



2018 Bomb Group Reunion

Our 2018 Reunion was held in Dayton, Ohio, Thursday, September 13, 2018 through Sunday, September 16, 2018. Our reunion home was the Crowne Plaza Hotel, which provided complimentary airport shuttle and area destinations within five miles of the hotel.

Some of our reunion committee

(Continued on page 4)

Inside this issue:

History of Crew 49	1
Service & Sacrifice	1
2018 Reunion	1
Back to Torretta	24
Torretta Airfield	28
Organizational Relationships	29
President's Corner	31
Webmaster Comments	32

History of Crew 49

By
Robert M. Sanders
Bombardier
Mowery crew #49
766th Squadron,
461st Bombardment Group (H)

Submitted by
Julie Robinson

P R E F A C E

On the following pages, will be found the more or less "crew history" of crew number 49. This

will be found to contain the true facts and incidents of the crew from the time of its formation until such time as it becomes dissolved.

It all began in September 1943 when the individual members were ordered to the Army Air Base at Mountain Home, Idaho. At this base, the individual members were assigned to the 470th

(Continued on page 8)

Service and Sacrifice

by
Julie Robinson

Part I- The Box of Letters

My Uncle, 2nd Lieutenant George Lenon Owens, Jr. was a co-pilot in the Fifteenth Army Air Force, 461st Bomb Group, 766th Bomb Squadron during World War II. He was a member of Crew 49 flying a Ford built B-24 Liberator, RC #49, nicknamed the "Spirit of Hollywood/Gloria Jean". His plane went down near

Budapest, Hungary during a bombing mission on April 13, 1944. When I was young, I spent hours searching for photos and sifting through old papers for information about him. I questioned my parents and grandparents about his service and death, but they would quickly change the subject. I knew that his death had deeply affected them, but I didn't fully understand the depths of their grief until the day much later when I discovered the let-

(Continued on page 18)

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>
Inskeep, Warren E.	Salina, KS	1092	10/14/15
Baril, Donald J.	Edgarton, MA	612	02/18/18
Grebe, LeRoy	Bellville, TX	748	
Lee, Robert E.	Woodside, NY	612	10/13/16
Bell, Frank W. Jr.	Palm City, FL	1092	08/31/18

765th Squadron

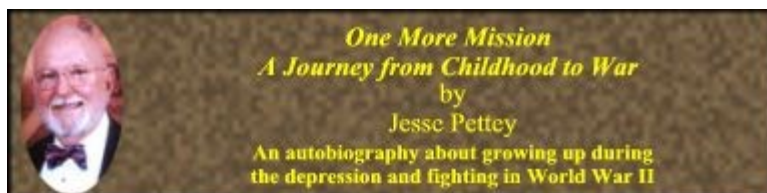
<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Mueller, Robert R.	New Berlin, WI	1092	03/08/14
Procopio, Frank J.	Pittsfield, MA	748	06/24/18

766th Squadron

<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Glushko, Wasil	Dayton, OH	1034	03/19/18
Schaper, David D.	Ballwin, MO	612	06/23/18
Watson, Harold J.	Crest Hill, IL	1092	03/18/18

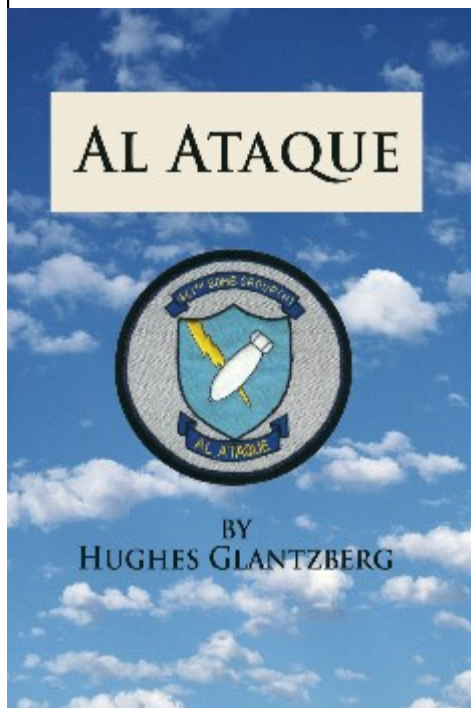
767th Squadron

<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>DOD</u>
Hansen, Lamar D.	Ogden, UT	757	02/19/17
Henspeter, Marlo R.	Twin Falls, ID	612	08/08/18
Johansson, Hjalmar O.	Montville, NJ	612	06/30/18
McQuade, Francis A.	Alhambra, CA	1092	
Smyth, Frederick C.	Antonito, CO	1034	04/10/17
Steinberg, Dave S.	Thousand Oaks, CA	1092	01/28/14
Swinehart, Robert G.	Mason, OH	1092	08/27/15



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)

members arrived, Tuesday, September 11, and our numbers increased by the hour. Our hospitality rooms were located on the second floor of the hotel with plenty of room for all.



Crowne Plaza Dayton Hotel

Wednesday, keeping with tradition, the snacks and beverages were purchased and the rooms were set up for the hospitality revelries. Dinner was on your own, with many great places to explore within walking distance from the hotel. For those who did not wish to venture off site, the hotel had a restaurant on the 12th floor with panoramic views of the city. A great place to enjoy a relaxing dinner and watch the sun set.

Thursday, the weather was improving as Hurricane Gordon had disrupted some travel plans, though Hurricane Florence was still a concern. Despite the two hurricanes 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 reconnecting and new introductions.

Leaving the registration area, the next stop was the second floor where you were welcomed by team greeters at the reunion packet welcome table. This year we were blessed with bomb groups from the 98th, 376th, 451st,

455th, 460th, 461st, 464th, 465th, 484th, and 485th. Wow!

As the day progressed, more and more WWII memorabilia was displayed in our hospitality rooms 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, 485th 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 461st Business meeting was held at 4:00 PM and adjourned at 4:50 PM. We concluded just in time to join the rest of our guest in the hotel's ballroom to enjoy a welcome reception that featured assorted cheeses, fresh fruit, and vegetable trays with dip, coffee and fruit punch sponsored by the Crowne Plaza Hotel as a thank you to our vets!

At 7:00 PM we transitioned over to our informal informational meeting where all the bomb groups in attendance were recognized; the Reunion Planning Committee, and the 461st Board of Directors were acknowledged, overview of the scheduled events for the weekend. The highlight of this meeting was a presentation by Hughes Glantzberg, 461st BG Association President, of some beautiful commemorative coins. Hughes presented about 100 coins to anyone who has contributed to preserving or furthering the history of the 461st Bomb Group. At the conclusion of the informal meeting, the group dispersed throughout the hotel, some to the hotel bar, 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, conver-

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)

sations, and storytelling was in full swing. Such stamina.

Friday morning, outside the ballroom, the breakfast buffet was established to feed nearly 300 hungry souls some scrabble eggs, bacon, hash browns, biscuits, gravy, and a cup of hot Joe. At 8:00 AM we departed the hotel for a short drive to National Museum of the United States Air Force, Wright Patterson Air Force Base.



Upon arrival we headed straight away to the B-24 "Strawberry Bitch", an original B-24D that was assigned to the 376th BG, "Flash" Gordon Byflied, Pilot, one of our participating veterans and bomb groups. For those who were adventurous had the opportunity to squeeze through the rear hatch door for a look inside of the "Strawberry Bitch" to take a few minutes to step back in time and reminisce.

At 9:15 AM we moved over to the Carney Auditorium for a special presentation of commemorative Presidential Unit Citation medals to each of the veterans by retired Lt. General C. D. Moore II from Wright-Patterson AFB. His wife said that he isn't handling retirement very well.

There was a large wreath which represented the combined efforts of our bomb groups that worked together within the Fifteenth Air Force to secure victory over the Axis powers during WWII. The wreath had a section representing each of the bomb groups at the reunion. The individual group members took their part of the wreath to their respective marker in the Memorial Gardens outside the museum to pay their respects.



After the service, there was plenty of time to tour the museum, grab a bite to eat in the AF museum mess hall with plenty of time for camaraderie with our friends. Some of us ventured out to the William E. Boeing Presidential Gallery to view an historic collection of presidential aircraft, and even had the opportunity to walk through four of them, including the aircraft used by Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, and the Boeing VC-137C also known as SAM, (Special Air Mission) 26000, which was used by eight presidents, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, George H. W.

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Bush and Clinton. So much history all in one location. Between around 12:30 PM and 3:45 PM, one by one the buses were inhabited and we departed the Air Force museum for a quick ride back to our hotel.

Returning to the hotel there was a mad dash to the hospitality rooms.

The Social hour with a cash bar commenced at 5:30 PM, and the Individual Group Banquets were held at 6:30 PM.

Saturday after our breakfast buffet, we had a day to “stay in house” where we could relax, visit, attend speaker presentations or just hang out. Many of us attended an expanded program of Veteran speakers, with discussion panels, and even speakers from outside our organization, including Dr. Susanne Meinl, a researcher from Germany who did a presentation on the crash of a 460th BG aircraft. Lunch was on our own.

Social hour and a cash bar began at 5:30 PM in the ballroom. The infamous group picture of all the veterans in attendance was taken in one of the hospitality rooms. At 6:30 PM sharp, the Sons of the American Revolution presented and posted the Colors dressed in authentic Continental Army uniforms. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and the National Anthem was sung by a vocalist from the GEM City band. The wait staff was busy with thirty-one tables and ten guests per table. The evening meal was served and we were serenaded with big band entertainment provided by the GEM City band. One major highlight was a violin duet performed by a second generation member of the 376th BG and a young girl that came with the GEM City Band who has Down’s syndrome. It was a beautiful per-

formance and it’s very doubtful that there was a dry eye in the house! During the concert, the dance floor was a busy place. In addition to the great dance music, Celesete Smither and her sister, daughters of a 376th veteran, were on hand beautifully dressed in 1940s evening wear and danced with many of our veterans at their tables.

Sunday morning after the breakfast buffet there was a Worship Service; then after a short break, our traditional Memorial Service. Both conducted by our Reunion Chaplain. Chaplain/Captain Chris Cairns is an active duty Army Chaplain and the grandson of Col. Douglas Cairns, fourth and final Commanding Officer of the 485th BG.

Buses left at 10:30 AM for a second trip out to the Wright Patterson Air Force Museum for additional exploration as this museum is huge! For those who wished to experience a different venue, there was a trip to the Dayton Art Museum as well as a stop at the Second Street Market for some shopping and lunch. As the afternoon came to a close, the various buses returned to our hotel one last time for Reunion 2018.

The Sunday evening meal featured an informal “Farewell” dinner. Chow time commenced at 6:30 PM. After dinner there was one last opportunity to retreat to the hospitality rooms. It is my understanding that the lights were not turned off and doors locked until after 1:00 AM the entire length of our 2018 Reunion.

Well, here’s to another reunion on the books; many old tales retold, many new tales created, and another reunion memories to treasure. To our veterans who have been coined, “The Last Great Generation”, as

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

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 Dallas, TX, in 2019.

Submitted by: Mary Jo Hayes



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.
Permission is granted to use articles provided source is given.

(Continued from page 1)

Bomb Group and to the 802nd Bomb Squadron.

Over a period of a couple of weeks, the men were gradually molded into what was to become known as Crew 49.

The original crew consisted of ten men who were as follows:

Pilot	Paul S. Mowery, F/O
Co-Pilot	Peter Mourtsen, 2 nd Lt.
Navigator	George E. Reed, 2 nd Lt.
Bombardier	Robert M. Sanders, 2 nd Lt.
Engineer	Joseph S. Zippilli, Sgt.
Radio Opr	Clayton Childs, Sgt.
Tail Gun	Harry Dean, Sgt.
Waist Gun	Lenard Johnson, Sgt.
Ball Gun	Charles Pugh, Sgt.
Nose Gun	Theodore Pippit, Sgt.

The Crew as a whole were stationed at Mountain Home, Idaho, until the middle of October, 1943.

While at Mountain Home, the crew entered and finished the first phase of their combat training. This training consisted of local flights around the Mountain Home area which was used to "check the pilots out" in different kinds of flying, and to give them general practice in flying the B-24s. There was also a total of 50 bombs dropped by the bombardier by the use of the Sperry Bomb-sight. Also each man on the crew began to get new and hard training in each of his respective jobs.

Around the first of October 1943, however, all of the gunners were sent to a special gunnery school at Wendover Field, Utah, thereby leaving the crew shorthanded. The remaining crew members made the best of it, however, and finished their first phase of training.

Upon completion of their "first phase", the crew was ordered to report to Wendover Field, Utah, where they were assigned to a new group which was being activated. This was the 461st Bomb Group commanded by Col. Frederic Glantzberg.

Upon reaching Wendover Field, we were told that the group was, as yet, not ready for us and that we might receive a 10-day leave. Thanks to Captain William Darden, our squadron commander, and to several other facts involved, this prophecy came true. On October 20, 1943, we left Wendover Field on a 10-day leave, knowing that when the leave was terminated, the crew would report to some other field due to the fact that the group was being ordered a change of station.

During our leave, we each received orders as to where to report back to the group and on November 1, 1943, we reported back to duty - this time at Hammer Field, Fresno, California. It was here at Hammer Field that our real training was to begin.

Upon beginning our training at Hammer Field, we had one change in the crew personnel. F/O Douglas L. Robertson was assigned as co-pilot instead of Peter Mourtsen. This change was due to a Second Air Force regulation which stated, in brief, that a Second Lieutenant could not be assigned to duty as a co-pilot with a crew which had a first pilot with the rank of Flight Officer. Hence, the change in our crew personnel at this time.

For the first week or two after our arrival at Hammer Field, we did not do much training, as far as flying was concerned. This was due to the lack of airplanes and also to the "infancy" of this new group. However, as time went by, we got into the swing of things and did a lot of flying. We flew mornings,

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

afternoons, and nights, - in fact, at times we were flying so much that we missed a lot of sleep and a good many meals. But on the other hand, a lot was accomplished by our "continuous" flying.

The pilots and co-pilots received lots of training in "straight and level" flying, in making instrument let-downs and take-offs, making formation take-offs and landings, formation flying both at low and high altitudes, flying radio ranges, and in general, just getting practice and "feeling out" in the B-24.

The Navigator received training and practice in navigation by flying short cross-country flights. These flights were accomplished more or less up and down the San Joaquin Valley. However, there were a few flights made to Tonopah, Nevada, and Tucson, Arizona. Also, one long cross-country flight to Guadalupe Island which is situated in the Pacific Ocean off the coast of lower California. On these flights, the navigator received practice in celestial navigation, dead reckoning and pilotage.

During the training at Hammer Field, the bombardiers had the practice of dropping more bombs. All of the bombs dropped were 100-pound sand practice bombs with the exception of five demolition bombs which were dropped at Tonopah, Nevada bomb range. Most of the bombing was done by each ship singularly, although some of the missions were completed by formation bombing.

The rest of the crew received their training and practice in air-gunnery, and in learning as much as possible about their jobs, and, in general, getting the "feel" of the airplane.

Not long after we arrived at Hammer Field, California, we lost our squadron commander, Capt. William Darden. Capt. Darden was killed in an airplane crash near Huntington Lake in the mountains east of Fresno, California. His command was taken over by Capt. James C. Dooley, who is still our squadron CO at this writing.

While at Hammer Field, we had three more changes in our crew. The first change occurred when Sgt. Charles Pugh was declared physically disabled to continue his duties. He was replaced as ball turret gunner by Sgt. Daniel Hoch. Our second change occurred when Sgt. Theodore Pippit took the examination for aviation cadet. He was proving more and more troublesome to the crew as a whole as time went on and so was replaced as nose turret gunner by Sgt. John Moreno. Our third change was in co-pilots, when Flight Officer Robertson was made first pilot of another crew, thereby leaving our crew without a co-pilot. We soon had a new co-pilot assigned to us, however, in the person of Lt. George L. Owens. Lt. Owens came to us under somewhat of a handicap. He only got in on the tail end of the crew training and yet proved to be a very competent flyer. In fact, we think he is one of the best co-pilots in the squadron.

While the crew was stationed at Hammer Field, it made a fairly good record for itself. We were the first crew to gain enough of Capt. Darden's confidence to be sent out on a night mission when it was known the field would be closed by weather at the time of our return. On that mission we were sent on a cross-country flight to Sacramento, Calif. However, upon our return to Hammer Field, the field was closed due to weather and we

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

had to proceed to the air field at Muroc, Calif. to land. That was a night that I am sure none of us will ever forget.

The crew also has the distinction of being the first (and so far as the writer knows) and only crew to successfully lead a group bombing mission.

Somewhere around the middle of December 1943, the crew received another distinction. We were the second combat crew of the squadron to be awarded our own airplane to take into combat. This ship was a brand-new B-24 H officially known by number 2336. However, at that time we had a name for our ship already picked out which later came into reality.

Due to previous contacts made, the crew decided to name the new airplane "Spirit of Hollywood" and wanted as an unofficial sponsor, Miss Gloria Jean Schoonover-known on stage and screen as simply, Gloria Jean. So, arrangements were begun by Lt. Sanders. S/Sgt. Clayton Childs, our radio operator, set about printing and painting the new name of the ship on the side of the nose section. He painted the words: - "The Spirit of Hollywood"- on the side and beneath this he copied the autograph of Gloria Jean. So far, our venture was progressing O.K.

Lt. Sanders then contacted Gloria Jean to find out her reactions to the idea and, if her reactions were favorable, whether she would be willing to have some pictures made of the airplane, the crew and herself. Gloria Jean and Universal Pictures Co. approved of the idea wholeheartedly. Our next step was to get the permission from the proper military authorities to transform the idea into a reality. F/O Paul Mowery and Lt. Sanders took their idea to Capt. MacFarlane, the squadron

intelligence officer, and to Capt. James Dooley, the squadron CO. They both approved of the idea and promised to help us obtain the permission of the group to fulfill it. Capt. MacFarlane obtained the permission from Major Lott, the group intelligence officer, provided that all pictures would be taken by an air force photographer. Capt. Dooley obtained permission from the group officials enabling us to fly our airplane to the Los Angeles area to have the pictures taken. On Monday, January 3, 1944, the crew of "The Spirit of Hollywood" took the airplane and four passengers and flew to Los Angeles- landing at Van Nuys airport. The passengers were as follows:

Capt. A. E. Sproul, Squadron Medical Officer
Lt. Wn. Franklin, Asst. Operations Officer
Lt. Phillip Caroselli, Asst. Intell Officer
Sgt. Michlmann, Air Force Photographer

Due to being in the hospital, S/Sgt. Childs, the radio operator, was unable to make the trip.

Upon landing at Van Nuys airport, we obtained an army staff car and F/O Mowery, Lt. Sanders, and Lt. Caroselli proceeded into North Hollywood to pick up Gloria Jean and take her to the airplane where the pictures were to be taken. Accompanying Gloria Jean was Mr. Fred Selig, a Universal Studio publicity agent.

Upon completion of the taking of pictures, the crew of "The Spirit of Hollywood" and the four passengers were the guests of Gloria Jean and Universal Pictures for a tour around the lot of Universal. The tour proved to be more or less of a quiet tour due to the fact that the studio was in the process of making only one picture. This picture was

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

“The Merry Monahans” starring Jack Oakie, Donald O’Connor, Peggy Ryan. However, we watched the shooting of a couple of scenes and then were shown other points of interest around the studio lot. We were fortunate enough to meet, personally, several other stars, which included Jack Oakie, the Andrew Sisters, Suzanne Foster, and others.

After the tour, we were taken to the “still” picture studio where more pictures were taken of the crew and Gloria Jean. All in all, the writer believes that the crew enjoyed themselves very much.

The crew spent the night of that eventful day in Los Angeles and Hollywood. Much could be said about all that happened that night, but that is another story and best not be written at this time.

As the story goes, it seems as if crew 49 set another example for the group. On the day the crew was supposed to leave Los Angeles and report back to Hammer Field, the group as a whole landed at Van Nuys airport to have their ships christened and pictures were made with movie stars. However, the group was unable to obtain any prominent movie stars, so once again crew 49 came thru’ with flying colors.

Upon returning to Hammer Field, there was very little to be done in the line of duty until that eventful day of January 15, 1944, when our squadron began its long journey to an overseas destination.

January 15, 1944

We left Hammer Field, Fresno, Calif. on the first leg of our overseas movement. Our destination was Hamilton Field, San Fran-

cisco, Calif. Purpose of going there was to be processed for our overseas movement. Arrived there on same day of take-off, January 15, 1944.

January 16, 1944

Began our processing by taking abbreviated examinations, such as medical examinations, showdown inspection, drew equipment, etc. The airplane also had work done on it as to having certain technical orders complied with, etc.

January 17, 1944

Continued and finished work of processing of crew and airplane begun on January 16, 1944. Crew of airplane was as follows:

Pilot	Paul S. Mowery, Jr.
Co-Pilot	George L. Owens, Jr.
Navigator	George E. Reed
Bombardier	Robert M. Sanders
Engineer	Joseph S. Zippilli
Radio Opr	Clayton Childs
Nose Gun	John Moreno
Tail Gunner	Harry Dean
Ball Tur Gun	Daniel Hoch
Waist Gun	Lenard Johnson
Crew Chief	Joseph Hammer
Passenger & Squad CO	James Dooley

January 18, 1944

Left Hamilton Field, San Francisco, California, on the second leg of our long journey. Our destination was Palm Springs, California. Nothing out of the ordinary occurred while in flight.

January 19, 1944

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

Left Palm Springs, California, on third leg of our journey. Our destination this day was Midland, Texas. Still nothing occurred while in flight.

January 20, 1944

Left Midland, Texas on fourth day of our journey. Our destination was Memphis, Tennessee. Lt. R. S. Fawcett had engine trouble and had to feather #3 engine and leave the formation. He landed at Dallas, Texas safely. Remainder of flight was uneventful.

January 21, 1944

Left Memphis, Tenn. on fifth leg of our journey. Our destination was Morrison Field, Palm Beach, Florida. Morrison Field was our Port of Embarkation. Also, while there, the crew and airplane had their final inspections and we also drew some final equipment. We were under the jurisdiction of the Air Transport Command from the time we left Hamilton Field until such time as we were to arrive at our final destination in North Africa. Also, at Morrison Field Sgt. Hoch and Sgt. Johnson were taken off our plane and transported to our final destination by other ATC means. I might say they were pretty disgusted at the whole affair, too.

January 22, 1944

Continued our processing and inspections at Morrison Field.

January 23, 1944

Continued our processing and inspections at Morrison Field.

January 24, 1944

Continued our processing and inspections at Morrison Field.

January 25, 1944

We took off from Morrison Field on our next leg of our journey. This leg was to carry us out of the continental limits of the United States and our destination was Waller Field, Trinidad. Took off at 0200 and arrived at Waller Field at about noon. Nothing of importance happened in route.

January 26, 1944

Left Waller Field, Trinidad on our next log which was to carry us to Belem, Brazil. This was also a quiet flight until we landed at Belem. When we were ready to land, we encountered a rain storm. Visibility was none too good and we nearly "over-shot" the field, however, we came in anyway. The runway was very wet and slippery and the brakes of the airplane could not take hold, which resulted in our going off the side of the runway. We were lucky in the fact, however, that no damage was done either to the crew or the ship. We only got stuck badly in the mud. We were pulled back on the runway by Caterpillar tractors manned by the United States Engineers stationed at Belem. We did, however, get a lot of mud and water all over the bombsight and navigation instruments on the inside of the nose of the airplane.

January 27, 1944

Left Belem, Brazil, on our next leg which was to take us "next door" to Fortaleza, Brazil. While at Fortaleza, Brazil we "pulled" a 50-hour inspection on the airplane. This was done under the direction of Crew Chief,

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

T/Sgt. Joseph Hammer. We also saw a “fair” USO show at Fortaleza.

January 28, 1944

Completed the 50-hour inspection and made ourselves ready for the longest and hardest leg of the whole journey. That was our flight over the south Atlantic Ocean. We left Fortaleza, Brazil, about 2100 on January 28, 1944, and our destination was Rufisque, French West Africa, which is located just southeast of Dakar.

January 29, 1944

We arrived at Rufisque about noon after a fairly uneventful flight due to the wonderful job of navigation done by our navigator, Lt. George E. Reed. Lt. Reed hit our destination on the head and missed his E. T. A. by only a few seconds. At Rufisque, we had our first experience with the steel matted runways.

January 30, 1944

We left Rufisque on our next leg of our journey, which was to take us to Marrakech, French Morocco. We were late in taking off because of another ship crashing at the end of the runway and burning up. Quite a sad-denying sight-but that is the chance every flyer takes. So on to Marrakech.

We arrived at Marrakech in the late afternoon, obtained our quarters, and went into town to look it over. It was the first time the boys had “officially” been to a town since leaving Hammer Field, California. There proved not to be much in town except a lot of filthy Arabs.

January 31, 1944

We left Marrakech on our next leg which was to take us to Teleghma, Algeria. We arrived there in mid-afternoon and found our home to be in tents. We had slept in tents before, but none like these. It was so cold that we had to sleep in our heavy flying clothes. We attended another USO show, which turned out to be another “fair” show. The labor at our camp was done by Italian prisoners of war. They also cooked and served our food - not bad either. Those prisoners were taken by the English but turned over to the American Army.

February 1, 1944

Still at Teleghma and learning a little more about the Italians, because we felt that we would end up in Italy instead of Africa. This feeling became a reality as we saw later. There proved to be a lot of filthy Arabs around this sector also. We stayed at Teleghma long enough to allow us to visit a nearby city called Constantine. This proved to be a better city, inhabited by both Arabs and French. Many incidents happened there which are better to remain untold as Lt. Owens and myself will verify.

February 2, 1944

We awoke with the startling news that we were moving on to a place called Oudna, near Tunis, Tunisia. We took off in formation with the “Spirit of Hollywood” flying in #4 position. Lt. C. W. Bauman was leading our flight and he could not find the airport at Oudna- hence, under orders from Capt. James Dooley, our ship took the lead and due to Lt. Reed, we led the flight to the airport. This proved to be Oudna Field #2.

February 3, 1944

(Continued on page 14)

(Continued from page 13)

We again had to move; this time to Oudna Field #1. However, we were unable to go with the rest of the squadron due to T/Sgt. Hammer finding water in the gasoline. It took about four hours to remedy this, allowing us to arrive at Oudna Field #1 in mid-afternoon.

February 4 to 21, 1944

The days we spent at Oudna Field #1 were, for the most part, uneventful. A few incidents occurred; however, they can be written up later. We spent most of our time improving our living quarters, and participating in recreation. Although there were training missions planned, there was not much flying due to the weather. It was at Oudna #1 that the bombsight in the ship was inspected, cleaned, rebalanced, and recalibrated for the first time since the minor accident at Belem. This time spent at Oudna #1 was also used to allow the rest of the group to catch up with our squadron. What flights were made at Oudna were all local flights made by skeleton crews.

February 22, 1944

On this date, the group was ordered to leave Africa and move into Italy to our permanent base of operation. We flew from Oudna over the Mediterranean Sea to Sicily and up into Italy on the east side to our field which was called Torretta, which was located about eight miles from Cerignola. There, we met again our ground personnel who had come overseas by boat. We arrived in mid-afternoon and set about setting quarters temporarily for the night.

February 23-1944 to March 5-1944

During the period stated above, the crew spent most of their time making their living quarters as decent as possible. The four of-

ficers were assigned to one tent known as "Tent #18", while the enlisted men were assigned to another tent in the enlisted personnel area. Our first improvement was the installation of a stove. Our stove was a half of a fifty-gallon oil drum with a can welded in the bottom for use as a grate. Our stove pipe was five 75 mm shell cases welded together. We obtained an oxygen bottle from a wrecked plane to hold our gasoline and a piece of oxygen tubing through which the gasoline flowed from the bottle to the stove. We found that this sort of stove was extremely satisfactory. Next, we obtained flat 10" x 5" bricks which we laid on the ground for a tent floor. Besides keeping the tent cleaner, these bricks held the heat better.

Then, to create a homelike atmosphere, we strung wiring into the tents for electric lights. Heretofore the lighting system had consisted of either candles or homemade gasoline lamps. Therefore, the electric lights were a great improvement.

With the installation of electricity, the four officers made another improvement. F/O Mowery had bought a radio while at Boise, Idaho, and we had been carrying it around with us in the plane. We brought this into the tent and wired it up to the electricity. Lo and behold, the darn thing played. The most enjoyable program which we could receive, and I think everyone will agree on this, was an English-German propaganda program. The main two characters were a couple called "Sally and George". They broadcasted propaganda which no one, of course, believed but their main feature, as far as we were concerned, was the playing of musical records by American dance bands.

During the period mentioned above, the tent improvements were about all that was really

(Continued on page 15)

(Continued from page 14)

accomplished. Due to rain, cloudiness, and general bad weather, there was little or practically no flying.

March 5, 1944

On this day, one of our members, F/O Paul Mowery, became a very happy boy. Effective on this date, he received his commission as a 2nd Lt. in the Air Corps with a rating as Pilot. Lt. Mowery is an exceptionally good pilot; in fact, his crew thinks he is one of the best. However, due to the "red tape" involved and a little hard luck, his commission was a long time coming through. At any rate, there was great rejoicing and "fumar mucho del cigar".

March 6, 1944 to March 31, 1944

Not very much happened to the crew between the dates mentioned above. We spent a lot of our time making more improvements to our tent. Of course, even with all of our improvements, we were not living in any "suite at the Ambassador", but we did have a better than average tent.

We were scheduled to fly several training missions during this period, but due to the weather most of these missions were cancelled. However, we did fly a few missions around the local area to our field and around the "heel of the boot" of Italy.

During the time of this period when we were not flying, we made frequent trips to nearby towns. Those were such towns as Foggia, Cerignola, Barletta, Canosa, Bari, and others. Cerignola was the nearest town to our camp and consequently we visited there more often. The town did not offer much there for us. There was a fairly nice Red Cross service club for the enlisted men. The town had lots of wine shops, but they were nothing out of

the ordinary. All in all, the town was not too good from a soldier's point of view.

Foggia was a much larger town and offered one feature to American officers which was worth the trip there. In the town was an American Red Cross Officers Club, which had as a main feature a snack bar. The trip was well worthwhile if for no other reason than to eat the sandwiches, coffee, pastry, etc. in the snack bar.

April 1, 1944

It was on this day that we were really supposed to start our operations. Our target was a railroad bridge and highway bridge at a town in northern Italy called Senigallia. We were called at 0315 and immediately arose and ate breakfast in order to be at Group Headquarters by 0445 for a mission briefing. At this briefing, we were told the known facts of the mission. The mission plan was to take-off at 0730 and climb to 5,000 feet over the field and assemble in formation. We were then to climb to an altitude of 15,000 feet, which was to be our bombing altitude for the target. We were to climb on course over the Adriatic Sea, drop our bombs on our target, which was on the coast and head back to sea and back to the field. However, due to the weather the mission was cancelled.

Due to cancellation of the mission, Col. Glantzberg called for volunteers for a six-ship formation to carry out the mission at a low-level bombing attack of 75 feet. Naturally, the "Spirit of Hollywood" was one of the six ships. Our bomb load was three 500-pound bombs per ship. However, due to the fact that ordnance could not obtain the proper bomb fuses, the mission was not run.

April 2, 1944

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

This was the day that we actually flew and completed our first combat mission. Our target was the marshaling yards at Bihac, Yugoslavia. Our bomb load was thirty clusters of fragmentation bombs.

We were called and arose at 0315, ate breakfast, got our equipment together and went to Group Headquarters for a briefing at 0530.

Our primary target was Bihac, Yugoslavia. Our secondary target was Knin, and the third alternate was Drnis, both in Yugoslavia.

Our take-off time was 0730 and we climbed to 15,000 feet over Melfi; then proceeded on course, continually climbing until the altitude of 20,000 feet was reached. We crossed the Adriatic Sea and entered Yugoslavia with no opposition of any kind. Everything seemed so peaceful there that it was a shame to drop bombs there but nevertheless we dropped them. At Bihac, were the marshaling yards, but also there were troop concentrations and other military installations.

We reached our IP which was near a little town, Martin Brod, and turned on our bombing run. Our bomb run was about seven minutes at the end of which we dropped our load of bombs and knocked out our target. We saw no fighters over the target and were not bothered by flak. However, some of the ships which were behind us said there was considerable flak coming up.

We turned from the target and proceeded west to the coast once more. Shortly after leaving the target, there was an accident in the formation which resulted in the loss of two airplanes and their crews. Lt. Wilson and crew of our squadron was one crew and the other was Lt. Zumsted from another squadron.

We saw three fighters shortly after leaving the target. They were Focke-Wulf 190s, but only looked us over and left, much to the disgust of our gunners, who seem to be getting a little "bloodthirsty".

Upon reaching the coastline of Yugoslavia, we turned and returned to our base, losing altitude as we returned. We arrived at Cerignola about 1300.

Summary of the mission goes something like this:

No fighters encountered.

No or little flak.

Target completely covered with bombs.

Two airplanes lost.

Total flight time: 5 hrs and 50 mnts

So ended the first successful combat mission for the "Spirit of Hollywood" and her crew.

The crew completed six missions before being reported "Missing" over Budapest, Hungary.

The reports of the last five missions are unobtainable due to the fact the writer lost contact with the crew. The reason for loss of contact was due to the writer being physically grounded for two months during which time the crew was reported "Missing".

After being returned to flying status, the writer, Lt. Robert M. Sanders, continued flying combat missions until he, himself, was shot down.

By luck he was returned to Allied territory and in due time returned to the United States, thus temporarily completing the history of Crew 49.

Sincerely,

Robert M. Sanders

461st Bombardment Group (H) Association Membership

For membership in the 461st 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.

The 461st Bombardment Group (H) Association offers three types of membership:

- **Life Membership** – Men who served in the 461st 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 461st Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reunion.
- **Associate Membership** – Anyone wishing to be involved in the 461st 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 461st Liberaider. You are not a voting member of the Association.
- **Child Membership** – Children of men who served in the 461st 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 461st Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reun-

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

(Continued from page 1)

ters, wrinkled and brown, hidden for years in a dusty, forgotten box. I took the letters home that day and read them one by one, and, for the first time, I understood.

The box included letters from my uncle to his parents during his training at various airfields around the country beginning in October, 1942, until he was deployed overseas in February of 1944. His individual flight records were also in the box, as well as pictures of the crew and the aircraft during a photo shoot with their sponsor, Miss Gloria Jean Schoonover, a Hollywood actress whose name was painted on the side of the airplane. There were also letters that described his time stationed in Northern Africa and Italy. His last letter was written April 9, 1944, four days before he was killed.

On April 14, 1944, Lt. Robert Sanders, bombardier of Crew 49 who was physically grounded at the time, wrote my grandparents to explain that my uncle, George Lenon Owens, Jr., and the other crew members were missing in action over enemy territory after their plane went down. The telegram from the Secretary of War confirming my uncle's status was sent May 5, 1944, and a formal letter from Brigadier General Robert H. Dunlop followed on May 8th.

The remaining letters were written from families of the other crew members expressing their concern and sorrow. There were also letters from friends of my uncle, young women he had met while stationed in the United States. As I read the letters, I was amazed at the support and love the families and friends showed one another during such a difficult time. They were all very hopeful and full of encouragement, but I could also sense their grief and the overwhelming anxiety of not

knowing if their sons and husbands were alive or dead.

In late July of 1944, it was learned that several of the crew members had bailed out of the plane and were being held as Prisoners of War. There was no news of my uncle or the pilot, 2nd Lt. Paul S. Mowery, Jr.. Mrs. Mowery and my grandmother continued to write one another during those long months. It was not until February of 1945 when word was received that my uncle and the pilot had been killed when the plane went down. My uncle's remains were recovered and returned for burial in 1949, almost four years later.

Included in the box were many other interesting artifacts and papers related to my uncle, his service, and the ultimate sacrifice he made for his country. Lt. Robert Sanders wrote a history of Crew 49 which outlined their training in the United States and abroad with descriptions of their missions. I found a copy of this history in the box and enjoyed learning more about the crew, including their trip to Hollywood to meet Gloria Jean at Universal Studios. Lt. Sanders wrote, "Much could be said about all that happened that night, but that is another story and best not be written at this time." His anecdotes and descriptions provide a rich account of Crew 49, their time spent training together as well as their journey and service overseas.

On a sadder note, I also found the individual casualty reports which described what happened when the plane went down. The crew was on a bombing mission over Budapest, Hungary on April 13, 1944. The target was the ME-109 factory. According to 2nd Lt. Robert Edwards, Ship #44 (42-52366), piloted by 1st Lt. Charles William Bauman, was flying in #2 position and was struck with a

(Continued on page 19)

(Continued from page 18)

direct hit by flak. The ship immediately peeled up to the left, did a 180 degree turn and crashed into ship #49 (42-52336) which was flying #4 position in the same flight. Sgt. Clayton Childs, Jr. reported that my uncle, the co-pilot, was killed instantly when the propeller of the right wing plane chewed into the cockpit on the co-pilot's side. The pilot, 2nd Lt. Paul Mowery was getting the plane back under control and gave the signal to bail out. The navigator and engineer bailed and the rest of the crew followed. The pilot bailed out at approximately 3,000 feet, but his chute never opened. He did not survive. His remains were seen near the plane.

I was thrilled to make such an exciting discovery and to learn about my uncle, the crew, and their families, but I was also saddened to realize the pain and anguish felt by the families when the crew went missing. I was touched by their ability to hold out hope in spite of not knowing what had happened. I could also feel the despair of my grandparents when all hope was gone and they were faced with the worst possible news. I know I will never fully comprehend the grief of losing a loved one in the time of war, but I am grateful to have some understanding of the heartache and sorrow my grandparents and the other families must have endured to learn that their loved ones had made the ultimate sacrifice.

You would think my discovery would have been enough. I found what I was looking for, a treasure trove of letters, photographs, and history of my uncle's life and service. But that is not the end of my story.

Part II- The Search

I'm not sure why, but I felt a strong need to visit the place where my uncle died. I began researching crash sites in Hungary and trying to find information about the location of his crash. I hit many dead ends until I found the e-mail address for Chuck Parsonson, Historian of the 461st Bombardment Group Association. I wrote him in August of 2017 explaining the situation and giving him the information I had collected on my uncle and the crash. He wrote back immediately and promised to help me find the site. Within an hour he sent me the links to two Hungarian articles about the recent recovery of one of the engines of a B-24 Liberator near Budapest, Hungary. He also mentioned that there might be a Fox news piece about the recovery of that engine. The articles were in Hungarian and difficult to translate, but I could read the serial number of the engine which linked it to my uncle's plane. I couldn't believe my luck! I then began searching YouTube for the Fox news piece and found a Hungarian video of the recovery of the engine.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8LcAcYcHms>

This was amazing! I knew then that the team members who had recovered the engine would know the exact location of the site, and I was determined to find them.

My husband and I had plans to visit Normandy in late September. We decided to add a visit to Budapest to our travel plans. It was time to contact the team members. Chuck Parsonson gave me the contact information for the author of the Hungarian articles. I attempted to reach him several times with no luck. I began to translate the articles myself to see if more information could be found to

(Continued on page 23)

(Continued from page 23)

ation who focuses on American losses in Hungary during World War II, especially the fate of the crews who went down in his country. He now works in cooperation with Károly and the association.

We felt very honored to be guided by these highly respected researchers who were taking the day off from their regular jobs to drive us around the Hungarian countryside. They drove us by the industrial area where the ME-109 factory, the target of the bombing, was located. They reported that many families lived and worked in that area during the war. Ákos showed us old photographs taken from the air above the industrial site to show us what my uncle would have seen as he flew over on his mission. They then drove us to Kiskunlachaza where the engine was recovered. According to translations of the Gendarmerie (police) reports from the time, on the 13th of April between 12:00 and 13:00 on the area between the Danube and the village, enemy aircraft dropped 17 bombs. One person was killed. In the vicinity of the village a four engine enemy aircraft crashed and totally wrecked. None of the crew was found. This would have been the aircraft of Lt. Bauman, ship #44 (42-52366). We walked into the field where the engine was recovered and stood near that spot. I knew that I was standing on sacred ground and felt incredibly humbled, but very proud to be able to pay my respects to the servicemen who died there.

We left the field in Kiskunlachaza and drove to the railway station at Delegyhaza. The Gendarmerie reported that between 12:00 and 13:00 on the 13th of April near the railway station a four engine enemy plane crashed. Three of the crew bailed out, two of the three were captured near the station of Kiskunlachaza while the rest were captured near the station of Dunaharaszti. Two people

were found dead. This would have been my uncle's plane. My uncle and the pilot were the two deceased crew members.

Károly and the other men had studied the Gendarmerie reports and the records in the Register of Deaths of Bugyi, a village east of Delegyhaza. These reports led them to the location where they believe my uncle's plane went down. As we rode to that site, I tried to imagine what it would have been like that day. The pilot was trying desperately to keep his plane level so his crew could bail out, his co-pilot dead beside him. Bombs were going off all around him, and he knew there were German soldiers and local Gendarmerie waiting to capture them on the ground. He jumped from the plane as it was going down hoping to open his chute and land safely, but probably knowing he was already too close to the ground. He was a hero who lost his life while saving the members of his crew.

We stopped at the site, a wide field planted with sunflowers, dried and ready to be harvested. It was a rainy day, a steady drizzle soaking my clothes. As I stood in the field, I was overpowered with emotion, tears streaming down my face. I was happy to have reached this place, to be able to stand near the spot where my uncle's plane went down, but saddened by the thought of his death. I felt so sorry that I never knew him when he was alive. I was also overwhelmed by the kindness and compassion of these Hungarian researchers who on that day in 1944 would have been my enemies. Their country had been devastated by war and yet, they were willing to offer me this gift, a chance to visit the place where my uncle died so many years before.

As I stood by the field, I felt an unusual presence, as if my uncle, my grandmother and

(Continued on page 21)

(Continued from page 20)

grandfather, my father, and his twin brother were all standing together with me, thankful that I had made this journey. I sensed my uncle turn to me, smile, and walk away leaving me with a sense of peace and satisfaction that is difficult to describe.

From the field, we were driven to Szolnok, home of the Reptár-Szolnoki Repülőmúzeum, the aviation museum where the engine is on display. We were met there by a journalist, cameraman, and reporter from a Hungarian newspaper and television station. They interviewed me to document our visit and our connection to the engine. We were treated to lunch and a private tour of the museum where we learned more about the work of Károly Magó and the Hungarian Aviation Archaeology Association. Again we were impressed by the dedication of Károly, Nandi, and others who work diligently to lo-

cate crash sites and make sure that remains of missing soldiers are found.

Driving back to Budapest, we discussed the war and the different ways our countries had been affected. We all agreed we must never forget the sacrifices made by so many to bring freedom to people around the world. As Akos explained, "When we take the politics out of things, we realize our shared humanity. Even though our language and customs are different, the hopes and dreams for our families are very much the same." Ákos is right, we must be forever mindful of the sacrifices our soldiers made to ensure that the principles for which we stand as a nation are protected and maintained. I know I will be forever grateful to those who have helped me complete this incredible journey and I pray that I will never forget those who have sacrificed for me, my family, my country, and the world.

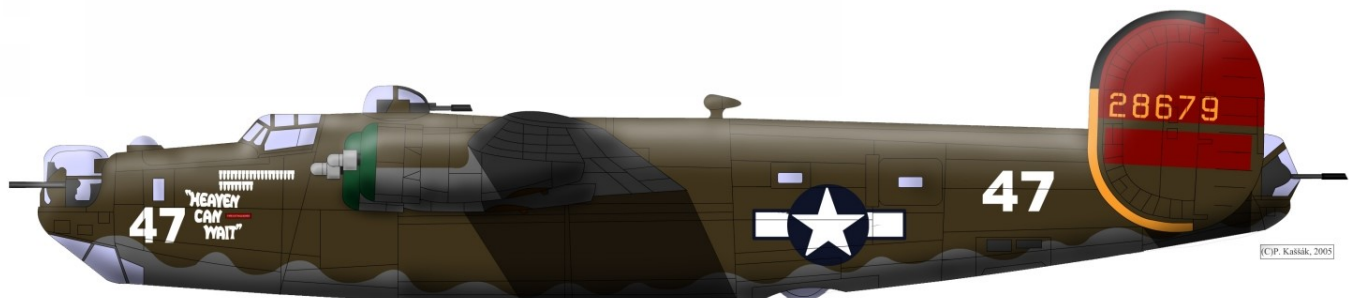


Standing L-R: Reed, George E. (N); Mowery, Paul S. (P) [KIA]; Gloria Jean; Owens, George L. Jr. (CP) [KIA]; Sanders, Robert M. (B)

Kneeling L-R: Dean, Harry E. (TG); Johnson, Lenard S. (WG); Zippilli, Joseph S. (E/TT); Moreno, John V. 'Bob' (NG); Hoch, Daniel R. (BG)
Not Pictured - Childs, Cayton (RO/WG)

461st BOMB GROUP
FINANCIAL STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED OCTOBER 31, 2018

Cash Balances - November 1, 2017	
Checking account	<u>\$11,530</u>
Income	
Reunion income	29,576
Dues and memberships	<u>367</u>
Total Income	<u>29,944</u>
Expenses	
Reunion expenses	32,452
Liberaider expenses	<u>802</u>
Total expenses	<u>33,254</u>
Net loss for the year	<u>(3,310)</u>
Cash Balances - October 31, 2018	
Checking account	<u>\$8,220</u>



(Continued from page 19)

locate the team, but Hungarian is a very difficult language. It took me days just to translate two paragraphs. I posted on Facebook to see if anyone knew someone who spoke Hungarian. No response. Then I thought of my son who was studying in Sweden in an international program. It worked! One of his classmates was Hungarian. He translated the articles for me and gave me the information I needed. But still no response from the team.

We left for Europe Friday, September 15, 2017, with a plan to arrive in Budapest Wednesday, September 20th. I was discouraged because I had not heard from the team members in Hungary and had no idea if we would have internet access during our travels in Normandy. I contacted Paul and Albert, owners of the Kapital Inn, Budapest where we would be staying while in Hungary (an exceptional place to stay, by the way). They agreed to help and tried to locate someone from the team, to no avail. I was disappointed, but not ready to give up. I checked my E-Mail one more time during a layover after our first flight. There it was! An E-Mail from Nandor Mohos (Nandi), an amateur aviation historian who focuses on US losses in Hungary during World War II. He explained that he works in cooperation with the Hungarian Aviation Archaeology Association whose team leader is Károly Magó, the author of the articles. Again, I could not believe my luck! Nandi wrote that they were looking forward to our visit to Hungary and would be happy to guide us to the site of the excavation of the engine and the museum at Szolnok where the engine is on display.

I continued to stay in contact with Nandi while we traveled through Normandy. I realized I had misread the serial number of the engine. It was not the engine from my uncle's plane (42-52336), but was the engine

from Lt. Bauman's aircraft (42-52366) which collided with my uncle's plane. Nandi explained that my uncle's plane went down farther away from where the engine was found because the pilot, Lt. Mowery, leveled out the plane to allow the other crew members to bail out. He also said that team leader, Károly Magó, would be traveling to the area in advance of our visit to locate possible eyewitnesses and study police reports to determine the exact location of the crash site. I couldn't believe these men, who really didn't know me, were taking so much of their time to help me find the site of the my uncle's crash.

Part III- Hungary

We arrived in Budapest Wednesday afternoon, September 20th. We were excited to be in such a beautiful city, but more excited about our plans for the following day. Nandi had arranged to meet us the next morning to visit the site. I could hardly sleep that night. At 9:00 AM an army van pulled up in front of our hotel with Nandi, Károly Magó, Ákos Rozsos, who was another member of the team, and a driver. We left Budapest to drive to Kiskunlachaza where the engine was recovered. Along the way, the men told us the history of Hungary during World War II and explained their roles in conducting research on aviation crashes. Károly Magó is a Warrant Officer with the 86th Helicopter Base. As a civilian he is the highly regarded leader of the Hungarian Aviation Archeology Association. He gets full support in these endeavors from his superiors in the army. The association has had 29 large excavations including four of American aircraft, as well as several smaller researches. Ákos Rozsos is a former member of the team and interpreter. He is the team member who saw my original E-Mail and forwarded it to Károly. Nandi Mohos is also a former member of the associ-

(Continued on page 20)

Back to Torretta

by
Sgt. Dan H. Fenn, Jr.
Administrative and Technical Clerk
767th Squadron

Several years ago, my late partner and I were studying a pile of brochures advertising various cruises. We quickly put aside the floating hotels which did not interest us at all and concentrated on smaller sailing ships. One promoted a trip to Northern Italy, from Rome to Naples. Obviously, I had seen most of that area during the war, but Patsy had never been to Italy and was very enthusiastic about the idea, so off we went.

Since the voyage ended in Naples, it occurred to me that it would be fun to take an extra day and go back to Cerignola, and to Torretta where I had spent nearly eighteen months as a sergeant in the orderly room of the 767th Bomb Squadron, 461st Bomb Group. Patsy agreed, so we hired a driver and headed east across Italy.

On the drive I suspect, though I am not certain, that I told her about how and why I found myself on that erstwhile farm in southeastern Italy about sixty-five years before. For me, it started back in Kearns, Utah after several military schools when the adjutant of the 767th Bomb Squadron, chose me and several others to join his squadron. Captain Ray Wilcovitz, who later became a judge in New York, was a bright, spry slight man. I recall particularly the time in Torretta when he volunteered to be defense counsel in courts martial. His acquittal rate was so high that he quickly was shifted to be the prosecuting

attorney!

As I told her my thoroughly undistinguished wartime history, the memories came flooding back and all those comrades from those days came out of the mists of time. Our squadron CO, Major – later General= James Knapp. We were somewhat anxious when he took over because he was a West Point graduate and we were afraid he would be really GI, which was not the culture of our organization. We weren't like MASH, but we weren't rigidly by the book, either. But, though outwardly stern, he turned out to be OK. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

From Kearns, we went to Wendover Field on the Nevada-Utah border, and then to Hammer Field in Fresno, California. The rumors kept circulating that we were going to get furloughs before we went overseas – but of course we never did. The Army was rife with misinformation! I well remember the Bamboo Room in Fresno when I met Tom Collins for the first time. The next morning was a disaster. And I recall calling home – Cambridge, Massachusetts – on Christmas Eve. How different communications were in those days - it took half an hour to establish the connection going painfully slowly through LA, Chicago, Boston to reach my home and family.

Then by troop train across the country to Hampton Roads, Virginia and boarding the Liberty Ship, the John Jay. Bunks stacked five high. Two very mediocre meals per day. Totally buttoned down at night. Sail-

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 24)

ing in convoy across the Atlantic. A wild storm off Cape Hatteras which clobbered all those of our company who had never been at sea before – those fifty-gallon cans strategically placed around our living space came in very handy!

Three weeks after we embarked, we moved past Gibraltar into the Med. At twilight I was on deck when suddenly our Marine detachment rushed up in helmets and flak jackets and started firing. We were under attack by bombers and, we thought, submarines. Since our ship was carrying ammunition, we were anxious. I was reading a book by Walter Lippman, the noted columnist and pundit, about the postwar world as the explosions crashed around us - until one of my comrades called my attention to the fact that I was holding it upside down. Coolness under fire!

After a week in the Bay of Tunis waiting for a spot to disembark in Naples, we went across the Med to that beautiful harbor, dominated by a smoking Mount Vesuvius, and got off on an upside-down vessel that had been partially sunk. Trucks transported us to nearby Bagnoli where an abandoned school awaited us. No cots - body bags filled with straw. One night there was a German air raid but we were too stupid to move to shelters so we stayed in the school rooms which had been pretty well destroyed earlier raids.

Nearby was a hill called the Vomoro, as I recall. At the top was a collection of beehive ovens. I wrote home to my family that I had discovered this absolutely delicious Italian food called “pizza.” No such

thing existed in the US at that time.

Soon we were transported to a railyard and loaded into railroad cars for a trip over the mountains to our permanent base. It was, I explained to Patsy, early February 1944. The Italian sun burned warm and bright. And then it got dark and we were up in the hills and it was freezing cold. We lit a little fire in the boxcar to help but the officers thought this was not a good idea and made us extinguish it.

When the sun came out the next day, it was better but still pretty chilly. The train stopped constantly. On one of those pauses, a cook whose name I think was Earl Clark, had to answer a call of nature, so he got off and squatted in a field. That picture still sits firmly in my mind. Suddenly the train started to go. Being a very big man indeed, there was no way he could catch the moving train. Somehow, he did find us several days later. I always wondered how he made it.

After thirty-six hours, in the middle of the night, we disembarked - somewhere. Loaded into trucks, we drove in the dark – but it seemed to us that the truck drivers didn’t know exactly where they were going. We thought we could hear artillery fire, at which point the drivers seemed to change direction. But what did we know and, of course, nobody told us anything.

Finally, we were dumped off in the dark in a field of mud and snow and a few tents. And cold. Very cold. Literally bone chilling cold. And no hope or possibility of warmth. With what – candles? Kerosene lamps? No cots – just the straw filled

(Continued on page 26)

(Continued from page 25)

body bags. But we did receive a pile of mail from home which had accumulated during our month-long trip on the SS John Jay. Thanks to Hughes Glantzberg's comprehensive and informative book "Al Ataque," I now know it was a place called Venosa. And I learned that General Glantzberg (then Colonel), the Group CO decided that Venosa was not fit for man nor beast nor B-24s and back we went into the trucks to move to Torretta.

As Patsy and I drove - were driven - from Naples to Cerignola more than six decades later, I had trouble recognizing the scenery. There was a big wide highway replacing the narrow winding road I remembered. When we got to Cerignola, though it had grown considerably, the cathedral, the plaza and other vistas were unchanged. It was eerie to see it again after all those years!

Since the driver had no way of knowing where Torretta was, he had arranged with the local police to guide us out there. Once, again, I saw little along the route that I recognized and, when the police stopped their cruiser and said: "Here is Torretta," I really did not see anything familiar. When I mentioned that fact to the cops, they asked: "What do you remember?" And I told them about the Baron's house which was group headquarters, the bull ring, the farmer's quarters, the olive grove. "Oh," they said, and kept going a few hundred yards, around a corner, and suddenly - there we were. Like Brigadoon. Just as I had left it that day in May, 1945. (Captain Wilcovitz had told me a month before that there was an opening

for a Warrant Officer in the Mediterranean Theatre and I should take the exam. I studied ARs, took it, got the highest score in the Theatre and got the appointment. The only question I remember was: "How many horses do you have at a Corporal's funeral?" For some reason, I remembered that one! Like who cares!)

As I say, there, miraculously it all was. The building used for flight briefings and courts martial. The chapel across the ravine. The storehouse we used for those horrible movies about "Why We Fight". The chaplain's office. The farm building we converted into an Enlisted Men's club where, under the watchful eye of Cpl "Tulley" Thuleson we drank 3.2 beer and smoked cigars. The hill where I sat alone when I heard that my grandmother had died. The cow barn we used as a mess hall, the remains of our squadron emblem still visible on the walls. The flagpole on Group headquarters. The olive grove. The volley ball court. The place where our tent stood, where six of us lived for all those months, just longing to go home. Was it ever wonderful when we got an electric light! And a stove, fashioned from a 50-gallon German drum cut in half with a notch cut out of the bottom to hold a shell casing which, in turn, held the mixture of oil and gas dripping in from a jerry can outside. Fortunately, we had no tent fire, but others did! In spectacular fashion!

It was in that tent that, early in our time at Torretta, Sergeant Howie, who had swiped a parachute and traded it to the British anti-aircraft group on the base for a bottle of

(Continued on page 27)

(Continued from page 26)

scotch and a bottle of gin, had broken open the scotch and we passed it around among the six of us. It was so good, we decided to go ahead with the gin. Big mistake. Inspection the next day. Oh my.

When I walked into the orderly room, now filled with bales of hay, the ghosts of my friends and colleagues appeared. There was the bespectacled Sgt. Howie. In the opposite corner was the payroll expert, Sgt. Rice. Next door was the domain of Sgt. Geary, in charge of supply with his assistant George Eaton. First Sgt. Fisher from Mahanoy City, PA. And my dear friend, S/Sgt. Ed Latal from Chicago, whose family sent us the most delicious Polish sausages which we heated or cooked on our red-hot tent stove. Ed and I stayed in touch until he died from a fall years ago.

And then there was "Old Pop" Payne who worked at Group Headquarters. (We called him "old" and "Pop" because he was in his early thirties and that was pretty ancient to us in those days.) He was an especially important part of our circle because he had an unusual blood type. The Red Cross would pay \$25 for a pint of Pop's blood - more than enough to stake us all to a weekend of R&R in Naples.

Then I walked into the smaller room of what must have been the home of a farmer where the officers held sway. Col. Knapp, the CO; Major Herald Bennett, the biology professor from West Virginia, the Executive Officer; Captain Wilcovitz, the adjutant, who scrounged fresh eggs and produce for our mess until some higher authority made him stop. I could see their

familiar faces, hear their voices once again as I surveyed those places which once they had occupied. Years later, Ed gave me the key to that orderly room which he had "liberated" when the squadron left to go home, as Hughes has described in his fine and useful book.

I looked at the sky overhead, now peaceful in its lovely Italian blue, and remembered with pain how we on the ground would look up anxiously as the planes returned from a mission, counting the missing places in the formations.

Empathetic as Patsy was, I doubt that even she could comprehend the waves of emotion which I felt, being back in that so familiar place, seeing and hearing once more those long-departed men who had so fully occupied that brief, encapsulated two-and-a-half-year piece of my life.

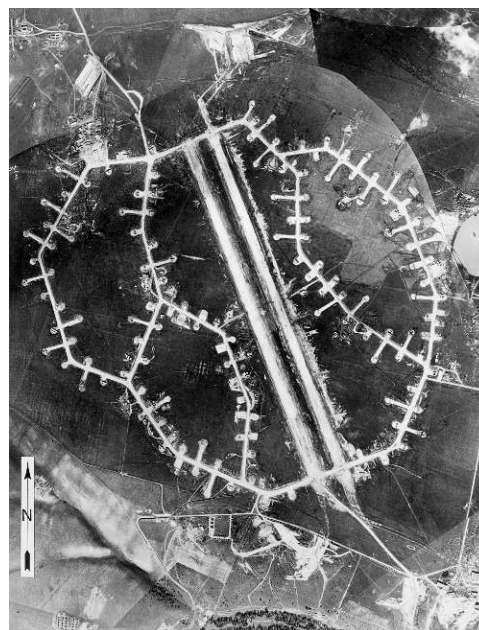
And as we drove away from Torretta that day, I thought I could hear once again the voice of a GI disc jockey in Italy who called himself "The Great Spectacled Bird," saying, as he always did at the end of his show, "Take Care of Thee."

Dan Fenn, one-time Sergeant in the 767th Squadron, went on to be Staff Assistant to President John Kennedy in the White House Vice Chairman and Acting Chairman of the United States Tariff Commission, and the Founding Director of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston. He now teaches at Harvard's Kennedy School

Torretta Airfield

Company 'H', Third Battalion, 21st Engineer Aviation Regiment, started work on this field late in November 1943 and remained at work with all platoons; relieved by Second Battalion, 21st Engineer Aviation Regiment, on 1 June 1944. Built two gravel runways, 150 feet x 6000 feet and laid 500 feet of pierced steel planking (PSP) at each end of the runways. Widened 17,000 linear feet of compacted gravel taxiway 15 feet and built 50 heavy bomber type hardstandings. Later laid 6,000 pieces of PSP on 800 feet at south end of the runways as an experiment at the insistence of the Air Corps. Planking rutted up due to foundation failure after a few days of heavy bomber traffic. Because of the soil condition, field posed serious drainage problems during heavy rains from January to well into March 1944. It was found impractical to put down gravel during rain, as the material absorbed and held water. The runway was dug up to a depth of 30 inches, exposed and aired and allowed to dry out. Then gravel, originally 6 to 8 inches thick, was re-compacted. Being an extremely flat surface, with slope of less than $\frac{1}{2}$ percent caused water to stand on the field until drainage system could be installed. Access roads and erection of semi-permanent huts and buildings were included in the field details.

On 29 May 1944 Company 'F', Second Battalion, 21st Engineer Aviation Regiment, assumed responsibility of this airfield and started to erect a Butler Combat Hangar. PSP 100 feet x 1000 feet was laid on both ends of the west runway. Drainage ditches were dug and the runways and taxiways were constantly maintained. In July 1944 maintenance was taken over by the 1898th Engineer Aviation Battalion. A detachment from Company 'D', 21st Engineer Aviation Regiment, was assigned to assist the 1898th Engineer Aviation Battalion by constructing an all-weather, gravel type 100 feet x 6000 feet runway on the site of the existing dry weather runways. On 21 December 1944, Company 'F', Second Battalion, 21st Engineer Aviation Regiment, again resumed responsibility for the field. During January and the first two weeks of March 1944, a new gravel lift was placed on the east runway to replace the original surface that had an excess of clay. Company 'F' maintained this field until the end of the war at which time salvage operations were started.



Organizational Relationships

by
Hughes Glantzberg
President
461st Bombardment Group Association

For the benefit of those who are not aware, the 461st Bombardment Group (H) did not win WWII by itself. There were a lot of other organizations that participated in the effort to put an end to the Axis powers. I think most people know that the 461st was part of the 49th Bomb Wing of the Fifteenth Air Force. The 49th Bomb Wing consisted of not only the 461st, but the 451st and 484th bomb groups as well. The question I will attempt to answer in this article is what roll did the 49th Bomb Wing play during WWII. The Fifteenth Air Force consisted of a number of organizations that helped to keep the bombers in the air, but there were five bomb wings that consisted primarily of bomber groups – 5th, 47th, 49th, 55th and 304th Bomb Wings. The 5th Bomb Wing had six bomb groups all flying the B-17s. The other four bomb wings all flew the B-24s. The 47th Bomb Wing had four bomb group; the 49th had three bomb groups; the 55th had four bomb group; and the 304th had four bomb groups. Each bomb group consisted of approximately 5,000 men. How was all this manpower managed in order to deliver deadly attacks on the Axis powers and end the war as quickly as possible.

The Fifteenth Air Force determined the target or targets that would be hit on a particular day. Orders were issues and sent to each bomb wing with the target for the day. Each bomb wing, in turn, issued orders that were sent to the bomb groups with more details

about the mission to be flown by the bomb groups. Usually all of the bomb groups in a particular bomb wing flew to the same target, but this was not always the case. When the bomb groups received the orders to fly a mission, they picked the crews that would fly that day and produced something called a poop sheet or pilot flimsy. This would list the pilots that would fly along with the aircraft. This might change depending on a number of factors but was pretty much adhered to if possible.

Pilots were told to destroy their poop sheets after the mission. As a result, very few of them exist today. I have managed to get some of them and have posted them in the Missions area of the 461st website. In the case of the 484th BG, the pilot flimsies that I have received are posted in the Missions area of their website. These orders provide details about the missions flown, but not how a particular mission was flown with the rest of the Fifteenth Air Force.

Let me back up just a little bit to the 49th Bomb Wing to try and put this in perspective.

If you go to the 49th Bomb Wing area of the Fifteenth Air Force website (www.15thaf.org), you will see a Missions links. This area contains the Operations Orders and Operations Reports for the 49th BW. I will use the first mission flown by the Fifteenth Air Force in August as an example. This is the mission flown on August 2, 1944. The Operations Order (Ops Ord) was issued on August 1 and sent to the three bomb groups of that wing.

(Continued from page 29)

The first paragraph of the Ops Ord tells what the other bomb wings are suppose to do on August 2. For example, the 5th BW was to send five groups of B-17s against Le Pouzin Oil Storage and Les Valences M/Y and Torpedo Factory. The 55th BW was to send four bomb groups to the Port Installations in Genoa. The 47th and 304th BWs were not required to fly that day.

The next paragraph says that the 461st and 484th BGs would have the Avignon Railroad Bridge as the target and the 451st would fly to Le Lontet Oil Storage. The coordinates are given for all of these targets.

The rendezvous of the bomb groups is spelled out next along with the altitude each bomb group should be at when meeting the other groups. In addition, details about the fighter escort is given. The route the formation was to take was given in detail. Missions were seldom flown directly to a target and directly back to base. The route was varied in order to throw the enemy off as to the target for the day. If it wasn't possible to hit the designated target, one or more alternate targets might be listed. In this case, there were two alternate targets that could be hit if it was impossible to hit the primary one.

The bomb load to be carried was specified along with how much Window (this was tinsel that was dropped to confuse the enemy anti-aircraft guns) should be used. If neither the primary or alternate targets could be hit, bombs were to be returned to base. Even the need for refueling was spelled out.

Finally, with as many aircraft as might be flying that day, you can imagine the radio traffic that could be heard unless they were to maintain radio silence. The call signs for the various organizations was spelled out so there

would no confusion about who was using the radio. The call signs were changed for every mission so the enemy never knew who was talking.

Now take a look at the 461st Missions area and the August missions. You'll see that the 461st was to hit the Avignon Railroad Bridge. Now you know where that decision came from. Unfortunately, I have no poop sheet for the August 2 mission, but if you look on down to August 12, you can take a look at the poop sheet for that mission.

The pilots that were scheduled to fly along with the aircraft they would use and their position in the formation was spelled out. On the poop sheet, the times for starting engines, taxing and taking off were spelled out for each formation. Now the pilots are given the direction, distance and time from one point to the next all the way to the target and back to base. There was no guesswork involved.

Notice that other details about this mission are also specified including the speeds at which the aircraft will fly, how much gasoline each aircraft will take, what type of bombs each plane will carry and what sort of escort they can expect on the mission.

There are always exceptions that can happen. An aircraft can have mechanical problems and need to turn back, enemy fighters could damage an aircraft and/or shoot it down, flak could do similar damage to an aircraft. In addition, weather can present a problem. If there is overcast in the target area, it might prevent the planes from seeing the target. If this happens, the mission target is shifted to one of the alternates. If the alternates are not available for whatever reason, the bombs are either return to the base or are jettisoned over the Adriatic Sea.

(Continued on page 31)

(Continued from page 30)

Once the mission is completed and the planes are back at the base, every crewmember goes through a debriefing in order to add information about the enemy to the knowledge already known.

As you can see in the Missions section of the website, a summary is written up about each mission detailing what happened on that mission. This becomes part of the official records of the organization.

The wing and the air force would also like to know how the mission went so a report is sent back up to the 49th Bomb Wing. The wing will combine the reports from all three bomb groups and create an Operations Report that summarizes the results of the wing as far as the mission is concerned. This report is then forwarded to the air force so the overall results of the missions for that day can be analyzed.

President's Corner

We don't normally have any information about the next reunion by the time we go to press on the December issue of the Liberaider. This year is an exception. We have some very good news about the reunion. We don't have all the details worked out yet, but what we have is exciting.

We are going back to the Wyndham Garden Dallas North Hotel that we visited in 2016. This hotel really want us to come back and have made us a deal that is impossible to refuse. To start with, they are willing to give us the same rate per room as we were charged two years ago. That, in itself is a great deal. On top of that, the City of Farmers Branch is giving us an incentive to return. This incentive is being applied to our already low room rate at the hotel. As a result, our basic room rate will be \$71.20 per night (plus tax).

The hotel is already taking reservations for next year and as usual, if you need to cancel for whatever reason, you may do so without penalty up to the day before arrival.

Please take a look at our website for details

on how to make your reservation.

We don't have any information about tours for this reunion, but Dave Blake assures me that we will have an itinerary by the time the June issue of the Liberaider comes out and I'm sure the tours will be as good if not better than previous. How many time can he continue to go above and beyond with each reunion?



A grocer put up a sign that read, "Eggplants, 25 cents each. Three for a dollar."

All day long, customers came in exclaiming, "Don't be ridiculous! I should get four for a dollar!" Meekly, the grocer would agree and package four eggplants.

The tailor next door saw what was happening and finally asked the grocer, "Aren't you going to fix the mistake on your sign?"

"What mistake?" the grocer asked. "Before I put up that sign no one ever bought more than one eggplant."

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We're on the web!
Visit
www.461st.org

Webmaster Comments

The 461st website continues to grow because it groups that make up the 49th Bomb Wing. Being part of the 49th Bomb Wing, the other slower now than in the past. It seems that most of the information that's out there about bomb groups share a lot of the same assignments as the 461st. A lot of the stories are the 461st is already on the website. I still feel that there is more that could be added. I'd like to encourage everyone to take another minutes to visit the other bomb groups and look through your files and see if there is read some of the material that's there. The something you overlooked that might add to 451st BG website (www.451st.org) is maintained by Jonathan Tudor. The 484th BG look around. Perhaps you will find something that reminds you of a photo or a story. website (www.484th.org) is maintained by me. Although veterans are undoubtedly There is a lot of information on the website, aware that the 484th shared Torretta Field but I would like to add more. I just need with the 461st, not everyone is aware of this your input. fact.

In another article in this issue of the Liberaid- If you take a look at the Fifteenth Air Force er, I wrote about how missions are planned, website, you will see a chart that shows all executed and reported. In doing so, I called the units that were assigned to the Fifteenth. your attention to the Fifteenth Air Force web- Not all of them have been documented. I'm site and mentioned the other two bomb still looking for more information.