it is fun to have flown my own crew – to play fullback in place of halfback – for a change. There is a feeling of deep pride when I see my name at briefing as leader of a unit in an effort for victory. I have seen that name on Choate paper, on Haverford paper, in the handwriting of my parents and family, and other who I love. All those people and more are a part of me, and for each of them I feel a special protective instinct, which, called for proof and testing, has now been indelibly marked on record. You have had your part, then, in that many more missions toward that goal of the four freedoms and a Christian world we pray for in Chapel.

I must close now with one more word of thanks to Choate for all it means to all the

Barnes tribe. Kindly remember me to Mrs. St. John and all the masters at Choate.

"Fairest in all the land,  
Ever thy name shall stand,  
Ever thy sons sing to thee."

Bill Barnes, '41

*SEVERAL more letters came at their usual, fairly frequent intervals. One was a birthday letter to his Daddy, written on July 1, and arriving right on the day. Then no more came.*

*His Mother and Richard were in Waterville, New Hampshire, arranging to have the cottage put into shape for the time we should all have together in the place we all wished most to be. The telegram telling us that he had been reported "missing in action over France since twelve July" came to Englewood late in the evening of July 27. The telephone in the Valley was out of order, so a Forest Ranger drove in and brought the folks to his telephone. If such news had to come, Waterville was a nice place for it to reach his Mother and brother.*

*Gradually additional details came in so that we could make up part of the picture. A group of planes including the "Dwatted Wabbit", with Bill the pilot, was on the way to Nimes in Southern France. Fighter planes made a sudden attack. Four ships were hit, including the "Rabbit", when they were still twenty minutes short of the target. Of the four Bill's was the only one able to go on to the target. It went on, but not in the kind of formation Bill always flew. They dropped their bombs on the target – then began to falter as they turned out over the Mediterranean. The plane landed in the sea, rough that day, and broke. No one is known to have escaped by parachute while the plane was in*

(Continued on page 10)

*(Continued from page 9)*

*the air, nor by any means after it hit the water. Rescue craft failed to find survivors.*

*What happened in the ship is not known, but the man who knew the crew supposes that men were hurt by the attacking planes, the injured probably including Bill and his co-pilot. They were able to go on to the target but no more. If his own safety were his main consideration any one of the crew would have bailed out rather than stay in the ship for a water landing. None was seen to do this. It is reasonable to assume that those who could jump just decided to stay to help those who couldn't jump. No one saved himself at the cost of abandoning a pal.*

*We have felt that Bill's picture could best be drawn by his own letters, so we shall not add many written about him by others. But it will help to have additions by two members of his crew – none of us ever saw him in a plane. Captain Robert Simon was first pilot when Bill joined the crew and clear up to July 10<sup>th</sup>, except for the missions when Bill flew as first pilot. S/Sgt. Joseph Kobell was rear-gunner on all of Bill's missions except his last. Then we include two letters from men who knew Bill well before he entered the Army, who also were in very helpful touch with him during the period covered by his letters. They are Dr. George St. John, Headmaster of the Choate School; and Dr. Archibald MacIntosh, Dean of Haverford College.*

*Miami Beach, Florida  
September 21, 1944*

*Dear Sir:*

*I received your letter a few hours ago, from my home. I understand your anxiety, and, thought this is not easy for me, I will tell you all I know about the accident.*

*First of all, the enclosed pictures were taken on July 10<sup>th</sup>. Names are on the backs of the snaps. It was on this day, that I left the Squadron to begin my trip home.*

*The most accurate description I have, is from S/Sgt. Joseph Kobell, who was our tail gunner. He was at Naples at the time, taking competitive examinations for an appointment to West Point. He got all the information possible, upon his return to the Squadron. Incidentally he qualified, and is now at Cornell University, studying for his entrance examinations.*

*He (Bill) was a wonderful boy, Dr. Barnes, and of anyone I have ever met, I wished he were my brother. That is the way I felt towards him. He is an example of cleancut, young America.*

*Very Sincerely,  
Captain Bob Simon*

*United States Army  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York  
October 2, 1944*

*Dear Mrs. Barnes,*

*My mother sent me your letter today and I was indeed happy to hear from you. I intended to write to you many times but I could not because of what happened as a result of my writing to Lloyd Agee's (radio man) wife. I told her the exact truth and then she called me from California and gave me an almost opposite story. . . She was led to believe that there were seven survivors. You see by telling her what really happened I just about shat-*

*(Continued on page 11)*

*(Continued from page 10)*

*tered her dreams. I did not want to make that mistake twice. So you see why I hesitated in writing to you.*

*No doubt Captain Simon told you what I wrote him. I will tell you the story from start to finish and not try to pull any punches.*

*The mission was the 49<sup>th</sup> for four members of the crew. Two 46<sup>th</sup>, and Lieutenant Barnes had 38. It was "The Rabbit's" 37<sup>th</sup> Mission. The mission was Nimes, France, and it was supposed to be what we call a "milk run". That is, not much opposition was likely to be encountered. The trip was uneventful until about twenty minutes before the target, then four ME-109s came out of the sun, fired rockets, and then came in with their machine guns. Three of our planes were immediately hit. It was a surprise attack and the Jerries made it good. The gunners claim they got one of the Jerries as they broke away. Our plane at the present moment seemed to be OK. They went over the target, dropped their bombs, and came off under control. Then about eighteen miles out to sea, "The Rabbit" pulled and headed for the sea. The crew members in the other planes could not understand it, because everything seemed to be in control, but they did notice that Jack Steles (engineer) had left the top turret. Lieutenant Barnes evidently was going to try to ditch (crash land into the sea) the plane. They hit very hard and the plane broke. Immediately some of the planes went down to see if they could see any survivors. They had binoculars with them but could see nothing. They then took a fix on the location of the disaster and within an hour a PBY was sent out to the area but they, too, failed to see anything.*

*That's exactly what happened, but like myself I know you want to ask questions. I will try to answer some of the questions that I first*

*asked when I got back to the Squadron. Why, if the plane was hit by fighters, did they go on, fly good formation, drop their bombs, and then go down? That is one question the answer of which we will never know. I'll give you my personal opinion. The fighters came in from the front. I believe Lieutenant Barnes and the co-pilot were hit but could continue on to the target. At least that is what they thought. Remember, most of the boys only had one more mission to go before they would come home. No doubt Lieutenant Barnes could not continue on and that is why Jack Steles left his turret. Jack had some flying time and tried to help Lieutenant Barnes hold the heading but couldn't, so they decided to crash land into the sea.*

*Then another question arises: why didn't they bail out? We had often talked about what we would do in case of an emergency. We all agreed we would jump. I know none of us would be afraid to jump. I imagine they agreed to stay with the pplane to help those that were wounded.*

*That is the story, Mr. Barnes. The chances are mighty slim, but we can put our trust in God and hope that in some way they did get out.*

*Lieutenant Barnes was on the same raids that I had been on up to this time. We hit Ploesti, the Rumanian oil fields, three times. They were some missions. I can still remember Lieutenant Barnes on the interphone about three minutes before we dropped our bombs. There was a group of planes up ahead and they were right in the midst of the flak. Lieutenant Barnes cam on with the interphone: "Gee! Look at the flak up there! You can't distinguish the planes from the flak. It just*

*(Continued on page 12)*

(Continued from page 11)

looks like a big black cotton ball! Can you imagine that we are heading right for it?" member so immediately he was pinned Well, I was in the tail turret and I couldn't "Junior". Our crew averaged 22, so you can see the flak. He had me worried when he de- see we were a bunch of old men. Bob Simon scribed the flak. I sure did feel relieved. was our pilot and not a better one could be Then he tells me we are going right for it. I found. In the eyes of our squadron we had a didn't know what to do. We sure did get flak very good crew and they made us flight lead- that day. It lasted for about twenty-five ers. This made Bill moan because he was be- minutes. I never thought we were going to ing outranked in the co-pilot's seat by the dif- get back from that one. After the mission I ferent commanding officers in our outfit. Bill told junior never to do that to me again. He for a while started to fly with other pilots. was so calm talking about the flak and then getting hit so badly.

Lieutenant Barnes flew about ten to fifteen and the day after with Bob Simon. When Bill missions as first pilot. I flew every one but flew, he flew with heart and soul. He would the last one with him. He was a very good crouch behind the wheel and just sweat keep- pilot. He had a big responsibility and han- ing in formation. He was cool and always dled it very well. knew what he was doing. He flew very good formation; in fact we thought he flew it too

. . . . . close at times. He always said he wanted to put our wing in the waist window of the lead ship. I don't know if Bill ever took a drink before you. I know he wasn't a drinker, but after every mission we would go to "Operations" and have our celebration drink. "Well, another one under our belt".

. . . . .

Respectfully yours,  
Joe Kobel

United States Army  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York  
October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1944

Dear Molly:

When I first received your letter today I couldn't imagine who you were. I remember Bill speaking about you and proudly speaking about his sister who was also flying. He thought a great deal of you and after reading your letter I can understand why. The most memorable raid I was on with Bill as first pilot was a place called Giurgiu, Rumania. It is south of Bucharest and is a ship- ping center for the oil from Ploesti. We were going along serenely until we hit the Adriatic coastline. There we ran into some terrible weather and we couldn't see from side to side. The lead ship had throttled back and we were indicating 130 and stalling. So Bill, with a few choice words, pulled out of for- mation and we made a dog-leg and tried to get back in formation, but we couldn't find the group. We then decided to go on to the target and try to pick up the group there. Near the target the weather cleared, but we

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

couldn't find our group. There we were, one B-24, a half hour from the target, over territory that had from 200 to 300 enemy fighters. . . .

The navigator then coyly asked, "Bill, don't you think it's about time we tucked in with some group? You know there are plenty of fighters here." We saw a group to our right, so we went over, gave the colors of the day to the formation, and then went in with them. The flak was pretty heavy, but as we always said, "The Rabbit takes a drink just before the I.P. and goes staggering in." Off the target four of Hitler's boys came pouring in and only three of them got away. Hank Sievers and myself caught this one superman squarely and he just rolled over and died. When we got back, "Junior" was ready for the sack. He was weak from the strain. He did a wonderful job. We were by ourselves for five hours on oxygen and when we got back to the base we found out that the Squadron thought they had lost us.

As for sports our crew had the roughest football team in the Squadron. At PT we used to play the other crews and they soon didn't want to play us anymore. Our crew liked to win and we played hard to win. Bill was our break-away runner. We did the blocking and he ran. Maybe that is what was wrong with our crew. We were too eager. We never turned back from any target unless something was absolutely wrong with our plane so that it could not continue. Our crew as a whole had more missions than any other crew.

I know when I wrote your mother that I would be telling her discouraging news. That is why I hesitated in writing. I have some pictures we took overseas. I am having them made up and will send them to your mother. We never got too many pictures because takeoff was at dawn and not enough

light to take them. After a mission we were never in the mood to take any pictures at all.

We were a crew for nine months. I lived and joked and suffered with them all that time. Then to have them snuffed out of existence with the snap of a thumb doesn't seem fair. God in his infinite mercy knows the answer. It is above me, but I do know that I lost my greatest friends when "The Rabbit" didn't return.

Sincerely,  
Joe Kobell

Haverford College  
Haverford, Pennsylvania  
October 25, 1944

Dear Dr. and Mrs. Barnes: -

The letter which I had hoped that I would not get from you has come. Many time in the last months I have thought of Bill and of you.

In this letter I am sending you three of his letters to me. There was one in June which I mentioned to you in a previous letter, which I can't find at the moment, but I will send that too when we do find it.

I am so glad that I have these to send you. Someday I should like to come to see you and to see his diary and any other letters that you have.

As I read what he had to say to me I feel so grateful that I was able to do something for him, and at the same time very humble. In the long letter he wonders whether I remember him clearly, and he, of course, never realized that to me he was one of the loveliest of

(Continued on page 14)

*(Continued from page 13)*

the fellows we had ever had here. Whenever I thought of him the word "bright" always sprang to mind. "Bright" not in an intellectual sense, though he was that too, but shining and clear. That lovely smile of his always lifted my heart whenever he came in to see me.

Very vividly I remember the pleasure that he got out of his football. After one game when he had scored I stopped him on the campus to congratulate him, and I can still see the way his face lighted up. I recalled what some of my early scoring had meant to me and it was such fun to know the satisfaction that he was getting out of the experience.

Shortly before he left we had a long talk about what he might meet in the Army. I told him some of my own experiences and I said that knowing him I had complete confidence that what to some might be a very trying time would be for him a new adventure that would help to complete him, . . .

I know he wanted Air, and we talked about that. I have flown myself for some years now and having been through the mill, there are one or two things I can tell the boys that seem to mean a good deal to them when they are going through their training.

When I knew he had his wings I was very pleased because I knew that he would be where he belonged. And when I got his June letter and he spoke of the flying in the big formations I could guess something of what he felt, and it seemed so right to me that he should be there.

I can realize what he meant to his crew, because I know what he meant to those who knew him here. In the face of the ultimate test he would be at his finest.

A very dear friend of mine, a much older man, who died some years ago, used to quote to me the following lines from some Scottish poet. Because he exemplified what it says, just as Bill did, just as Si Simmons lost in the Pacific did, just as Ed Lee, lost over Burma did, just as others of these bright and shining souls whom it has been my good pleasure to know, did, the lines keep running through my mind frequently these days:

*"He either fears his fate too much  
Or his deserts are small  
Who fears to put it to the touch  
To win or lose it all."*

These men did not fear "To put it to the touch" and in their going they added further to the richness which they gave us by their living.

I miss him, and it is hard to give up the idea that he will be back for a while longer. But at the same time I can't feel that he is gone. He gave us all something that means he is with us always.

When you get further word, I hope you will let me know. It was thoughtful of you to write me – it means more than I can express.

*My warmest regards,  
Archibald MacIntosh*

*The Choate School  
Wallingford, Connecticut*

*Headmaster's Study*

*Dear Dr. and Mrs. Barnes and Dick:*

*I keep praying – I won't let myself believe there isn't hope. Bill would soften the heart of the worst Nazi there is, make him a friend. Until the last prisoner is accounted for and France and all Europe at peace, with a man*

*(Continued on page 15)*

*(Continued from page 14)*

*free to move and declare himself, I will not believe.*

*Bill stands for Choate – not just for the best Choate is, but almost more for things hoped for – the dreams of us old men, and for the visions of all young men who shall bear the Choate name.*

*In some degree we are all “other men” because of Bill. His love of the School, his words about Chapel, become part of us. What as Choate men and boys we have wanted on our individual Sinai’s to say, Bill has said for us. His letters about his School are a precious possession rooted in the School’s spiritual life. In all my work at School Bill will always be a part of me. His rare insight and appreciation, his virile sentiment – and above all the X-ray element of his nature seeing through to the soul of things – Bill shares with me himself, and I see through his eyes which are the eyes of both worlds – not just this one.*

*The latest letter from Bill belongs to you three – perhaps most of all, Dick, to you. “I am merely showing you how deep my thoughts and prayers carry me in my hopes and dreams . . . .” that’s Bill.*

*Yours and his eternally – I love him almost as you do.*

*George St. John and  
Clare St. John – both*

*August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1944*

*They kept the news from me – held it back while I was away. In one of his letters to us, Mr. Niehaus reminded us of the sermon preached by Dr. Joseph R. Sizoo in the Choate Chapel on the day Bill was graduated in 1941. The closing parts of his sermon were:*

*“A great deal is being said and written today about darkness. I have been reading recently everything the Bible has to say about shadows and I have made a strange discovery. In the Bible, shadows and night never speak the last word. They are never considered final. The Bible opens with the amazing statement, ‘It was evening and morning, the first day.’ I would not have written it like that. I should have written it, ‘It was morning and evening, the first day.’ But here it is written, ‘It was evening and morning, the first day.’ Lest you think that a typographical error, let me say it is repeated six times in the same chapter. Men who believe in eternal values recorded the deep conviction that God’s day always ends in dawn and that darkness never speaks the last word. Strange enough, the Book closes with this amazing assurance, ‘There shall be no night there.’ Those who walked with God and lived with an adventurous faith were convinced that night never speaks the last word and that in the end eternal values always triumph. Hold fast to that simple conviction and nothing will throw you. You will have something which no experience can impeach, no temptation can imperil. You will write as though angels guided your hand and sing as though choirs invisible warbled in your soul.*

*“I have a friend; he is the distinguished British novelist, Cecil Roberts. Not long ago he told me a moving story. He was leaving his country home to come to America. Motoring along the winding road near Lancaster he saw by the roadside a fresh dug grave which had over it a simple stone. It seemed rather odd to have a grave by a country roadside, so he stopped the car and began to inquire why it was there. Directly across the road from the grave there stood an old English thatched-roofed cottage. There lived in it a very old lady who told him that her pet marmoset had*

*(Continued on page 16)*

*(Continued from page 15)*

*been killed on that spot. She requested of the authorities permission to bury her pet where it had fallen. Realizing she was an old lady they gave consent and that accounted for the fresh grave along the roadside. As Cecil Roberts walked back he saw upon the white stone inscribed the simple word, 'Peter'. That was the name of the pet. Directly beneath he read this legend" 'There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one small candle.'*

*"Are there enough of you left who believe it? Are there enough of you left who won't walk out on it? Are there enough of you left who will stay with it to the end of the end until the inheritance is won and Jesus Christ shall see the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied?"*

*"Members of the graduating class of 1941, I salute you!"*

*As we live in spirit with Bill during his Army career we knew that he was living a life of great speeds and equally great risks. His body became hard and strong, his mind alert and filled with a great mass of new knowledge, and his soul grew up. The speed of his growth equaled the speed of his plane's flight, and skimmed as closely to deadly hazards.*

*Of course, our main concern was not for Bill's body, not for his mind, but for Bill himself. War was no business for him, with its habit of cutting straight across anything – anything – to achieve its end. But into the sordid mess he marched all alone – save for the God of his soul. His was an awful struggle, but he wrote these letters, and we know he had won.*

*He chose great risks, he "stuck to his guns", he lived by his faith, he loved to the end, he flew hard and fast but always on the course toward sanctuary.*

*He called Mrs. Frank L. Babbott: "Aunt Elizabeth". She reminded us of the poem by Rupert Brooke, and the prayer by James Martineau, with which we close this little book.*

### *SAFETY*

*Dear! Of all happy in the hour, most blest  
He who has found our hid security,  
Assured in the dark tides of the world that rest,  
And heard our word, 'Who is so safe as we?'  
We have found safety with all things undying,  
The winds, and morning, tears of men and  
mirth,*

*The deep night, and birds singing, and clouds  
flying,*

*And sleep, and freedom, and the autumnal  
earth.*

*We have built a house that is not for Time's  
throwing.*

*We have gained a peace unshaken by pain for  
ever.*

*War knows no power. Safe shall be my going,  
Secretly armed against all death's endeavor;  
Safe though all safety's lost; safe where men  
fall;*

*And if these poor limbs die, safest of all.*

*"We seem to give them back to Thee, dear God, who gavest them to us. Yet, as Thou didst not lose them in giving, so we have not lost them by their return. Not as the world giveth; givest thou, O Lover of Souls! What thou givest Thou takest not away. For what is Thine is ours, if we are Thine. And life is eternal; and love is immortal; and death is only an horizon; and an horizon is nothing save the limit of our sight. Lift us up then, Strong Son of God, that we may see further; cleanse our eyes that we may see more clearly; draw us closer to Thyself that we may know ourselves nearer to our beloved who are with Thee. And while Thou dost prepare a place for us, prepare us for that happy place, that where they are, and Thou art, we too may be. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."*

## **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:		\$	

## Interview of Paul Tibbets

*Here is a bit of American history which has yet to reach the history books. It's an interview by Studs Terkel with Paul Tibbets, the pilot of the B-29 which dropped the first atom bomb; fascinating.*

Studs Terkel: We're seated here, two old gaffers. Me and Paul Tibbets, 89 years old, brigadier-general retired, in his home town of Columbus, Ohio, where he has lived for many years.

Paul Tibbets: Hey, you've got to correct that. I'm only 87. You said 89.

Studs Terkel: I know. See, I'm 90. So I got you beat by three years. Now we've had a nice lunch, you and I and your companion. I noticed, as we sat in that restaurant, people passed by. They didn't know who you are. But once upon a time, you flew a plane called the Enola Gay over the city of Hiroshima, in Japan, on a Sunday morning - August 6, 1945 - and a bomb fell. It was the atomic bomb, the first ever. And that particular moment changed the whole world. You were the pilot of that plane.

Paul Tibbets: Yes, I was the pilot.

Studs Terkel: And the Enola Gay was named after...

Paul Tibbets: My mother. She was Enola Gay Haggard before she married my dad, and my dad never supported me with the flying - he hated airplanes and motorcycles. When I told them I was going to leave college and go fly planes in the Army Air Corps, my dad said, "Well, I've sent you through school, bought you automobiles, given you money to run around with the girls, but from here on, you're on your own. If you want to go kill

yourself, go ahead, I don't give a damn." Then Mom just quietly said, "Paul, if you want to go fly airplanes, you're going to be all right." And that was that.

Studs Terkel: Where was that?

Paul Tibbets: Well, that was Miami, Florida. My dad had been in the real estate business down there for years, and at that time he was retired. And I was going to school at Gainesville, Florida, but I had to leave after two years and go to Cincinnati because Florida had no medical school.

Studs Terkel: You were thinking of being a doctor?

Paul Tibbets: I didn't think that, my father thought it. He said, "You're going to be a doctor," and I just nodded my head and that was it. And I started out that way; but about a year before, I was able to get into an airplane, fly it - solo it - and I knew then that I had to go fly airplanes.

Studs Terkel: Now by 1944 you were a pilot - a test pilot on the program to develop the B-29 bomber. When did you get word that you had a special assignment?

Paul Tibbets: One day [in September 1944] I'm running a test on a B-29, I land, a man meets me. He says he just got a call from General Uzal Ent [Commander of the Second Air Force] at Colorado Springs, he wants me in his office the next morning at nine o'clock. He said, "Bring your clothing - your B4 bag - because you're not coming back." Well, I didn't know what it was and didn't pay any attention to it - it was just another assignment. I got to Colorado Springs the next

*(Continued on page 19)*

morning perfectly on time. A man named Lansdale met me, walked me to General Ent's office and closed the door behind me. With him was a man wearing a blue suit, a US Navy captain - that was William Parsons, who flew with me to Hiroshima - and Dr. Norman Ramsey, Columbia University, professor in nuclear physics. And Norman said: "OK, we've got what we call the Manhattan Project. What we're doing is trying to develop an atomic bomb. We've gotten to the point now where we can't go much further 'til we have airplanes to work with." He gave me an explanation which probably lasted 45, 50 minutes, and they left. General Ent looked at me and said, "The other day, General Arnold [Commanding General of the Army Air Corps] offered me three names." Both of the others were full colonels; I was a lieutenant-colonel. He said that when General Arnold asked which of them could do this atomic weapons deal, he replied without hesitation, "Paul Tibbets is the man to do it." I said, "Well, thank you, sir." Then he laid out what was going on and it was up to me now to put together an organization and train them to drop atomic weapons on both Europe and the Pacific - Tokyo.

Studs Terkel: Interesting that they would have dropped it on Europe as well. We didn't know that.

Paul Tibbets: My edict was as clear as could be. Drop simultaneously in Europe and the Pacific because of the secrecy problem - you couldn't drop it in one part of the world without dropping it in the other. And so he said, "I don't know what to tell you, but I know you happen to have B-29's to start with. I've got a squadron in training in Nebraska - they have the best record so far of anybody we've got. I want you to go visit them, look at them, talk to them, do whatever you want. If they don't suit you, we'll get you some more." He said: "There's nobody could tell

you what you have to do because nobody knows. If we can do anything to help you, ask me." I said, thank you very much. He said, "Paul, be careful how you treat this responsibility, because if you're successful you'll probably be called a hero. And if you're unsuccessful, you might wind up in prison."

Studs Terkel: Did you know the power of an atomic bomb? Were you told about that?

Paul Tibbets: No, I didn't know anything at that time. But I knew how to put an organization together. He said, "Go take a look at the bases, and call me back and tell me which one you want." I wanted to get back to Grand Island, Nebraska; that's where my wife and two kids were, where my laundry was done and all that stuff. But I thought, "Well, I'll go to Wendover [Army Airfield, in Utah] first and see what they've got." As I came in over the hills I saw it was a beautiful spot. It had been a final staging place for units that were going through combat crew training, and the guys ahead of me were the last P-47 fighter outfit. This Lieutenant-Colonel in charge said, "We've just been advised to stop here and I don't know what you want to do, but if it has anything to do with this base, it's the most perfect base I've ever been on. You've got full machine shops, everybody's qualified. They know what they want to do. It's a good place."

Studs Terkel: And now you chose your own crew.

Paul Tibbets: Well, I had mentally done it before that. I knew right away I was going to get Tom Ferebee [the Enola Gay's bombardier] and Theodore "Dutch" van Kirk [navigator] and Wyatt Duzenbury [flight engineer].

Studs Terkel: Guys you had flown with in

461st BOMB GROUP  
FINANCIAL STATEMENT  
FOR THE TWELVE MONTHS ENDED OCTOBER 31, 2016

Cash Balances - November 1, 2015

Checking account	<u>\$8,983</u>
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Income

Reunion income	47,374
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Dues and memberships	<u>125</u>
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Total Income	<u>47,499</u>
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Expenses

Reunion expenses	42,655
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Liberaider expenses	<u>1,030</u>
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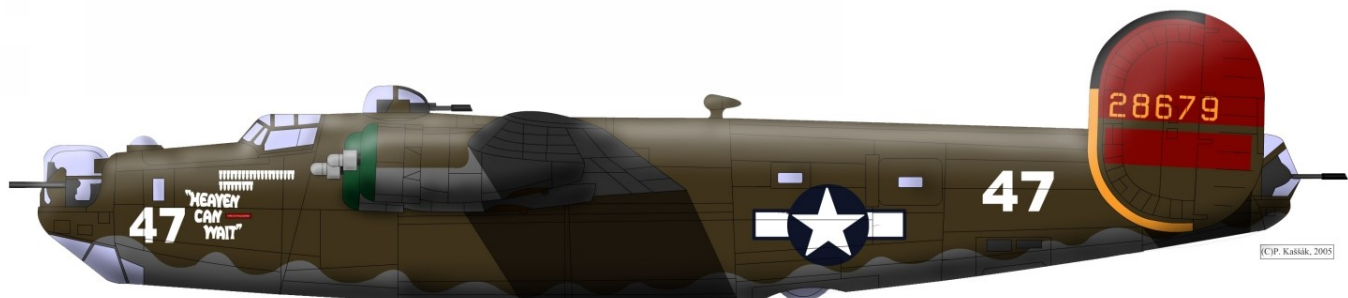
Total expenses	<u>43,685</u>
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Net income for the year

	<u>3,814</u>
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Cash Balances - October 31, 2016

Checking account	<u><u>\$12,797</u></u>
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[C.P. Katak, 2005]

*(Continued from page 19)*

Europe?

Paul Tibbets: Yeah.

Studs Terkel: And now you're training. And you're also talking to physicists like Robert Oppenheimer [senior scientist on the Manhattan Project].

Paul Tibbets: I think I went to Los Alamos [the Manhattan project HQ] three times, and each time I got to see Dr. Oppenheimer working in his own environment. Later, thinking about it, here's a young man, a brilliant person. And he's a chain smoker and he drinks cocktails. And he hates fat men. And General Leslie Groves [the General in charge of the Manhattan Project], he's a fat man, and he hates people who smoke and drink. The two of them are the first, original odd couple.

Studs Terkel: They had a feud, Groves and Oppenheimer?

Paul Tibbets: Yeah, but neither one of them showed it. Each one of them had a job to do.

Studs Terkel: Did Oppenheimer tell you about the destructive nature of the bomb?

Paul Tibbets: No.

Studs Terkel: How did you know about that?

Paul Tibbets: From Dr. Ramsey. He said the only thing we can tell you about it is it's going to explode with the force of 20,000 tons of TNT. I'd never seen 1 lb. of TNT blow up. I'd never heard of anybody who'd seen 100 lbs. of TNT blow up. All I felt was that this was gonna be one hell of a big bang.

Studs Terkel: Twenty thousand tons - that's equivalent to how many planes full of bombs?

Paul Tibbets: Well, I think the two bombs that we used [at Hiroshima and Nagasaki] had more power than all the bombs the Air Force had used during the war in Europe.

Studs Terkel: So Ramsey told you about the possibilities.

Paul Tibbets: Even though it was still theory, whatever those guys told me, that's what happened. So I was ready to say I wanted to go to war, but I wanted to ask Oppenheimer how to get away from the bomb after we dropped it. I told him that when we had dropped bombs in Europe and North Africa, we'd flown straight ahead after dropping them - which is also the trajectory of the bomb. But what should we do this time? He said, "You can't fly straight ahead because you'd be right over the top when it blows up and nobody would ever know you were there." He said I had to turn tangent to the expanding shock wave. I said, "Well, I've had some trigonometry, some physics. What is tangency in this case? He said it was 159 degrees in either direction. "Turn 159 degrees as fast as you can and you'll be able to put yourself the greatest distance from where the bomb exploded."

Studs Terkel: How many seconds did you have to make that turn?

Paul Tibbets: I had dropped enough practice bombs to realize that the charges would blow around 1,500 feet in the air, so I would have 40 to 42 seconds to turn 159 degrees. I went back to Wendover as quick as I could and took the airplane up. I got myself to 25,000 ft., and I practiced turning, steeper, steeper, steeper and I got it where I could pull it around in 40 seconds. The tail was shaking

*(Continued on page 22)*

*(Continued from page 21)*

dramatically and I was afraid of it breaking off, but I didn't quit. That was my goal. And I practiced and practiced until, without even thinking about it, I could do it in between 40 and 42, all the time. So, when that day came...

Studs Terkel: You got the go-ahead on August 5.

Paul Tibbets: Yeah. We were in Tinian [the US island base in the Pacific] at the time we got the OK. They had sent this Norwegian to the weather station out on Guam [the US's westernmost territory] and I had a copy of his report. We said that, based on his forecast, the sixth day of August would be the best day that we could get over Honshu [the island on which Hiroshima stands]. So we did everything that had to be done to get the crews ready to go: airplane loaded, crews briefed, all of the things checked that you have to check before you can fly over enemy territory. General Groves had a brigadier-general who was connected back to Washington, DC by a special teletype machine. He stayed close to that thing all the time, notifying people back there, all by code, that we were preparing these airplanes to go any time after midnight on the sixth. And that's the way it worked out. We were ready to go at about four o'clock in the afternoon on the fifth and we got word from the President that we were free to go: "Use me as you wish." They give you a time you're supposed to drop your bomb on target and that was 9:15 in the morning, but that was Tinian time, one hour later than Japanese time. I told Dutch, "You figure it out what time we have to start after midnight to be over the target at 9 AM."

Studs Terkel: That'd be Sunday morning.

Paul Tibbets: Well, we got going down the

runway at right about 2:15 AM and we took off; we met our rendezvous guys, we made our flight up to what we call the initial point, that would be a geographic position that you could not mistake. Well, of course we had the best one in the world with the rivers and bridges and that big shrine. There was no mistaking what it was.

Studs Terkel: So you had to have the right navigator to get it on the button.

Paul Tibbets: The airplane has a bomb sight connected to the auto-pilot and the bombardier puts figures in there for where he wants to be when he drops the weapon, and that's transmitted to the airplane. We always took into account what would happen if we had a failure and the bomb bay doors didn't open: we had a manual release put in each airplane so it was right down by the bombardier and he could pull on that. And the guys in the airplanes that followed us to drop the instruments needed to know when it was going to go. We were told not to use the radio, but, hell, I had to. I told them I would say, "One minute out," "Thirty seconds out," "Twenty seconds" and "Ten" and then I'd count, "Nine, eight, seven, six, five, four seconds", which would give them a time to drop their cargo. They knew what was going on because they knew where we were. And that's exactly the way it worked; it was absolutely perfect. After we got the airplanes in formation I crawled into the tunnel and went back to tell the men, I said, "You know what we're doing today?" They said, "Well, yeah, we're going on a bombing mission." I said, "Yeah, we're going on a bombing mission, but it's a little bit special." My tail gunner, Bob Caron, was pretty alert. He said, "Colonel, we wouldn't be playing with atoms today, would we?" I said, "Bob, you've got it just exactly right." So I went back up in the

*(Continued on page 23)*

*(Continued from page 22)*

front end and I told the navigator, bombardier, flight engineer, in turn. I said, "OK, this is an atom bomb we're dropping." We'd been fiddling round with the most peculiar-shaped things we'd ever seen. So we're coming down. We get to that point where I say "one second" and by the time I'd got that second out of my mouth the airplane had lurched, because 10,000 lbs. had come out of the front. I'm in this turn now, tight as I can get it that helps me hold my altitude and helps me hold my airspeed and everything else all the way round. When I level out, the nose is a little bit high and as I look up there, the whole sky is lit up in the prettiest blues and pinks I've ever seen in my life. It was just great. I tell people I tasted it. "Well," they say, "what do you mean?" When I was a child, if you had a cavity in your tooth, the dentist put some mixture of some cotton or whatever it was and lead into your teeth and pounded them in with a hammer. I learned that if I had a spoon of ice-cream and touched one of those teeth I got this electrolysis and I got the taste of lead out of it. And I knew right away what it was. OK, we're all going. We had been briefed to stay off the radios: "Don't say a damn word. What we do is we make this turn, we're going to get out of here as fast as we can. "I want to get out over the Sea of Japan because I know they can't find me over there. With that done we're home free. Then Tom Ferebee has to fill out his bombardier's report and Dutch, the navigator, has to fill out a log. Tom is working on his log and says, "Dutch, what time were we over the target?" And Dutch says, "Nineteen plus 15 seconds." Ferebee says: "What lousy navigating. Fifteen seconds off!"

Studs Terkel: Did you hear an explosion?

Paul Tibbets: Oh yeah. The shockwave was coming up at us after we turned. And the tail

gunner said, "Here it comes." About the time he said that, we got this kick in the ass. I had accelerometers installed in all airplanes to record the magnitude of the bomb. It hit us with two and a half G. Next day, when we got figures from the scientists on what they had learned from all the things, they said, "When that bomb exploded, your airplane was 10 and half miles away from it."

Studs Terkel: Did you see that mushroom cloud?

Paul Tibbets: You see all kinds of mushroom clouds, but they were made with different types of bombs. The Hiroshima bomb did not make a mushroom. It was what I call a stringer. It just came up. It was black as hell, and it had light and colors and white in it and grey color in it and the top was like a folded-up Christmas tree.

Studs Terkel: Do you have any idea what happened down below?

Paul Tibbets: Pandemonium! I think it's best stated by one of the historians, who said: "In one micro-second, the city of Hiroshima didn't exist."

Studs Terkel: You came back, and you visited President Truman.

Paul Tibbets: We're talking 1948 now. I'm back in the Pentagon and I get notice from the Chief of Staff, Carl Spaatz, the first Chief of Staff of the Air Force. When we got to General Spaatz's office, General Doolittle was there, and a colonel named Dave Shillen. Spaatz said, "Gentlemen, I just got word from the President he wants us to go over to his office immediately. "On the way over, Doolittle and Spaatz were doing some talking; I wasn't saying very much. When we got out of the car, we were escorted right quick to

*(Continued on page 24)*

*(Continued from page 23)*

the Oval Office. There was a black man there who always took care of Truman's needs and he said, "General Spaatz, will you please be facing the desk?" And now, facing the desk, Spaatz is on the right, Doolittle and Shillen. Of course, militarily speaking, that's the correct order: because Spaatz is senior, Doolittle has to sit to his left. Then I was taken by this man and put in the chair that was right beside the president's desk, beside his left hand. Anyway, we got a cup of coffee and we got most of it consumed when Truman walked in and everybody stood on their feet. He said, "Sit down, please," and he had a big smile on his face and he said, "General Spaatz, I want to congratulate you on being first Chief of the Air Force," because it was no longer the Air Corps. Spaatz said, "Thank you, sir, it's a great honor and I appreciate it." And he said to Doolittle: "That was a magnificent thing you pulled flying off of that carrier," and Doolittle said, "All in a day's work, Mr. President." And he looked at Dave Shillen and said, "Colonel Shillen, I want to congratulate you on having the foresight to recognize the potential in aerial refueling. We're gonna need it bad someday." And he said thank you very much. Then he looked at me for 10 seconds and he didn't say anything. And when he finally did, he said, "What do you think?" I said, "Mr. President, I think I did what I was told." He slapped his hand on the table and said: "You're damn right you did, and I'm the guy who sent you. If anybody gives you a hard time about it, refer them to me."

Studs Terkel: Anybody ever give you a hard time?

Paul Tibbets: Nobody gave me a hard time.

Studs Terkel: Do you ever have any second thoughts about the bomb?

Paul Tibbets: Second thoughts? No. Studs, look. Number one, I got into the Air Corps to defend the United States to the best of my ability. That's what I believe in and that's what I work for. Number two, I'd had so much experience with airplanes. I'd had jobs where there was no particular direction about how you do it and then of course I put this thing together with my own thoughts on how it should be because when I got the directive I was to be self-supporting at all times. On the way to the target I was thinking: I can't think of any mistakes I've made. Maybe I did make a mistake: maybe I was too damned assured. At 29 years of age I was so shot in the ass with confidence I didn't think there was anything I couldn't do. Of course, that applied to airplanes and people. So, no, I had no problem with it. I knew we did the right thing because when I knew we'd be doing that I thought, yes, we're going to kill a lot of people, but by God we're going to save a lot of lives. We won't have to invade Japan.

Studs Terkel: Why did they drop the second one, the Boxcar [plane named "Bockscar" now at the Air Force Museum in Dayton ... with Fat Man plutonium implosion bomb] on Nagasaki?

Paul Tibbets: Unknown to anybody else - I knew it, but nobody else knew - there was a third one. See, the first bomb went off and they didn't hear anything out of the Japanese for two or three days. The second bomb was dropped and again they were silent for another couple of days. Then I got a phone call from General Curtis LeMay [Chief of Staff of the Strategic Air Forces in the Pacific]. He said, "You got another one of those damn things?" I said, "Yes sir." He said, "Where is it?" I said, "Over in Utah." He said, "Get it out here. You and your crew are going to fly it." I said, "Yes sir." I sent word back and the

*(Continued on page 25)*

*(Continued from page 24)*

crew loaded it on an airplane and we headed back to bring it right on out to Tinian and when they got it to California debarkation point, the war was over.

Studs Terkel: What did General LeMay have in mind with the third one?

Paul Tibbets: Nobody knows.

Studs Terkel: One big question. Since September 11, what are your thoughts? People talk about nukes, the hydrogen bomb.

Paul Tibbets: Let's put it this way. I don't know any more about these terrorists than you do; I know nothing. When they bombed the Trade Center, I couldn't believe what was going on. We've fought many enemies at different times. But we knew who they were and where they were. These people, we don't know who they are or where they are. That's the point that bothers me. Because they're gonna strike again, I'll put money on it. And it's going to be damned dramatic. But they're gonna do it in their own sweet time. We've got to get into a position where we can kill the bastards. None of this business of taking them to court. The hell with that. I wouldn't waste five seconds on them.

Studs Terkel: What about the bomb? Einstein said the world has changed since the atom was split.

Paul Tibbets: That's right. It has changed.

Studs Terkel: And Oppenheimer knew that.

Paul Tibbets: Oppenheimer is dead. He did something for the world and people don't understand. And it is a free world.

Studs Terkel: One last thing, when you hear people say, "Let's nuke 'em," "Let's nuke

these people," what do you think?

Paul Tibbets: Oh, I wouldn't hesitate if I had the choice. I'd wipe 'em out. You're gonna kill innocent people at the same time, but we've never fought a damn war anywhere in the world where they didn't kill innocent people. If the newspapers would just cut out the s\*\*t: "You've killed so many civilians." That's their tough luck for being there.

Studs Terkel: By the way, I forgot to say Enola Gay was originally called number 82. How did your mother feel about having her name on it?

Paul Tibbets: Well, I can only tell you what my dad said. My mother never changed her expression very much about anything, whether it was serious or light, but when she'd get tickled, her stomach would jiggle. My dad said to me that when the telephone in Miami rang, my mother was quiet first. Then, when it was announced on the radio, he said: "You should have seen the old gal's belly jiggle on that one."

*Paul Tibbets was born in 1915 so the interview was conducted some time in 2002.*

## Adriatic Aerie

by  
Bob Livingstone

The author of the following article, Robert Livingstone, is a recognized B-24 researcher and author of "*Under the Southern Cross: The B-24 Liberator in the South Pacific*" and "*Strike Back! Modelling the B-24 Liberator in RAAF Service*" as well as numerous articles in international publications. "Adriatic Aerie" first appeared in THE AVIATION HISTORIAN.

(www.theaviationhistorian.com)

By the end of October 1943 the North African aerial campaign was complete and the Italian invasion was progressing well, allowing the commencement of a two-front air offensive against Germany. To achieve this, the USAAF established the Fifteenth Air Force on 1 November 1943 and populated it initially with six heavy bomb groups taken from the Ninth (equipped with two B-24 Groups) and Twelfth (basically B-17 equipped) Air Forces. A further fifteen heavy groups, planned or under training in the US, originally earmarked for the Eighth Air Force, were subsequently to join the Fifteenth, making up five bomb wings.

The Fifteenth Air Force B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers' tasks were strategic: destroy the enemy's air force on the ground and in the air, participate in POINTBLANK, support the ground war in Italy and harass German forces in the Balkans, but the priority was petroleum production and the most vital (and dangerous) target was the Rumanian refinery complex of Ploesti which the groups were to visit many times between April and August 1944.

One of the transferred groups was the 376<sup>th</sup>, *The Liberandos*, assigned with the 98<sup>th</sup> Pyra-

*midiers* to the 47<sup>th</sup> Wing, beginning the move from their Ninth Air Force base in Tunisia for Italy on November 17, to be based at San Pancrazio, one of 45 airfields being prepared for combat operations in southern Italy and about three miles from the eponymous farming village.

The Fifteenth established three emergency airfields to cater for the approximate tracks the bombers were expected to fly to their assigned targets, one of which was the island of Vis, on the Dalmatian coast of occupied Yugoslavia, from May 1944 offering an alternative to crash-landing in inhospitable terrain, baling out over Yugoslavia, or braving the dangerous flight across the Adriatic to reach southern Italy in combat damaged or fuel-short aircraft.

On 22 August 1944 the Fifteenth fielded a force of 612 bombers and 354 escort fighters against five oil targets, losing 32 bombers and four fighters. The 376<sup>th</sup> flew their mission to underground fuel storage tanks at Lobau near Vienna, losing two B-24s to a mid-air collision and one aircraft missing, a very low account considering that the Fifteenth Air Force had a considerably higher attrition rate than the Eighth Air Force.

The missing aircraft, B-24J-CO 44-40330 *Hardway Ten*, Battle Number 92 of the 515<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, was commanded by Captain Charles Andrews:

*On August 22, 1944, my crew was assigned to **Hardway Ten** on a mission to Vienna. It was a rough mission as far as we were concerned as we lost one engine over the target and another one [on] the same side rolling off the target. We had been hit*

(Continued on page 27)

*(Continued from page 26)*

*repeatedly. We had lost our oxygen, our hydraulic system, brakes, and with only two engines, we had to let down and come back alone.*

*We had been briefed on the use of the island of Vis for emergency only, and rather than ditch in the Adriatic we opted for landing there as we couldn't have made it back to Italy. On our approach to the very short field, the B-24 ahead of us blew a tire in landing and was parked at the end of the runway. Then to make matters worse an Italian transport pulled into take-off position on the runway. Later I could have killed the guy as he could have seen us on our final approach. Anyway, there was no going around and the ship was not easy to handle with the two right engines gone, but I did get it on the runway (3300 feet long) and over the transport, but with no chance of stopping except for the one application of the emergency brakes, and the only way to avoid the B-24 on the far end of the runway was to veer off to the side.*

*What I didn't see was an irrigation ditch deep enough to stop the left gear, which, when it dropped, caught the left wingtip and then the engines, and turned us over in a complete cartwheel. The plane was a mess and we were all inside of it. I can still hear the sound of one engine running; it had no prop but was turning over and my first thought was 'fire'. We will always thank the good Lord for the absence of fire as we would all have been dead, but some people on the ground got us out finally.*

*I found out a few hours after I was pulled out that two of my crew were dead and that one man was in very serious condition with broken ribs that had punctured his*

*lungs. A day or so later a C-47 was sent in to pick us up and some others who had landed there, but I stayed on the island with my injured crewman. He had been in a coma and I didn't want him to come out of it and not see anyone that he knew.*

*He only lived a day or so after that, never regaining consciousness, so I came back on another plane going back to Italy and joined the rest of my crew in the hospital in Bari. We were all banged and hurt to some extent but were soon back in action. I have thought of those three men almost every day of my life.*

Those killed were John E. Cross (tail gunner), Duane Hostetler (radio operator) and Vernon D. Ferguson (nose gunner).

The island of Vis today is being advertised as a mysterious tourist destination, with a history dating to the Romans and earlier. The 90 square kilometer island lies in the Adriatic, 45km off the city of Split, Croatia, and its strategic location has been understood for centuries, controlled at various times by the ancient Greeks, Romans and Byzantines and the French and British in more modern times.

The relatively short-lived amalgamation of Balkan states named Yugoslavia lasted until 1941 when it was invaded and occupied by Germany. The Allies left the anti-Nazi fight to the Yugoslavians, supplying them mainly by air-drops by both USAAF and RAF aircraft, despite the country being opportunistically split in a civil war between the Nationalists, the Communists (Partisans), the Fascists (Ustasha) and the Royalists (Chetniks). It was the invading Russians whose eastern pressure began the withdrawal of German forces in October 1944, but fighting continued until the end of May 1945, after the German surrender, when the leader of the Parti-

*(Continued on page 28)*

(Continued from page 27)

sans, Josip Broz "Tito", assumed control and all sides then surrendered to the British.

Vis was never under German rule having been occupied (and renamed Lissa) by the Italians in 1941, but they abandoned the island after Italy signed an armistice with the Allies on 8 September 1943 after which Tito's Partisans assumed control. The Germans poured troops into Italy but with limited naval assets were only able to capture and hold the islands close to the coast. The Royal Navy, looking for an advance base for Balkan coastal raids, and the Army, looking for a location from which to support Tito's Partisans, realized that Vis was the only possible geographical location.

Only half of British 2 Commando unit, all that was considered necessary, arrived in January 1944, primarily to defend the island, but led by its CO, "Mad" Jack Churchill, carried out aggressive raids on mainland coastal towns. Together with a small force of US Rangers, two Royal Marine Commando units, some men from the Highland Infantry and a Royal Artillery detachment, the force attacked and subdued the German units on the islands of Solta and Hvar by May 1944. The Royal Navy based MTBs, MGBs, HDMLs and a few Destroyers in the harbour under the command of Lieutenant Commander Morgan Giles.

Helped by the British military, an airfield to support the Partisans on the mainland was built by the Yugoslavs in May 1944, and it became the home of the Escadrila zu Vezu (Headquarters Liaison Squadron) of the Balkan Air Force. 352<sup>nd</sup> (Yugoslav) Squadron RAF with Spitfires and 351<sup>st</sup> (Yugoslav) Squadron RAF (Hurricanes), both based in different Italian airfields, used the Vis airfield as a forward base and 352<sup>nd</sup> Squadron moved

there permanently on 1 January 1945.

Once the runway was completed, the Fifteenth Air Force nominated it as an emergency airfield and briefed crews on its existence accordingly. The Germans were aware of its existence almost immediately and prepared maps of it for their fliers. To support aircrew and repair damaged aircraft, the AAF posted a small group of personnel (approximately ten men) under the command of Captain S. R. Keator which was assisted by RAF personnel posted to support 352<sup>nd</sup> Squadron. Keator, a man of action with no time for report writing, is reported as stating, "We don't need typewriters or filing cabinets; If I had a typewriter I'd have to type reports, and if I wrote reports, I'd have to file them. We'd rather fix airplanes."

At the same time that the runway was being built, Tito had his own problems. His headquarters at Drvar in Bosnia was attacked by the Germans in *Operation Rösselsprung*. Aided by raids mounted from the island as a distraction, Tito and the Central Committee escaped to an airfield near Kupres where they were flown to Bari by C-47 and thence moved to Vis by the destroyer HMS *Blackmore* on June 6. Tito left Vis for the last time on September 20 for Russia before entering liberated Belgrade on October 15.

Jay Stout had this to say about Vis in *Fortress Ploesti*:

*Many bomber crews who were hit over the target managed to make it back through enemy territory, across Yugoslavia, and to the eastern shore of the Adriatic. Ahead of them lay 100 miles or more of forbidding sea. If making back across the Adriatic Sea to Italy was a doubtful proposition, one option available to them was an emergency landing at the island of Vis. Vis is one of the westernmost*

(Continued on page 29)

(Continued from page 28)

*Dalmatian islands that hugs the coast of Yugoslavia. A rocky, waterless crag that was held by the partisans and served as Tito's Headquarters for several months during the Spring and Summer of 1944. Too prickly for the Germans to take, it was used as a base of operations for several special British units. From Vis, they made raids on German garrisons in Yugoslavia, and kept various partisan groups armed and supplied.*

*But most important to the Allied fliers, there was a primitive 3,500 foot gravel runway. For the big bombers it was only suitable for an emergency landing. And once committed, there was virtually no backing out; it was situated such that a crippled bomber had little chance of climbing away from an aborted landing. Once down, a quick assessment was made of the aircraft's condition. If it was salvageable, a special effort was made to find room for it on the tiny airfield. If not, it was bulldozed to make room for other aircraft. The crews then waited for transportation back to Italy via a fast torpedo boat or a C-47.*

Depending on the wind direction - or not if the crippled aircraft had limited options, both approaches were problematical. One runway threshold involved a steep close approach over the surrounding mountains with an upslope to the runway end; landing short could be disastrous, but landing long and not stopping in time at the other end past the over-run meant an unsurvivable 100 foot drop over the cliff down to the rocky beach. Landing in the opposite direction raised the slightly less terrifying possibility of running down the unprepared slope past the end of the runway with its attendant dangers. There was no doubt that the runway at Vis, at least for a heavy bomber, and particularly for a damaged one, was an emergency runway only.

George McGovern, later Senator McGovern and Presidential hopeful, flew the B-24 with the 741<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron of the 455<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. On 20 December 1944, his 30<sup>th</sup> combat mission, he

flew the *Dakota Queen* to the Skoda tank-manufacturing works at Pilsen in Czechoslovakia. An hour from the target number two engine had to be shut down and feathered and the aircraft struggled to keep up with the formation. Thirty seconds from dropping the bombs number three engine was hit by flak. The oil pressure dropped so suddenly that the propeller could not be feathered and windmilled until the engine caught fire.

McGovern dived the B-24 in attempt to blow out the fire and continued feathering attempts until finally one last stab at the feathering button met with success. It was obvious that they could not get back to base, but the navigator advised that they could reach the Vis emergency runway in under an hour. Everything loose was thrown out to lighten the aircraft, and despite number three bursting into flames again late in the flight, McGovern touched down right on the end of the runway and with tires smoking from the heavy braking, swung off the runway at the very end, still travelling fast. The crew was flown out to Italy by C-47 and some months later McGovern was awarded the DFC for his "high degree of courage and piloting skill".

Not all diversions to Vis ended in a landing however.

On 30 May 1944, 2/Lt William Cubbins of the 450<sup>th</sup> BG 723<sup>rd</sup> BS was flying co-pilot on B-24H -FO 42-95296 as part of a full 15-group Fifteenth Air Force mixed mission of B-24s and B-17s to attack targets in the Vienna/Wiener Neustadt area, Cubbins' thirteenth mission. The 450<sup>th</sup> was known as *The Cottontails* because of their white tails. The forming up did not go to plan as the 449<sup>th</sup> ran late and were behind instead of in front of the 450<sup>th</sup>. After leaving the IP, the 449<sup>th</sup> tried to regain its position in the bombing sequence by 'cutting the corner' in the turn, causing the 450<sup>th</sup> to "break left to avoid a sky full of crunched bombers". The 450<sup>th</sup> leader had no option but to fly past the target, reverse course and bomb in the opposite direction.

(Continued on page 30)

(Continued from page 29)

During the bomb run Cubbins' aircraft was hit by flak, a shell which did not explode smashing into engine number three. There was no fire, but a lot of fuel was lost, the right wing appeared to have more dihedral than it should and was flexing more than usual. A lot of height was lost while the aircraft was stabilized again and turned back towards Italy; it became quickly obvious that they were not going to make it back to Manduria and the only alternatives were to abandon the aircraft either immediately to certain capture, hang on until they reached Yugoslavia and hope to meet the partisans, or try to reach Vis; Vis won the crew debate.

The aircraft and the fuel lasted long enough for them to cross the coast and at this point they called Vis tower for permission to land, only to be told by a British controller, "Negative Sir! Jump your crew over the island. We don't have any more room for aircraft on the field." From overhead the crew of *Dakota Queen* could see he was right:

*Wrecked and seemingly flyable B-24s, B-17s, a B-25 or two, and other junked aircraft lined one side of the small runway. The other side was the fighter parking and ordnance areas. We'd have to jump.*

They flew over the island along the axis of the runway and baled out over the airfield. A pair of German fighters flew at them on descent but inexplicably appeared not to fire. When the crew had gathered together on the ground they counted one short: waist gunner Riley had vanished and was never found despite days of searching; it was thought that he had landed in the sea and drowned, but possibly he had hesitated too long and was trapped in the aircraft until it flew on and disappeared into the sea. The remainder of the crew stayed for three days in the tents for the 'transient accommodation' on the other side of the mountains, waiting for transport back to Italy. Cubbins has left an excellent account of the airfield:

*From the ground, the reason for the tower op-*

*erator's refusal to let us land on the airstrip was even more obvious than it had been from the air. The place was a junkyard. Most of the bombers were total wrecks. Many had been bulldozed from the runway to their final resting places, and all had been stripped of serviceable equipment by the Commandos and Partisans. Looking up at the mountains surrounding the airfield, I was thankful we had been refused permission to land. With one engine out and a weakened wing, we might not have made it. The fire-blackened skin of a number of aircraft carcasses bore grim testimony that some had made it the hard way. I wondered how many men had died trying to land on the mountain-locked strip.*

Life on the airfield was not at all completely isolated from enemy attack, despite the German inability to over-run the island. The German fighters mentioned above made sporadic strafing attacks on the airfield, and Cubbins writes of being woken on his first morning on the island by the sound of an air raid siren and the sound of exploding bombs. As an airman it was his first experience of being on the receiving end of a bombing raid:

*The German bombs had been small and few in number; nevertheless, I'd felt totally helpless. For the first time I wondered what it was like to be caught beneath our massive bomb drops.*

This crew had brought home a badly damaged aircraft on their previous mission, two missions later they miraculously landed on a British airfield in Italy with all four engines stopped, and on 30 July they baled out of B-24H-DT 42-51159 *Bachelor's Bed-lam* over Rumania and became POWs.

The 460<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, *The Black Panthers*, was another of the Fifteenth Air Force B-24 Groups whose aircraft found a need for emergency landings at Vis.

(Continued on page 31)

(Continued from page 30)

On 15 July 1944, 2/Lt Ted Newby, bombardier on Charlie Hammett's 763<sup>rd</sup> BS crew, found himself scheduled to fly another mission to Ploesti as part of a mission comprising six hundred heavies and associated 'little friends'. Their usual aircraft, B-24H-DT 42-51084 *Hangar Queen*, was down for repairs, so they were allocated another anonymous squadron B-24 this day. The 460<sup>th</sup> B-24s were briefed to climb to 24,000 feet, about the best a skinny-winged Liberator could reach with full fuel and bombs; on the mission the wide-chord B-17s could be seen six thousand feet above them. Some aircraft struggled on the climb, dropping a 500lb bomb or two to be able to continue the climb before they stalled; to drop out of formation and straggle was to invite certain death from flak or more particularly, fighters.

Approaching Bucharest number three engine was damaged by flak and began to lose oil pressure, followed quickly by the loss of superchargers on number one, then number two. They held off feathering number three a little too long as when they tried, it refused to feather and began to windmill. The bombardier salvoed the bombs and quickly they turned and descended until they were heading back towards Italy at 13,000 feet, slowly descending because of the drag from the windmilling propeller, leaving behind a trail of everything moveable except the turret guns; unmoving guns signaled an easy target to the fighters. Italy was clearly not an option, but Vis beckoned. Friction from the windmilling propeller had caused a small fire in the shaft at the front of the engine, fuel was leaking from the engine and the vibration from the propeller was becoming intense:

*The plane shuddered so much, my jowls shook; I could actually feel my cheeks shaking like a bowl of jello on a bumpy road. It's funny how your mind works in stress situations like this. I thought of the then popular song, "It must be jelly, 'cause jam don't shake like that."*

*The propeller and shaft finally tore loose from the engine, cut through the fuselage, and spun its way down to the ground.*

*Actually, the departing propeller was a blessing in disguise. Suddenly, all was serene again, and we picked up twelve miles an hour speed.*

The B-24 was now assured of reaching the island, but when committed for the landing, the pilots were confronted with a small biplane taxiing on the runway. They held off until past the biplane and dropped the B-24 heavily on the runway, no doubt frightening the hell out of the Yugoslavian pilot - with maybe 1500 feet left. The waist gunners had been briefed to be prepared for the need, and their parachutes with harness hooked to the gun mounts were thrown out of the waist windows the moment the B-24 touched down; the pilots stamped hard on the brakes and brought the aircraft to a screeching halt, aided by the drag from the parachutes.

*As I reached out to congratulate them on a fine landing, I wondered why both pilots were as white as sheets. Neither of them said a word. They couldn't. I turned white, too, when I climbed out from under the bomb bay and saw the nose of our plane protruding out over the edge of a cliff that seemed a mile straight down to the rock-strewn ocean shore. **The nose wheel was just inches from the edge.** When we talked to the tower operator, a pilot himself, he told us it was the finest emergency landing he had ever seen, and all he ever saw were emergency landings at his field. He had thought we had no chance of stopping in that short distance; he had seen a number of other disabled bombers go over the cliff.*

The crew was returned to Bari by boat, and probably thankful for that mode of transport.

Many of the aircraft which made the decision to head for Vis didn't even make it that far, their

(Continued on page 32)

(Continued from page 31)

aircraft so badly damaged that they had to be abandoned by their crews over Yugoslavia, or went out of control and crashed or were ditched in the Adriatic in the vicinity of Vis. One such was the last B-24 built by Douglas at Tulsa from parts fabricated by Ford at Willow Run, B-24J-10 42-51430, named at the factory *The Tulsamerican* and paid for by Douglas employees with War Bonds. Operated initially by the 450<sup>th</sup> BG 722<sup>nd</sup> BS, it was transferred after depot servicing to the 461<sup>st</sup> BG 765<sup>th</sup> BS and given the Battle Number 24. On mission 137 for the 461<sup>st</sup> and the 17th for the aircraft, *The Tulsamerican* flew on 17 December 1944 to the Blechhammer South oil refinery in Poland. Attacked and damaged by fighters over the target, and losing two engines, the decision was made to head for Vis, but without hydraulics, once the decision to land was made, the gear had to be manually extended via the handles in the bomb bay. The mains went down and locked but the nose wheel refused to co-operate. The captain elected to continue the approach while the engineer tried to kick the recalcitrant nose wheel into action, intending to crash land on the runway without it should the nose wheel not respond to brute force, but while executing the circuit to align with the runway, the other two engines suddenly quit, leaving the captain no option but to ditch in the Adriatic between the islands of Hvar and Vis, the extended main undercarriage causing it to nose in heavily and flip onto its back before sinking. The pilot, navigator and engineer were killed but the remaining seven crewmembers were picked up by Croatian fishermen and taken to Vis for repatriation.

The aircrew were Pilot Lt. Eugene P. Ford, Co-Pilot Lt. Vincent Eckland, Navigator Lt. Russell C. Landry, Bombardier Lt. Val P. Miller, Engineer T/Sgt. Charles E. Priest, Tail Gunner S/Sgt. James R. Hazel, Ball Turret Gunner S/Sgt. Wallace H. McLemore, Nose Gunner S/Sgt. John F. Toney, Waist Gunner S/Sgt. Casimir P. Walenga, Radio Operator/Waist Gunner S/Sgt. Edward F. Steelandt. Hazell was the only one to return to duty, the other six being returned to the

US for hospitalization and recuperation.

The exact location of the wreck was not recorded, understandable in the circumstances, and despite almost 30 years of searching by the navigator's cousin who was determined to find closure for his family, the aircraft was only found by accident by a Croatian recreational diver in December 2009. The construction plate was pried off the instrument panel and when cleaned revealed the serial which permitted positive identification of the wreck. Allied and Axis aircraft litter the seabed in the Adriatic, most never investigated or found and identified.

The airfield on Vis provided a very valuable service to the USAAF well beyond its manning costs, reportedly saving hundreds of aircraft and thousands of lives. On one day in 1944 it is reported to have accepted 37 B-24 landings in both directions, sometimes simultaneously.

After the Germans in Yugoslavia retreated north, the repair crews and 352<sup>nd</sup> (Yugoslav) Squadron RAF moved to Zara (now the Croatian city of Zadar) on the mainland in February 1945 and 351<sup>st</sup> Squadron, now also Spitfire-equipped, joined them. The island was closed to foreigners by the Partisans and progressively converted to a military station, ultimately with more than 30 military facilities, an underground tunnel, a military hospital and facilities for Yugoslav warships. After the war the airfield was abandoned and returned to agriculture – a vineyard as it had been previously.

This situation lasted until 1989 through the break-up of the Yugoslavian Communist Republic, although the Yugoslav army did not fully leave the island until 30 May 1992. Fast forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and the abandoned military facilities are offered as tourist attractions: offered are scuba diving, caving, swimming and walking tours. There is talk of re-building the wartime airfield into a modern aerodrome to take tourist flights from the mainland to supplement the boat ride from Split.

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an Allied airfield in the Balkans to open up in time to catch the all-out effort of the Fifteenth Air Force in support of the advancing Russians and the windup of the year-long campaign against Nazi oil.

Striking heavier and heavier loads at newer and more distant targets, in direct collaboration with the Soviet troops of Koniev, Petrov, Malinovsky and Tolbukhin, the liberators and fortresses of the Fifteenth Air Force, together with their long range fighter escorts, have had to fly farther and climb higher than ever before. Only so much gasoline can be carried on base missions without sacrificing the payload of bombs. Many brave pilots have watched the needle on the fuel gauge dropped to zero while they were still miles away from the home bases in Italy or the emergency strip in the Dalmation islands to the south.

Some of these planes although low on gasoline have tried to cross of the Adriatic Sea, only to crashed before making the Italian mainland. Other planes with shot up engines, ripped lifting surfaces and torn fuselages have suffered the same fate.

Those days are gone. A P-38 pilot, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Kenneth W. Herrick, San Marino, California, said after landing on the Balkan airfield, "You can take my word for it, this is the best place of its kind in the whole Fifteenth Air Force. When I landed, there was only about 20 gallons of gasoline in each tank. It was mighty close."

Behind this large-scale, highly successful life-saving and plane saving operation is a slight, sun-bronzed officer of a Fifteenth Air Force Service Command air service squadron, who has knitted a group of GIs into a compact and versatile crew of repairman whose exploits have overshadowed any other similar services activities.

Many months ago, Captain Samuel R. Kestor, of Wynnewood, Pennsylvania, selected the cream of his service unit and wrought a Dalmation Island into an emergency field. Although it was

the best (and the only) field in the vicinity, the lack of runway space resulted in some nasty crackups in landing. When of the intelligence concerning this other field was received, Captain Kestor moved heaven and earth until he was made a member of the daring band that sneaked in the first step towards opening a mainland oasis for crippled aircraft.

After the air force engineers had cleared the field of mines and made necessary alterations, the advanced party of Fifteenth Air Force Service Command repairman, medics, clerks and cooks were flown in. Old hands at the game, they all pitched in at getting established and were ready for operation 72 hours later. Meanwhile the engineers constructed an additional runway and elements of the British Balkan Air Force move again.

Supplies and equipment of the Fifteenth Air Force Service Command poured in and a field hospital was set up. In February, everything was ready for business.

Captain Kester, assisted by his test pilot and second in command, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Creaseman, of 125 Brucemont Circle, Asheville, North Carolina, had to combat a maintenance and supply problem intensified by the distance and the lack of water transportation. It was solved when war-weary B-24 liberators, denuded of all combat equipment, were fitted out with huge bomb bay gasoline tanks and six of them flew dozens of trips from Italy to the Balkans.

When the drizzling Italian winter weather broke wide open in February, the Balkan airfield was ready. As hundreds of bombers and fighters of the Fifteenth Air Force pounded and roared their way to blast communications and industrial targets feeding the Russian and Italian fronts, the work of the service command units increased by leaps and bounds. In the first 10 days of the offensive there was an increase of 75% over the previous ten days in the number of bombers and fighters repaired by a Fifteenth Air Force Service Command units and turned back for combat fly-

*(Continued on page 34)*

*(Continued from page 33)*

ing.

In tune with the high speed of the operations is the procedure on the Balkan airbase. As soon as the control tower operator contacts an approaching aircraft and determines the trouble, the operations office is notified and a jeep shoots out to meet the new arrival.

A large percentage of these visitors are only in need of fuel and are directed to a parking lot where Sergeant Weller M. Seiders, 1207 Sabine Street, Austin, Texas handles all the details. Gassed up, the planes take off for the home base.

First contact with approaching aircraft is made in the control tower, where Sergeant Oscar B. Lynott, 10 East Gorham Street, Madison, Wisconsin, an aircraft instrument specialist turned control tower man by necessity, holds forth.

“What surprises me most of all,” says Sargent Lynott, “is how cool and collected the pilots are. When they come within sight of the field almost all of them have been up for hours and have gone through all kinds of hell. The other day we had a fortress come in with two engines dead and are just as he hit the runway the other two cut out. Later the pilot told me that his fuel tanks were so dry that he could hear them rattling it. But to hear him talking to me over the radio you would think it was just another landing.

“They’re always quite appreciative of the help and service we give them. Almost always the pilot will contact the control tower after the take-off for home and express his thanks. Sort of makes you feel good,” says the sergeant.

The field dispensary is operated by Captain Roderick J. Dougherty, of 3924 North Seeley Avenue, Chicago, Illinois and receives enough business to satisfy even the most eager medic. On the days that the Fifteenth Air Force is flying big missions, a flight nurse is flown in to the Balkan airfield to help out in the hospital. Although the medics have a brisk business, the fact that the

local Partisan commissar has turned over an excellent building as a hospital has lighten the load.

Busy as the hospital is, the repair line where the bulk of the men work under Master Sargent Jack B. Reichmuth, 1105 Loma vista, Victoria, Texas, is even busier. Fighters and bombers are lined up waiting for a variety of repairs, chiefly changes of engines which have burned out or have been shot out. In the first month of operations, over 30 planes pass through the repair section. Some of the planes do not make the repair line. They go to the scrap heap.

Another more dangerous phase of the repair work involves the removal of aircraft which have crashed in the back country of Yugoslavia. Pilots report the location of the crash to Captain Kestor.

“Final distribution of that crashed airplane,” says captain Kestor, “is up to us at the airfield, but most of them are inaccessible. Communications just don’t exist back in there.”

Base communications is another story, for under Captain Charles G. Hill, of 600 West 25<sup>th</sup> Street, Asheville, North Carolina, powerful transmitters and teletypes are busy all day. Two GIs operate a relay station for incoming and outgoing messages with the unofficial assistance of little Yugoslav shepherds. They are T/A John B. Wunzyak, 610 Gordon Avenue, Calumet City, Illinois, and Sargent Maxwell Russell, 105 West 55<sup>th</sup> Street, NYC.

The importance of the oasis in the Balkans can best be judged in the terms of the combat men. Recently the bombers of the Fifteenth Air Force went out on a mission in the face of a storm. A strong headwind on the return trip broke up the formations, but 28 of the planes picked up the beam from the Balkan airfield and landed safely with less than an hour’s fuel left in their tanks. That day’s combat communique read, “All our aircraft returned safely.”

## Moe Berg

When baseball greats Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig went on tour in baseball-crazy Japan in 1934, some fans wondered why a third-string catcher named Moe Berg was included. Although he played with five major-league teams from 1923 to 1939, he was a very mediocre ball player. But Moe was regarded as the brainiest ballplayer of all time. In fact Casey Stengel once said: "That is the strangest man ever to play baseball."

In Tokyo, garbed in a kimono, Berg took flowers to the daughter of an American diplomat being treated in St. Luke's Hospital - the tallest building in the Japanese capital.

He never delivered the flowers. The ballplayer ascended to the hospital roof and filmed key features: the harbor, military installations, railway yards, etc.

When all the baseball stars went to Japan, Moe Berg went with them and many people wondered why he went with "the team" . . .

Eight years later, General Jimmy Doolittle studied Berg's films in planning his spectacular raid on Tokyo..



*Lou Gehrig and Babe Ruth*



The answer was simple: Moe Berg was a United States spy, working undercover with the Office of Strategic Services (predecessor of today's CIA).

Moe spoke 15 languages - including Japanese. And he had two loves: baseball and spying.

His father disapproved and never once watched his son play. In Barringer High School, Moe learned Latin, Greek and French. Moe read at least 10 newspapers

*(Continued on page 36)*

(Continued from page 35)  
everyday.

He graduated magna cum laude from Princeton - having added Spanish, Italian, German and Sanskrit to his linguistic quiver. During further studies at the Sorbonne, in Paris, and Columbia Law School, he picked up Japanese, Chinese, Korean, Indian, Arabic, Portuguese and Hungarian - 15 languages in all, plus some regional dialects.

While playing baseball for Princeton University, Moe Berg would describe plays in Latin or Sanskrit.



*Tito's partisans*

During World War II, Moe was parachuted into Yugoslavia to assess the value to the war effort of the two groups of partisans there. He reported back that Marshall Tito's forces were widely supported by the people and Winston Churchill ordered all-out support for the Yugoslav underground fighter, rather than Mihajlovic's Serbians.

The parachute jump at age 41 undoubtedly was a challenge. But there was more to come in that same year. Berg penetrated German-

held Norway, met with members of the underground and located a secret heavy-water plant - part of the Nazis' effort to build an atomic bomb.

His information guided the Royal Air Force in a bombing raid to destroy that plant.



*The R.A.F. destroys the Norwegian heavy water plant targeted by Moe Berg.*

There still remained the question of how far had the Nazis progressed in the race to build the first Atomic bomb. If the Nazis were successful, they would win the war. Berg (under the code name "Remus") was sent to Switzerland to hear leading German physicist Werner Heisenberg, a Nobel Laureate, lecture and

(Continued on page 37)

determine if the Nazis were close to building an A-bomb. Moe managed to slip past the SS guards at the auditorium, posing as a Swiss graduate student. The spy carried in his pocket a pistol and a cyanide pill.

If the German indicated the Nazis were close to building a weapon, Berg was to shoot him - and then swallow the cyanide pill. Moe, sitting in the front row, determined that the Germans were nowhere near their goal, so he complimented Heisenberg on his speech and walked him back to his hotel.

Most of Germany's leading physicists had been Jewish and had fled the Nazis mainly to Britain and the United States. After the war, Moe Berg was awarded the Medal of Freedom - America's highest honor for a civilian in wartime. But Berg refused to accept it because he couldn't tell people about his exploits.

After his death, his sister accepted the Medal. It now hangs in the Baseball Hall of Fame, in Cooperstown.



*Werner Heisenberg - he blocked the Nazis from acquiring an atomic bomb.*

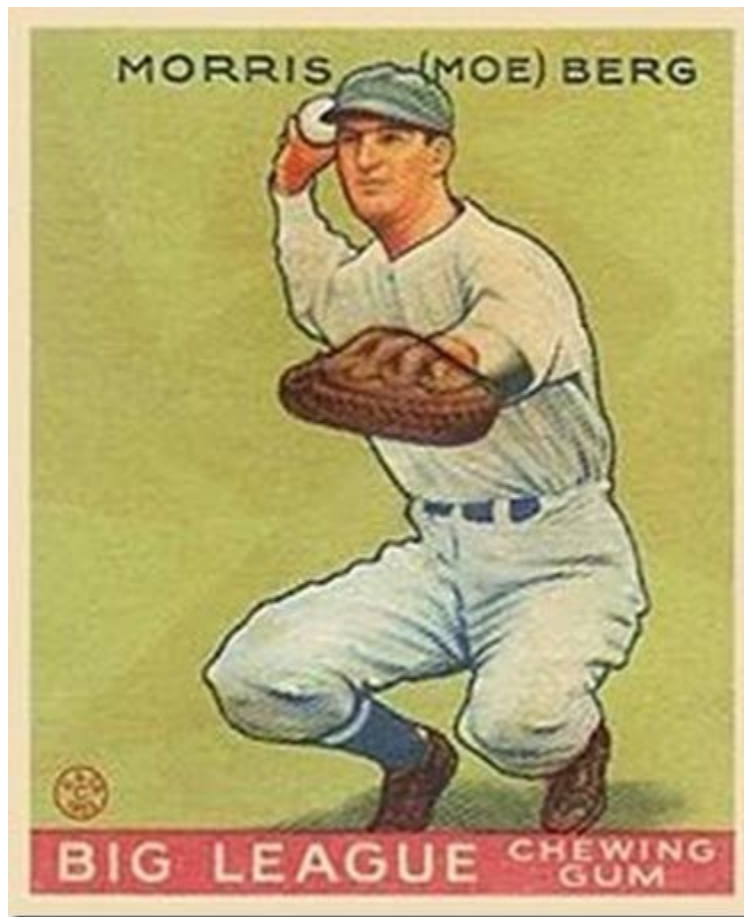
Moe Berg's report was distributed to Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and key figures in the team developing the Atomic Bomb. Roosevelt responded: "Give my regards to the catcher."



*Presidential Medal of Freedom: the highest award given to civilians during wartime.*

Moe Berg's baseball card is the only card on display at the CIA Headquarters in Washington, DC.

*(Continued from page 37)*



## President's Corner

WOW!

What more can I say about the 2016 reunion. With 300 people in attendance, it was even larger than the 2015 reunion in Kansas City. All of the feedback I've received indicates everyone had a grand time. Dave Blake will really have a challenge to top this one. For 2017, the location will be New Orleans, LA. The National World War II Museum is located there and it will undoubtedly be the main attraction. Watch the website for updates as they come in from Dave. I understand he is making a survey trip down there in Early December so we may have something to share when he gets back.

Did you ever stop to think what it was like for the men who served in the 461<sup>st</sup> after the war ended. Obviously there was the clean up of the field. The planes had to be returned to the good old USA. That was the job of the air echelon. The ground echelon had the responsibility of returning Torretta Field to its pre-war condition so it could be returned to the Baron who owned it before it was taken over by the Fifteenth Air Force.

Once Torretta Field was returned to the Baron, the ground echelon returned to the good old USA by ship taking upward of a month to reach home. A lot of the men were reassigned for duty in the Pacific where the war was still raging. Fortunately the Japanese surrendered before these men completed their retraining. At this point, the government had no need of these men any longer so they were discharged and allowed to return to civilian life.

Civilian life. That must have actually seemed strange to the men returning from combat. They had spend one, two or three

years in military life with all the discipline that comes with it. They were told when to get up in the morning, when to eat, and when to go to bed. And while in the combat zone, they were under ever more control. Civilian life must really have seemed strange. There was no wake-up call from the duty officer, meals were on your own and there were no taps signaling bedtime and lights out.

To make matter worse, all the men were dumped back into the civilian work force at about the same time. I imagine it was difficult to find a job unless you had a job previously and were lucky to be able to walk back into that job when you got home.

Some men decided on a different path upon returning from war. They decided to stay in the service and make a career of military life. Yes, I imagine this may have been an easier path to take, but there were also adjustments to be made. The jobs were different. There was no more combat.

71 years after the end of World War II, it's easy for us to look back and say how great it was that the war ended and our fathers and grandfathers were able to come home and resume their civilian lives again. If your father or grandfather is still with you, go ask him what it was like retuning from combat and getting back into civilian life. He may have a few surprises for you.

If you hear an interesting story, please record it and send it in for possible publication in a future issue of the Liberaider.

## 461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

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

## Webmaster Comments

I believe I've mentioned other WWII websites that I've created since beginning work on the 461<sup>st</sup>. It didn't take longer before I agreed to do a website for the 484<sup>th</sup>, the bomb group that shared Torretta Field with the 461<sup>st</sup>. But it didn't stop there. There are other organizations that now have a website and a story to tell. Each group is unique and although the ultimate goal of the Fifteenth Air Force was to shut down the Axis powers, the stories I've heard from the various groups all come together to represent a fantastic picture of life in the European Theater of Operation (ETO). I can't encourage you enough to look at the other Fifteenth Air Force websites and read some of the stories recorded there. You will note a lot a similarities with the stories told by the 461<sup>st</sup> veterans, but there are slight differences as well and I think everyone would enjoy reading a slightly different version.

One thing I would like to point out. The 461<sup>st</sup> was one group out of three that made up the 49<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing. The other two were the 451<sup>st</sup> and the 484<sup>th</sup>. Our Historian, Chuck Parsonson located some very valuable information about the missions flown by the 49th Bomb Wing. I have been working to transcribe the Operations Orders and Operations Reports Chuck has sent me. I'm not done by any means, but I do have a number of these on the Fifteenth Air Force website ([www.15thaf.org](http://www.15thaf.org)). Click on the 49<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing and then Missions. Go in a see how the missions were planned and carried out. You can then go back to the 461<sup>st</sup> website and see the details involved in carrying out the mission.