



*The 461st*

# Liberaider



Vol. 27, No. 1

JUNE 2010

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

## Reunion Information

The 2010 reunion of the 461st Bombardment Group (H) will be held in Chicago, IL. This promises to be another exceptional reunion with exciting tours and activities. See page 18 for details and sign-up information.

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## Diary of John Panas

Radio Operator, Navigator, Bombar-  
dier

July 1942 – December 1945

### **About the Author**

John Panas was born October 5, 1918 in New York City. He was the second child of Nicholas and Sofia Panagiotopoulos. In 1920, they moved to Asbury Park, NJ. He has an older sister, Mary and younger brothers, George and Constantine (Dino).

### **Panagiotopoulos (Panas)**

It all started on the “day that will live in infamy”, December 7, 1941, the day that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.

On March 1, 1942, I received a Notice of Classification Form from Draft Board No. 5 of Monmouth County, New Jersey. I was classified 1-A. At the time I was a student at Columbia University in New York City. While I

### **Combat Service of John N.**

*(Continued on page 4)*

## World War II Experiences

by  
Robert K. Jones

An item that bears mention, I think, is security and intelligence among the prisoners in the Stalag Luft I which, was conducted by self appointed types (though usually with some previous experience) and approved by the senior officers. This was probably important to our well being. I’ve already mentioned the security check which was maintained over the new arrivals but similar and continuous checks and cross checks were carried on at all times in order to assure that

the Germans could not infiltrate our ranks. They did try periodically. Each block maintained a man on 24-hour observation of the area to keep track of the “goons” and what they might be doing.

I guess I need to define some of my terms. “Goon” was any German military type in the guard force (meant to be derogatory). “Ferret” was a Goon who wandered around the compound day or night apparently just observing and reporting anything out of the ordinary (Escape or Tunneling activity)

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# *Taps*

May they rest in peace forever

Please forward all death notices to:

Hughes Glantzberg  
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Gunnison, CO 81230  
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## **764<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>Date of Death</b></u>
Allen, Alfred H.	Henerson, TX	748	11/05/2009
Bacchi, Remo L.	San Diego, CA	678	02/01/2010
Louis, Charles L.	Andover, KS	748	05/07/2009
Nelson, Robert A.	Renwick, IA	748	10/02/2009
O'Keefe, Arthur E.	Gardenerville, NV	511	05/09/2010
Rautenberg, Bernard R.	Azusa, CA	754	11/23/2009
Vest, Billy D.	Maryville, MO	1034	12/21/2009
Wallace, Robert S.	Lake City, MN	757	02/00/2007

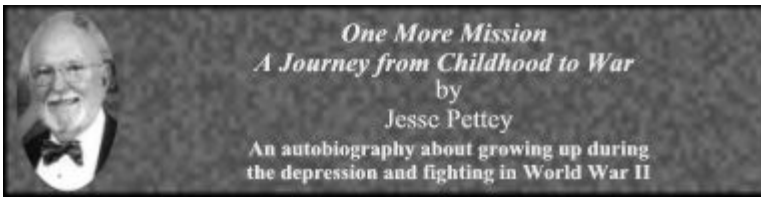
## **765<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>Date of Death</b></u>
Chadd, Calvin S.	Odon, IN	620	02/12/2010
Godino, Peter N.	Fresno, CA	612	01/05/2010
Krause, David L.	Belmont, MA	575	12/22/2009
Lewandowski, John A.	Clinton TWP, MI	747	02/28/2010
Newell, Raymond	Long Beach, CA	1092	01/23/2010

## **767<sup>th</sup> Squadron**

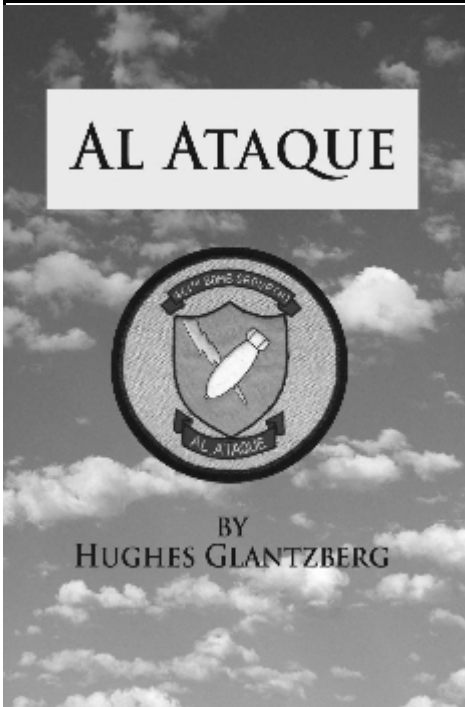
<u><b>Name</b></u>	<u><b>Hometown</b></u>	<u><b>MOS</b></u>	<u><b>Date of Death</b></u>
Dickie, George D.	West Yarmouth, MA	1034	04/20/2010
Frazier, Ernest R.	San Antonio, TX	1092	01/16/2010





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.

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

*(Continued from page 1)*

was willing to serve my country, I was reluctant to be a "foot soldier" so I decided to try my luck by enlisting in the Army Air Corps. On a warm spring day in May of 1942, I took time from my studies, hopped on the subway, and went to the Army Air Corps office on Whitehall Street in New York City. I met all the requirements and passed the written examination, eye test and physical examination. On July 15, 1942 I was accepted and sworn into the Army Air Corps. My orders subsequently arrived on January 15, 1943. I was to report for duty at the Army Air Base in San Antonio, Texas for further assignment. After more written and physical tests, I was assigned to train as a navigator at Ellington Field in Houston, Texas. We were referred to as "Aviation Cadets". Our class was listed as 43-16 Echelon VI.

After my initial physical, I was issued my "dog tags" which showed my name, serial number and religious persuasion. They asked if I was Catholic or Protestant, but I replied that I was Greek Orthodox. I insisted that "G.O." should be embossed on my dog tags, but the sergeant refused. I appealed to the Captain and he accepted my request. Therefore, my dog tags read "G.O." for Greek Orthodox.

During my service in the Army Air Corps, I acquired the nickname "Kelly". This came about at an early morning roll call. At 5:00 A.M. the Sergeant lined us up alphabetically and started to call off names such as O'Connor, O'Toole and Osborn. When he got to my long Greek name, Panagiotopoulos, he was tongue-tied. Of course I tried to help him pronounce it, but it was futile. After five or six morning roll calls, the Sergeant finally threw in the towel and christened me "Kelly" instead.

During the early months of 1943, I went through basic navigational training at Ellington Field. From there I moved on to Gunnery School in Harlingen, Texas. We trained on AT-18 Flight Trainers and were also taught to use .50 caliber machine guns. We also learned to use Army pistols on ground targets. This was required of all cadets. On July 3, 1943, we graduated from Gunnery School and received our "Gunnery Wings".

In a mere 175 days, a navigator was trained to lead a

group of bombers to a target 500 miles away and to return under radio silence to home base. To improve my navigational skills, I had to take a test and fortunately passed with flying colors. During the months of August, September and October my advanced training took me to Arkansas, Kansas and Mississippi, as well as our home base state of Texas. This included both day and night flights using celestial navigation techniques.

My training in Texas was extremely intense but also very interesting. But when there was some occasional free time from studies, I spent the time sight-seeing and meeting the fairer sex. While at New Braunfels, my home base, I met Doris, a very attractive young lady. Cadet Rusinko, his date, Doris and I once went to San Antonio to see the football game between the Texas Aggies and Texas Tech. After the game, we went out and celebrated my upcoming birthday, October 5. During my stay here we passed the time together going to dances, movies and sometimes swimming.

On my birthday I flew up to Walnut Ridge, Arkansas for my first celestial flight, using the stars as my navigational guide. From there we went on to Garden City, Kansas to complete our advanced training and to further prepare for combat.

### **Class 43-16 - Echelon VI**

It seemed like such a short time since this bunch of bewildered cadets arrived at San Marcos. We all wondered how we would ever "sweat it out". We had our share of tours and night classes. Many was the hour we spent after lights-out discussing everything from airplanes and navigation, to sports and women. Then there were the Saturday night excursions to Austin, only to be followed by the Sunday parade, complete with hangovers. Day and night celestial missions followed quickly. But now we were a "hot" bunch of navigators turned out by the best instructors from the "best damn" navigational school in the world.

On November 13, 1943 I graduated from the rank of Cadet, received my Silver Wings, and was promoted to Flight Officer. I returned to Ellington Field and for three weeks I was a temporary Instructor. I en-

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joyed being an instructor for in addition to helping the new cadets, I also got a little time to rest. Soon my three weeks were up and I received orders to report by December 17th to Westover Field in Springfield, Massachusetts. But first I was granted ten days leave to visit my parents in Asbury Park, New Jersey. I reported back to Westover Field but shortly was granted another ten days of leave for the Christmas Holidays. However, during this leave I visited a lovely young woman named Georgiana, a student at New York University. She and I had dated while I was attending Columbia. On New Year's Eve, while celebrating what promised to be an exciting but uncertain New Year, I asked Georgiana to marry me. Her answer was a soft "no". While I had high hopes for a better answer, I understood her reasons but refused to be disillusioned.

On January 7th, 1944 I received orders to report to Langley Field, Virginia for further instruction. Here at Langley I was reunited with many of my buddies - Petek, Riddle, Ostheimer, Peddicore, Rusinko, Peterson and Plitt.

On a weekend pass I went to visit my family. Again I asked Georgiana to marry me. This time the answer was "maybe yes and maybe no". Not to be denied, I asked her again at the end of January. Her answer was a tender "maybe".

During January and February of 1944 we had further advanced training. We were stationed at Chatham Field in Georgia. My family surprised me with a visit and the Colonel gave me permission to show them around the base.

One of my more interesting practice missions took me to Havana, Cuba. Batista was President of Cuba at the time. I was here for a few days since the conditions for flying were perfect year round. In our spare time, we toured Havana and had rum and coke at the famous Sloppy Joe's Bar.

We returned to Langley for radar navigational training. I was selected for this specialized training, not only for navigation, but for use in bombing enemy targets. The Norden bombsight is a high precision instrument used for pinpointing a visual target. Radar can also see the target, but is less precise. At

times when there is 80% cloud cover over the target, the figures from the radar operator are sent to the bombardier to permit him to complete his bomb run. Should the target become visible at the last minute, under conditions of 80% overcast this technique has proven to be very effective. Visual synchronization can be accomplished in the last 20 seconds if the bombsight has been previously coordinated with the radar operator.

In mid April I received a weekend pass and went to visit my parents, but also to see Georgiana, hopefully my bride-to-be. The biggest news of the day was Georgiana's "YES" to my proposal of marriage. We agreed to officially get engaged in about four weeks or whenever I got another pass.

On May 6th, I met the Army Air Corps Commissioning Board, thanks to Colonel Haviland. Now it was only a matter of time before I would be able to officially wear my Gold Bars. Remember, upon graduating Navigational School, I was commissioned as a Flight Officer.

At the end of May I finally received another weekend pass and went home to Asbury Park and was engaged to Georgiana. Her parents, my parents, my brothers, sister, aunts, uncles, cousins, and some close friends gathered to celebrate our engagement at my uncle's restaurant, The Marine Grill in Asbury Park. It was an unforgettable day for both of us, a big step and something we could both look forward to.

A few days later my main orders arrived and I was informed to be ready to depart for combat duty. On Sunday, June 4, 1944, Lieutenant Heath, our pilot, and the entire B-24 bomber crew were briefed for take-offs over the Atlantic Ocean. We were also briefed on safety precautions and what to expect while flying over such a large body of water. We departed Langley Field and headed for Bangor Field in Maine. From Bangor Field we flew to Newfoundland where we received our sealed orders advising us to join the Fifteenth Air Force in Italy. We left Newfoundland with a full tank of fuel in our B-24 and on June 11th we arrived in the Azores; distance of 1,500 miles. We refueled and set out for our next stop in

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Marrakech, Morocco in North Africa; about 1,800 miles. Then it was on to Gioia, Italy for a short stay. There was little to do here but wait for our next orders. This was a perfect time to continue writing my journal. We finally arrived at our base in Cerignola, Italy where we were assigned to the 764th Squadron of the 461st Bomb Group. This was part of the Fifteenth Air Force which was headquartered in Bari.

Soon thereafter I was checked out on my radar equipment by three senior officers; a Colonel, a Major and a Captain. To judge my ability I had to drop a 100 pound bomb on Pianosa Island in the Adriatic. This island was uninhabited and roughly the size of a small city block. From 15,000 feet you were expected to drop these "fly-weight" bombs and land them within 100 feet of that rock. If successful you were doing quite well, especially with this new invention, radar.

On June 27th, a group took off for a mission to Vienna, Austria. While I was not assigned to the mission, I found it noteworthy. At the target our squadron was attacked by several Messerschmidts and seven of the bombers were hit. One was hit so bad that he dropped from an altitude of 20,000 feet to 12,000 feet having lost some power and his oxygen. Two bombers from the group dropped down and escorted the crippled plane home. That particular crew was on its 50th mission and was scheduled to head back stateside. A very lucky crew, indeed!

I finally received my first mail in a month. It was a big batch and lots to read. Later that week, several of us went to Foggia to see "This is the Army" with Irving Berlin himself. This was a real treat and gave us an enjoyable way to kill some time.

On July 15th, a date I will never forget, I saw my first combat action. Our target was the most feared of all, the Ploesti oil fields in Romania. The regular procedure before every mission was to be briefed on the target destination, weather conditions, location of anti-aircraft batteries and the like. As a Radar Navigator I was assigned to fly with the Lead Group - 2nd Attack Unit with Captain Bean, the pilot, and Major Goree, the co-pilot. The Ploesti fields were protected by hundreds of antiaircraft guns and the sky was

awash with flak, some coming way too close for comfort. Needless to say, I was nervous on my first mission. After the bombs were away, I relaxed some, but I still stayed tightly wrapped in my flak vest. It was an easy combat mission, if you didn't get hit, and many prayers of thanks were offered up during our flight back to the base. When we landed, the Officer-in-Charge debriefed the crew. They were interested in what we saw, how many aircraft were hit, and what else transpired during the mission. The oilfields were hit by 80% of the bombers in the Fifteenth Air Force despite the bad weather and heavy anti-aircraft fire. Our 461st Bomb Group was proud to receive the Presidential Citation. My first mission was a true "baptism by fire".

**Explanation of a bomb run** - The run itself is usually 25 to 30 miles from start to finish. From the start of the run to the target itself, the radar operator or the bombardier, depending on the weather, has control of the automatic pilot, with the ability to correct the aircraft one degree to the right or the left. All four squadrons, usually seven to eight planes per squadron, must hold a very tight formation, bomb bay doors open and planes held very steady. Once the bombs are away, the bomb bay doors are quickly closed and the pilot takes over the controls once again.

On July 18th, with the 764th Squadron of the 461st Bomb Group, we set out for our target in Friedrichshafen, Germany. This was an aircraft plant known as Manzell A/C, a component factory. I flew deputy lead for the 49th Wing Lead Group. Our pilot was Captain Stevens and the co-pilot was Major Goree again. The bombardier, Captain Murphy, used his bombsight because the weather was clear and the visibility was good. Unfortunately, our radar equipment confirmed only 25% accuracy with our strike. In the meantime, we were being pelted with heavy flak. It was so close that at 30 degrees below zero we were all perspiring heavily. Our waist gunner, Sergeant Marangelo, got hit in the back. Fortunately, his flak jacket saved his life.

On July 19th we were assigned to attack the Schleisheim plants outside of Munich. Our pilot this time was Captain Specht and his co-pilot was Colonel

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Burke. The weather was clear and the radar was not necessary except for navigation. Captain Murphy used his Norden bombsight and we really laid waste to the target. The usual blanket of flak came up to greet us and our aircraft was peppered with several new air conditioning holes. We looked for enemy fighters but they were way off in the distance chasing other bombers.

The next day I was transferred from the 764th to the 765th Squadron, but still with the same 461st Bomb Group. With this transfer I was made a Radar Squadron Leader.

On July 22nd I awakened at 5:00 AM as usual. We were briefed once again on the toughest of all targets, the Ploesti Oil Refineries - my second trip there. The difficulty in the Ploesti mission was the anti-aircraft cover. It seemed as though they had every inch of the target covered. I was flying Deputy Lead for the 49th Wing that day. On the bomb run, bomb bay doors wide open and each plane carrying seven 500 pound bombs, the lead ship in front of us was hit hard with flak four miles from the target. They pulled off the run and fortunately, we found out later, managed to land safely at another base in Italy. However, we were ordered by Major Goree to take the lead over the target. I had been tracking the target for 25 miles so I dropped the bombs as close as possible. We caused about 35% damage to the refinery. All the while, the flak was coming at us from everywhere, a dangerous situation indeed! With the help of God and some evasive action flying, we pulled out and returned to our base safely.

July 24th is a day that I will always remember. Not only was it Georgiana's birthday, but I had a day off and was not scheduled to fly with my group. They

departed with another radar operator destined for a target in Germany. The group got hit very hard by enemy fighters and the lead ship went down. A few of the crew managed to get out and parachute to safety.

As a point of information, during a bomb run, with the bomb bay doors open, the radar operator completes his calculations and hits a toggle switch to release the bombs. When the lead ship releases its bombs, the other bombers in our group follow suit. Depending on the type and size of the target, the bombs are set to be dropped at different intervals.

It was August 3rd and our mission for the day was Friedrichshafen, Germany. It seemed like an ideal target for a radar run. Colonel Glantzberg was the leader of our group. However, due to a miscommunication between the Colonel and the bombardier, everything did not seem to be going according to plan. In fact, I informed Captain Specht, our pilot, that my radar showed that we were a bit off course. The group next to us bombed this particular target and we were ordered to an alternate target. We completed our run without too much flak and had very few fighters to contend with.

On August 10th our mission was the Xenia Oil Refinery in Ploesti, Romania. This made my third visit to treacherous Ploesti. Colonel Applegate was assigned to lead the group with Captain Specht, the pilot, and Captain Murphy as bombardier. The target was well covered with clouds and smoke pots, not to mention the usual blanket of flak. As a result, I had to handle the bombing by radar. I had plenty of time to work on my radar equipment and drop my bombs. After we peeled off from the target, we looked back and saw a lot of black smoke come billowing from

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

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the ground. The photos later showed that we had some good bomb results on this run. In the distance we saw some enemy fighters, but they didn't bother with us. We landed safely at our base with some light damage from flak. The 461st Bomb Group hit the Ploesti target seven times in total. It so happened that I was on three of the seven missions. (I think they were trying to do away with me!)

On August 15th, 1944, the Fifteenth Air Force was assigned to pave the way for our ground forces in their invasion of southern France. Our group, led by Colonel Glantzberg, participated in the invasion. We were proud to be a part of this momentous day.

**Explanation of Position of bombers of the 461st Bomb Group according to flight plan to the target of Ploesti.**

Four Squadrons and call signs as follows:

764th Tasteless

765th Whitesail

766th Watchpot

767th Today

Each name on the flight sheet represents the pilot of his B-24 and crew. The first attack unit commanded by Col. Glantzberg has control of the 20 B-24's. The second attack unit commanded by Deputy Group Leader Maj. Goree also has 20 B-24's. Both lead and deputy lead B-24's have radar equipment. I was assigned to operate the radar equipment in the lead of the second attack unit.

A total of 40 B-24's in this group.  
Each B-24 carrying 4,500 lbs. of bombs.  
180,000 lbs. of bombs in total of the entire group.

Comprising 10 men to each aircraft, making a total of 404 airmen (including 4 radar operators).

If read carefully, this flight plan could be understood by the average layman at the rendezvous time and specified area, we join with 451st Bomb Group and the 484th Bomb Group.

Our fighter protection of P-38's met us at a specified time and place.

Bomb-bay doors are open usually on a 30-mile bomb run 8 to 10 minutes. After bombs are dropped we are to rally to the left from the target. Army Intelligence reports that there are too many anti-aircraft guns to the right of the enemy target.

On August 19th I was called into Colonel Lawhon's office. He promoted me from Flight Officer to the rank of Second Lieutenant. After I was sworn in, we flew up to Rome for a well earned afternoon of sight-seeing and fun. We returned to the base that evening for a party and a few drinks.

On August 22nd our mission was the underground storage compound in Lobau, Austria (near Vienna). Captain Specht was the pilot and Colonel Applegate was the co-pilot. Initially I was using my radar to locate our target. However, as we approached the weather cleared and the visibility was good. Captain Murphy took over responsibility for the run with his bombsight and the results were very good. As we pulled away from the target, we were ambushed by several Messerschmidts. They shot down three bombers in the group next to ours, then they turned their attention to us. The German fighters made a pass at our group, but our gunners were on target and kept them at bay. At the same time we were still being pelted by their anti-aircraft guns. In order to confuse the Germans and give them an inaccurate reading on the radar instruments that controlled the anti-aircraft guns, all of our B-24 bombers carried boxes of silver tinsel. Over the enemy targets our waist gunner were authorized to throw out this tinsel. Sometimes this deception would work and the flak would be well below us....but other times the German gunners were not fooled. We were really nervous that day because there were German fighters everywhere. At last our P-38 fighters arrived and saved the day for us. I remember thinking that I never wanted another mission like that one. When we got back to our base we learned that our squadron had shot down two of the Messerschmidts.

A few days later I was elected Vice President of the Officers' Club in our squadron, Lieutenant Rothberg

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was elected President. The dues were \$2.00 per month per officer. Since we had 100 officers, we always had extra money to buy better food at the supply base in Foggia.

The Air Force supplied the Officers' Club with about 65 bottles of liquor a month, which was never enough to distribute fairly among our squadron. If we gave a bottle of liquor to an officer with several months seniority, as opposed to a new-comer, the new-comer got shortchanged. We had no choice! Our first priority was to give the Colonel his share - gratis. If a jeep was needed at any time, we had to ask the Sergeant in charge of the motor pool. Needless to say he received something on the cuff too. We collected \$2.00 per bottle from each officer.

The next few days we had a little time on our hands. So we flew to Rome. We went to St. Peter's Cathedral in the Vatican and were fortunate to see the Pope while we were there. We then hired a guide to show us the rest of the sights in the Vatican. The next day the weather was so clear and warm that we went swimming in the Adriatic.

The war fronts in France certainly moved a lot in a few weeks in favor of the Allies. The ground troops were nearing the German border. Our bombers were flying supply missions in support of the ground forces.

Beginning on September 10th, our 461st Bomb Group was assigned to haul bombs and gas to Lyons, France for our ground troops. We were being used temporarily as a transport group. I went on a few of these missions. Comparatively speaking, these assignments were easy with no fighters and flak to bother us and being able to fly at a comfortable altitude. We landed at a French air base and unloaded our cargo of fuel and supplies.

On September 13th I returned to Rome on a flight with Captain Arbuthnot. He was there to report on and record his experience on a mission over Linz, Austria. That day his crew and group shot down several ME-109's. Deservedly so, that crew was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

September 15th we flew a supply run to St. Raphael

in southern France to deliver a wing tip for Lieutenant Green's bomber which had sustained some damage. While we were there, Colonel Applegate borrowed a jeep for a ride to Cannes, about 25 miles from the air base. Cannes was a lovely town on the French Riviera, with lovelier women who rode around in shorts on their bicycles. I bought Georgiana a bottle of Chanel #5, a perfume that was all the rage at the time. Of course we made a few stops at the local cafes to sample the various French cognacs. On the way back to the base we passed many areas that we had previously bombed during the invasion of southern France. The devastation was amazing to behold! !

The target for September 25th was Salamis, outside the port of Pireaus, Greece. Our lead commander was Colonel Lawhon, and my pilot was Captain Johnson. This target was a German submarine base, but the subs were housed in bunkers made of six foot thick reinforced concrete. Our 500 pound bombs proved to be not much of a match for the reinforced concrete. I think we caused more aggravation than real structural damage. Can you imagine? I attended Athens University in 1939, and while there, I promised a classmate that I would return some day as a tourist. Well, I returned to try to bomb the daylight out of a target there! I kept my promise, but under vastly different circumstances than I had envisioned.

By the end of September, Captain Johnson, Lieutenant King, Lieutenant Chalmers and I started building a house at our base in Cerignola. None of us could stand the cold, damp tents in the winter. We built it out of cement blocks which we used for the walls, floor and a fireplace. We obtained lumber, cement and tar paper by bartering liquor with the British personnel located near our base. Lumber and tar paper were used for our roof. We got the cement blocks from an Italian farmer in exchange for cigarettes. They named the house "Mother Kelly's" because of my penchant for keeping it clean.

Our mission on October 4th was over Munich, Germany. Whenever Munich was mentioned in the briefing room, moaning was sure to follow since it was considered a tough target. We were to hit a large railroad marshaling yard. By damaging the rail

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yard, we hoped to prevent supplies from reaching their troops on the front lines. Our pilot was Captain Prien, Colonel Hawes was the commanding co-pilot. Captain Murphy was the bombardier and yours truly was the Radar Operator. The weather was clear and the bombing by Captain Murphy was superior. However, the barrage of flak wreaked havoc with our formation. The twenty-six bombers assigned to this mission were over the target at 11:55 AM at an altitude of 23,500 feet. 70% of the bombs were dropped within the target area. We lost seven planes from our group, two from my squadron, the 765th. A total of 70 officers and enlisted men were reported missing in action from the downed planes. The flak over the target was intense, like all hell broke loose. As a result, sixteen of the remaining nineteen planes received damage. A few of the damaged bombers landed near Foggia. The plane of Lieutenants Chalmers, Waggoner, and Rothberg was severely hit but they managed to limp as far as Yugoslavia. I had no idea how badly we were hit until we landed. The holes we found in our airplane! God was with me again so I could celebrate my 26th birthday the next day. This group received the Distinguished Unit Citation for the Munich mission.

On October 7th, we were headed for Vienna, Austria. Captain Johnson was our pilot, and Colonel Lawhon was the commanding co-pilot. We did not want our group to take any chances flying to this target unescorted since it was a tough one with too many anti-aircraft batteries. Therefore, we decided to bomb an alternate target just outside of Vienna. There was very little flak here and no fighters in the area.

It was October 13th, Friday, and everything that could go wrong did. We were once again headed for Vienna to bomb the gas works and rail yard. Captain Johnson was the pilot with Colonel Hawes as the commanding co-pilot. We had the target sighted but suddenly my radar went dead! We moved out of the lead position in the formation to deputy lead. The new lead radar operator had very little time to calibrate his instruments. The results were poor even though the flak at the time was light. Because of this unfortunate turn of events, part of the group had to make another run at the target. Now who in his right mind would go over an enemy target twice, loaded

with anti-aircraft guns, especially on Friday the 13th?!? Well, we had to. The second time around Captain Murphy, our bombardier, saw the clouds open just enough to use his bombsight and drop his bombs on the primary target with a direct hit. The flak was like a swarm of angry bees all around us! We pulled out and headed home like a bat out of hell. But with all of this bad news we arrived home to some welcome good news. We found out that Lieutenant Chalmers and his crew had safely bailed out of their crippled bomber over Yugoslavia. They greeted us when we landed. What a party we had that night!!

Our mission for October 14th was the railroad yards in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia. I was assigned to the 766th Squadron to fly radar lead. Captain Prien was the pilot, Colonel Lawhon was commanding co-pilot, and Captain Murphy was the bombardier. The weather was fairly cloudy that day, and to make matters worse, my radar equipment was not working properly. We got lucky as we approached the target for the weather cleared enough for Captain Murphy to use his bombsight. The flak was light, no fighters were encountered, and our results were good. We returned to the base and were treated to steak and beer for dinner. All in all, a good day!

At the end of October we had a "milk run" mission over Milan, Italy. This meant no flak and no fighters. In fact, conditions were so perfect that no radar was used. We successfully completed the mission and returned to base unscathed. This was a nice change of pace.

On November 1st, we were briefed, at 5:00 AM as usual, for a target in the center of Vienna. Just hearing the name Vienna was enough to make us sweat, let alone having to fly to the center of the city. The Germans must have had literally hundreds of anti-aircraft guns surrounding the city. I was really worried this time and had an unsettling premonition that something was going to happen on this mission. I flew this mission as Lead Radar Navigator - Bombardier for the 461st Bomb Group. Captain Prien was the pilot, Colonel Lawhon was commanding co-pilot, and Captain Murphy was the bombardier in our ship, Number 50. We took off in very bad weather

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but still managed to assemble our formation. Fifty miles from the target the weather worsened. The other lead group, the 451st, veered off to an alternate target. Colonel Lawhon did not like the idea of flying over this target in this weather alone. So we changed course and headed for a secondary target, Graz. All the while engine number 3 was acting up and we were all nervously eyeing our parachutes. During the bomb run the real excitement started. Even though we had a good formation for the bomb run, we used radar because the target was 100% socked in by clouds. To make matters worse, the sky started raining flak. The Germans were using radar too, to locate us, and they were doing one hell of a good job at that. Halfway through the bomb run, our airplane was really getting bounced around and flak was ripping through our fuselage. A large chunk of flak tore through the tail assembly of the ship, another hit and broke the leg of our waist gunner. It even knocked out my radar set! At that point, with the bomb bay doors wide open, we yelled "bombs away", and the Commander ordered us to "get the hell out of there". We used every evasive move we knew once the bomb bay doors closed to avoid that curtain of flak trying to locate us. Our #3 engine finally gave out, and we just managed to get back to base, albeit with a ship full of holes and a badly injured waist gunner. As soon as we landed, an ambulance rushed the injured gunner to the base hospital. Shortly thereafter, another B-24 landed with no brakes, the brake linings having been destroyed by flak. Thinking quickly, the crew tied some parachutes to the rear of the plane and succeeded in bringing the plane to a halt. Another ambulance rushed the pilot of that plane to the hospital with a serious leg injury from the flak. This was one mission we were all glad was over and would not soon forget. I remember someone saying, "Hey, Kelly! I think the war is getting serious!"

It was November 3rd, and we were ordered to fly a special "radar" mission to a target called the "Herman Goering Benzal Plant" in Klagenfurt, Austria. Captain Johnson was the pilot and Captain Mixson was the co-pilot. Before take-off we were advised that the entire route, from our air field to the target was solidly overcast. Therefore, the group and

squadron flights were grounded except for the radar equipped planes. The General Staff had decided to use these radar equipped planes just to harass the German factories, thereby hoping to slow down production. We took off at 4:00 AM, all alone and without fighter support. We flew over the Alps at an altitude of 20,000 feet. Considering the circumstances, all we could do was hope and pray that the weather conditions would not improve! The entire mission was handled by radar for navigation and bombing. We arrived at the target and were greeted only by some very light flak, and thankfully, no enemy fighters. We dropped our bombs and high-tailed it for home. On the way back, my radar picked up the Danube River, and the entire crew burst into a shaky rendition of "The Blue Danube Waltz". It did help break the tension though. We nicknamed this mission the "Lone Wolf Mission", all alone and in the clouds. Due to the horrible conditions, we were unable to take any pictures of our bomb results.

It was now November 5th, the mission was the Florisdorf Oil Storage Depot in Vienna. It seemed as though the Air Force was trying to eradicate Vienna from the map. If this kept up, all of Vienna will be reduced to rubble. Captain Jenkins was the pilot and Captain Trommershauser was co-pilot. The location of this target was approximately five miles outside of the city. There was heavy cloud cover and I had to use radar for the bomb run. We were the second attack unit of the group. This target was well known for plenty of flak, but for some odd reason another group on our right was taking all of the flak, while we were getting very little. We dropped our bombs with precision, encountered no enemy fighters, and returned safely to base. I never minded flying several hours on a mission. That being said, those six minutes over the target, bomb doors open, and 4,000 pounds of bombs staring you in the face, could take ten years off the life of any man!

It was November 6th and the target was Balzano, Italy. Captain Johnson was the pilot, Captain Mixon the co-pilot, and Captain Murphy was bombardier. The weather was fairly clear, so the radar was only used for navigational purposes. The target was protected by several anti-aircraft guns, and they were deadly accurate scoring several hits. A co-pilot on

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one of the bombers in our squadron was killed by the flak. Fortunately, no planes were lost.

On November 15th, I was not scheduled to fly. It turned out to be a very sad day for our squadron. On a "Lone Wolf" mission, we lost a B-24 and its crew. Lieutenant Read, a radar operator of the 765th Squadron, was on this ill-fated mission. The pilot was Lieutenant Beatty and the co-pilot was Lieutenant Berg. They were on a one plane raid to Innsbruck, Austria. Their goal was to do some damage and just cause the shutdown of the factories and military production. No one knew for sure what happened because they were out there all alone. They were listed as M.I.A. (Missing in Action). This type of mission was very dangerous, and for that reason seldom attempted.

On the 16th of November we were assigned to attack the marshaling railroad yards on Munich once again. Captain Luebke was pilot, and Colonel Lawhon was the commanding co-pilot. I was selected to again be the lead radar navigator for this group. The weather this time of year was usually bad and today was no exception. There was solid cloud cover all the way to the target, strictly a radar bombing mission. I was working with Captain Murphy, our bombardier, giving him the readings from my set in case the weather cleared and he could take over. All of a sudden, very early on the bomb run, with bomb bay doors open, Captain Murphy shouts out "bombs away". The bombs were being dropped prematurely! The nose navigator was putting on his flak vest and accidentally hit his toggle switches and released the bombs. A lucky German farmer's fields, courtesy of the American Air Force, received a free plowing - using about 100,000 pounds of dynamite. We closed our bomb bay doors and turned for home, avoiding the anti-aircraft fire ahead. Colonel Lawhon was understandably furious. He ordered an investigation which resulted in all bomb release toggle switches being removed from the nose sections of all B-24's.

On November 17th, our mission was the Blechhammer Oil Refineries in Germany. Captain Garrett was pilot, Colonel Lawhon was commanding co-pilot, and Captain Murphy was bombardier. Captain Toth was the navigator and I was the Lead Radar Opera-

tor. During the briefing we learned that the target probably would have at least 85% cloud cover. Once we passed the Alps, we climbed to 24,000 feet to get above the bad weather so radar was used for the entire mission. I made certain to avoid all known flak areas along the way, getting my bearings from cities enroute and passing this information along to the navigator and Commander of the group. We arrived at the initial point, 33 miles away, and began our bomb run. I had difficulty picking up the target with my radar set. To further complicate matters, my rate control on my instrument panel was running a little too fast. Once this mechanism is entered into my radar equipment, the bomb rack mechanism carrying the bombs was set in motion. I was reasonably sure that I missed the center of the target, and with 28 bombers in the group following my lead, most of our 100,000 pound payload of dynamite landed off target. After that long ride at 35 degrees below zero, and that big fat target, to have only 20% of the target damaged was disappointing. I felt like I did not do a very good job. Back at the base, I was called onto the carpet in the Colonel's office. "Kelly, get on the ball and do a better job on these targets!" Thank goodness no-one was hurt.

Late November flying conditions were bad and we had a lot of time on our hands. My buddies and I flew over to the Isle of Capri, a famous tourist spot, for a week of rest and relaxation.

On December 2nd we returned to the Blechhammer Oil Refineries. Captain Johnson was the pilot, Captain Baker was commanding co-pilot, and Captain Iconis was the bombardier. My radar set became inoperative about 30 minutes before target time so we put our deputy radar lead into position. On the bomb run the lead radar spotted the refineries and had the squadron drop their bombs on the target with good results this time. As we peeled off from the target the flak was very heavy. Several of our airships sustained damage. Captain Baker took a piece of flak in his chest, but his flak vest saved him. We landed safely at our base but our ship had many holes from the flak.

We were roused at 3:00 AM on December 7th to the news that we were to fly a lone wolf mission due to

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the bad weather conditions. I accompanied Captain Louches and his crew because we were to use a radar equipped plane. Everything seemed to go wrong on this mission. My flux gate compass was erratic. The top gunnery hatch was loose and the cold air was pouring in. I was surprised we even made it off the ground. We got as far as the Adriatic Sea and the gunners thought they saw some enemy fighters in the distance. However, due to engine trouble, we were forced to return to our base. The radar was a new instrument for navigation and bombing purposes, and as such there were few people that knew how to diagnose the problems and repair them. Our radar mechanics were trained by British radar technicians and did the best they could to repair the equipment. Anyhow, this mission was scrubbed and no mission credit was given to those who participated. This was also the anniversary of the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor.

For the last three mornings we were briefed at 4:00 AM for a mission to the Vienna rail yards in Austria. However bad weather kept us grounded. On December 11th the weather cleared and our mission was on. Captain Johnson was the pilot, Colonel Hawes was the commanding co-pilot with Lieutenant A. Johnson as the bombardier. Flying to the target was without incident. We shortened our bomb run from 34 miles to 20 so as to bunch our group and the group ahead of us into one tight formation. The weather below us was bad so we used the radar to spot the target. The other bombers in the group watched the lead bomber and toggled their bombs when they saw the lead ship let loose. There was plenty of flak but most was wide of us. However, another group to our right was not as lucky. Four bombers were blown up by direct hits. Assuming my radar calculations were correct, and the bombs were all released at the proper time, we should have hit this target pretty heavily. As we veered off and headed for home a few Messerschmidts fired at us. It was close but they missed us. Our gunners kept them at a distance with their 50 caliber guns. Soon our P-38 fighters arrived and escorted us safely back to base. The best part of the mission was when we touched down in one piece.

On December 12th the weather was bad again. The bulk of the Air Force was grounded. Nevertheless

headquarters ordered the radar-equipped planes to fly lone wolf missions, the most dreaded kind since you were literally all alone with no support from the rest of the group. We were to attack the oil refineries at Blechhammer, Germany. This was a long, lonely ride into enemy territory, but oil was, after all, the lifeblood of any army.

We were up at 4:00 in the morning for our briefing. Lieutenant Barnes was the pilot and Lieutenant Frattone was the co-pilot. Of course, due to the weather we would have no fighter cover. Our course was charted just inside the Russian lines, and approximately 30 miles east of Budapest. At the time the Russian ground forces were fighting the Germans just outside of Budapest. The weather was solid cloud cover all the way so all the navigation and bombing was done by radar. We were running a little short of fuel so we hit an alternate target, the Morovska Ostrava oil refinery, 30 miles short of our primary target. At 23,000 feet and at a speed of 180 MPH we started our bomb run of 25 miles. We dropped our seven 500 pounders on the target and at "bombs away" headed for home. As we broke for home the clouds cleared and I could see the stars, an ominous sight. Sure enough, 60 miles from Budapest five German fighters jumped on us. One of our waist gunners spotted the enemy fighters and noticed that the lead fighter was a jet! We had heard that the Germans had recently introduced jet fighters for the first time in the war. This one was equipped with radar, the reason they found us in the heavy cloud cover. They came in one at a time with guns blazing, aiming for the belly of our B-24, then peeled up and to the right. They shot 20mm guns as well as their 50 caliber canons. One of our waist gunners was hit in the arm and the leg. The other waist gunner was busy shooting at the ME-109 enemy fighters. When the attack commenced, Lieutenant Barnes dove straight for the heavy cloud cover. Nonetheless, our ship was full of holes and one of the gas lines had a slight leak. We were lucky they missed our gas tank. The radar equipment took a slight jarring as well but thankfully continued to work properly. We hid in the cloud cover and the fighters finally gave up chase. We landed short of our base at Foggia to get our gunner to a hospital. Our gas supply was so low

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that we left our bomber at the base and returned home to Cerignola in an army truck. We wanted to be back at our home base for Christmas.

The mission for December 18th was the oil refineries at Blechhammer again. Captain Johnson was the pilot, Colonel Lawhon was the co-pilot and group commander, Captain Murphy was the bombardier and Captain Toth was the navigator. This was one of our tougher targets, and an awful long ride just to get there. Once there, plenty of anti-aircraft fire was waiting to greet you. Our group had bombed this target yesterday. They had bombed the south target while I had the day off. Today we were to bomb the north part of the refineries. The group on yesterday's run encountered several ME-109's and as a result we lost eleven B-24's and their crews. Today we had support from our P-38 fighters and the German fighters did not challenge us. The cloud cover below us was heavy so I took over the navigation and bombed the target by radar. The figures on my radar set seemed in order, and the bomb run seemed to be on line. As such, I believe we probably had excellent results. As our bombs were released we closed the bomb bay doors and high tailed it out of there. The flak was heavy and coming too close! Two B-24's in our group were hit and downed. Our gunners spotted several parachutes that had opened and we prayed that these fellows would land safely. Captain Toth received a slight wound from the flak.

Back at the base we learned that Lieutenant Ford and his crew were one of the unlucky ones from yesterday's mission. His plane was hit by enemy fighters but he managed to ditch the plane near the Island Vis, just off the coast of Yugoslavia. Three men did not get out and he was one of them. Fortunately, the rest of the crew survived.

On December 27th our mission was Venzone Viaduct in northern Italy. For a change, this was a real soft mission. Captain Johnson was the pilot and Captain Roberts the co-pilot. We were carrying six 1,000 pounders - very heavy stuff. We had 32 bombers in the group and the bombardier did a very good job on this viaduct. We encountered no flak or fighters. The job being well done, we returned to base.

December 29th and our mission was rolling stock in Passau, Germany, the marshalling railroad yards. The pilot was Lieutenant Welton, the co-pilot and group leader was Captain Grey, and Lieutenant Sullivan was the bombardier. I was assigned to lead in the second attack group. The first attack group was led by Colonel Hardy, but it seemed that a few things got messed up. We reached the primary target but it was not visible by the bombardier. Our group leader ordered our second attack unit to fly down to northern Italy. We bombed the locomotive works at Castelfranco Veneto, our secondary target. It was a visual bombing done by Lieutenant Sullivan, the bombardier. We achieved some excellent results, so it was another job well done. Our return to the base was uneventful.

On January 5, 1945, at 5:00 AM, we were briefed to fly to Zagreb, Yugoslavia. The target there was the main marshalling railroad yards. The pilot was Captain Johnson, the co-pilot was Captain Trommershauser, and the bombardier was Lieutenant Johnson. We arrived at the target at 23,000 feet and to our dismay found the target had 90% cloud coverage. In this part of central Europe, especially Germany and Austria, there are only five to eight good days a month of clear weather during the winter for combat formation flying. We were supposed to use the Norden bombsight on this target. Because there was no flak or fighters in the area, we made three passes hoping for a break in the weather. On each pass I was using my radar to spot the target for the bombardier, but the clouds never cleared. On the fourth run I told the pilot and the bombardier that I would take over because I had a good "fix" on the target. We managed to drop our bombs on the assigned target at long last.

We were assigned a mission in Linz, Austria on January 20th. The target was the huge marshalling railroad yards. Our pilot was Captain Johnson, the commanding co-pilot was Major Roberts, the bombardier was Lieutenant Johnson, and the navigator was Captain Toth. Intelligence had informed us that the railroad lines had been repaired and the Germans were again using these lines to transport troops, ammunition and other supplies. The weather had kept the Air Force down for several days. The American

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Air Force was trained to fly a tight formation for good bombing results and for protection from enemy fighters. Without good weather this was not possible. Even though I had a head cold and a temperature of 102, which I did not report, I flew in the lead radar ship. I used my radar to navigate the entire route to the initial point (IP) of the bomb run, and as luck would have it the target was very clear. My radar instrument was right on line with the target and the bombardier was receiving my readings and had no problem in taking over. On the bomb run, usually around 30 miles in total and with the bomb bay doors open, the flak was very heavy and coming very close. In fact some of the flak was scratching the surface of our plane - too close!! Every burst seemed to be shaking our ship and this run seemed like an eternity. Finally the bombardier shouted "bombs away" and all of the bombs from our group dropped at the same time. The pilot gave the order to close the bomb bay doors and "get the hell out of here". To lessen the possibility of being hit by flak we zig-zagged off and away from the target. Our ship and several others in our formation of 28 bombers took several hits from the flak. Two planes from our squadron were hit and went down but we did see some lucky crew members going down with their chutes open. This was what was known as a "hot raid", due to the heavy flak in the area. The temperature at 23,000 feet was 50 degrees below zero and a few hits from the flak took out the electrical lines that controlled our heated suits. Boy, did it get cold!!

For ten days the extreme weather had totally grounded the Fifteenth Air Force. Finally on January 31st the weather cleared and we were assigned to bomb the Moosbierbaum Oil Refineries in Austria, 20 miles west of Vienna. Captain Johnson was our pilot, the group leader and co-pilot was Major Baker, and the bombardier was Lieutenant Johnson. I was flying lead radar the entire mission. There was complete cloud cover so we used radar to bomb the target. My equipment was working perfectly, and when the bombs were dropped. I was certain I had hit that "big fat target". We quickly peeled away to the left because there was heavy flak coming in from the right. The deputy radar operator, flying in the bomber next to me, confirmed a good hit. We saw

no enemy fighters in the vicinity and returned safely.

As a point of information, we were not the only ones using radar. The Germans were using a radar type device to detect us up to 24,000 feet. Their anti-aircraft guns were so effective that they could reach us most of the time.

Our mission on February 7, 1945 was the Florisdorf Oil Refineries outside of Vienna. This site had the most anti-aircraft guns of any we attempted. They were desperate to protect this refinery since even their fighters were running low on fuel supplies. Our pilot was Captain Johnson, and Major Baker was the command co-pilot. The weather on this day was ideal for flying, especially clear for bombing with not a cloud in sight. The bombardier, Captain Murphy, missed the primary target but hit the ordnance (ammunition) depot right next to it and all hell broke loose. Flak blanketed us on all sides and some of our ships were hit. The 451st Bomb Group was just ahead of us bombing the same target and they caught most of the flak. Two of their ships exploded in mid-air. The German fighters, we supposed because of their limited fuel supply, did not come up to greet us. Our mission being completed, we headed for home.

We had a lot of days off at this time of year due to the bad weather. However, on February 14, 1945 we were sent to the Moosbierbaum Oil Refineries, twenty miles west of Vienna. Since this was to be Captain Johnson's last mission before returning to the States, he asked that I be his radar operator in the lead ship. Major Baker flew as Group Leader and co-pilot. Lieutenant Netzer was the navigator and Lieutenant Johnson was the bombardier. Netzer and Johnson were both on their last mission before going home. The weather at take-off was clear, but this changed quickly once we were in the air. After a few hours the clouds moved in and I had to take over the navigation by radar. As we approached the target I was using my radar equipment to line up the target for the bombardier in case the clouds broke. I passed my readings on to the bombardier and he set his bombsight in motion. If I was correct his reading should be on target. Just then the weather cleared on the bomb run and Lieutenant Johnson took over with his bombsight and automatic pilot. We really plas-

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tered this target! Although we encountered the usual amount of flak, we again saw no fighters. Once the bombs were away we headed for home. After we landed I wished Captain Johnson and his crew a safe journey home. He thanked me personally for a "job well done" in getting our ships out of the severe flak areas after our missions were completed. During the debriefing we found out that, while the Germans had plenty of fighters, they had no fuel to get them in the air. Even when we did see them they seemed to be less aggressive in their attacks, probably trying to conserve on fuel. I suppose that all of our strikes on their refineries were taking their toll.

On February 8th, Colonel Hardy called me to his office to inform me that I was being reassigned to the 461st Bomb Group as Group Radar Officer. Lieutenant Phelan took my old spot as Squadron Radar Leader. He would be flying as my deputy radar operator. The Colonel also informed me that I would be put in for promotion to Captain.

We took off on February 22nd, and flew to the Marshaling Railroad Yards in Ingolstadt, Germany, about 30 miles north of Munich. Our intelligence noted that there were very few anti-aircraft batteries at this target. As such, we planned to bomb at 15,000 feet which is very low over enemy territory. I was assigned as the Group Radar Operator. Lieutenant Vahldieck was the pilot, Colonel Lawhon was co-pilot and commander, Captain Toth was navigator, and Captain Churchill was the bombardier. I used the radar to navigate, but the weather was so severe over the primary target we had to abort. Instead we rerouted to the secondary target, the Kempton Rail Yards, about 30 miles southwest of Munich. Since the target was overcast, we used the radar to bomb. After we released our load, we climbed to 21,000 feet. This got us above the flak and above the Alps as well.

Major Baker, Group Commander, and Lieutenant Phelan, the radar operator led a group on a mission to Vienna. The target was overcast and Lieutenant Phelan overshot his initial point (IP). Suddenly, the whole formation was engulfed in "flak alley". They got pounded and a couple of ships were shot down. Major Baker, Lieutenant Phelan and the crew were

reported M.I.A., as was Lieutenant Marshall, the pilot of one of the other planes that was shot down. On a previous mission Lieutenant Marshall's plane had been disabled. That time he managed to get to Yugoslavia, and with the help of Marshall Tito, was rescued and returned safely to base.

There was no mission on February 25th, but it was certainly a memorable day for me, and one of my proudest moments as a radar officer. I was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (D.F.C.). The entire group was in formation and in full dress. I earned the D.F.C. for a mission on December 18, 1944 to the Blechhammer North Oil Refineries in Germany. While leading the group in, we had remarkable results on our bomb run. Colonel Lawhon presented the award.

Our mission on February 28th was the rail yards at Ora in northern Italy. Major Roberts was our Command Pilot, Captain Toth was navigator, and Captain White was the bombardier. The mission was set to use the bombsight for the bomb run, and my radar for navigation only. Ora had quite an array of anti-aircraft guns. After "bombs away" they really laid into us. There was so much flak and so many close blasts that our ship was getting bounced around wildly. The good news is that we made it back and the photos showed that we really laid waste to that target.

It was now March 1945 and it seemed that we were not flying nearly as many combat missions. The scuttlebutt was that the war might be winding down. The Germans were getting bombarded from all sides, especially by the American Air Force. Their fuel depots were being methodically destroyed and their supply routes were being cut off one by one.

In late March we received some good news. Major Baker, Lieutenant Phelan and their crew, who had been listed as M.I.A., miraculously returned safe and sound. They were fortunate to land behind the Russian lines. They knew that they were lucky to be alive. While with the Russians, they got a tour of Bucharest, Romania.

After five weeks of inactivity and boredom, we finally flew another mission on April 6, 1945. I was

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assigned to fly with the 2nd Attack Group to a target in Brescia, in northern Italy. We were to bomb an ammunition plant. The pilot and co-pilot were Lieutenants Whalen and Clay, the bombardier was Lieutenant Marchbank. This turned out to be a pretty routine mission and very little radar operation was necessary. The weather was clear for flying and the target was also clear for our bomb run. After "bombs away" I looked through the bomb bay doors and saw our payload score a direct hit on the plant. Thankfully there was very little flak but I wore my flak vest every time regardless.

Colonel Lawhon had completed 36 missions and on April 14 was transferred to Wing Headquarters. Once there he was assigned to support the 8th Army in the landing in southern France. This led to other changes in the 461st Bomb Group. Colonel Rogers was named as our new Commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Gregory became our new Deputy Commander.

At 5:00 A.M. on the morning of April 26th, we were briefed on our mission for the day. We were going after the rail yards at Linz, Austria. Colonel Rogers was the Command Pilot for the entire group. The weather was soupy so we used radar for the entire mission including the bombing. Nevertheless we put the rail yards out of action, once again cutting the Germans' vital supply lines. There was some flak but very few enemy fighters. Our P-38's and P-51's kept them at bay and after "bombs away" we peeled off and headed for home.

It was now April 30, 1945. We all felt that the war was coming to an end, so I asked Colonel Rogers for permission to visit my relatives in Greece. The reports from H.Q. gave us the impression that it might be any day. Major Scott made out the papers and sent them to Bari, Headquarters for the Fifteenth Air Force. Further approvals were required there and lots of red tape had to be overcome.

In early May we had several stand-downs in a row and were told that peace terms were in the works. What a relief it would be not to have to run the gauntlet of enemy flak and fighters ever again!

May 7, 1945 - BIG DAY! Today was the end of the

war in Europe. Thank God I'm alive and well. However, there is still the war against the Japanese. More good news arrived today. I was notified that my trip to Greece had been approved and I was granted a ten day leave. If only my promotion would come through. It would make me so proud to visit home as a Captain. I was told that it looked like it might come through. I finished my tour of duty in Europe with 34 missions to my credit.

### MISSION OF MERCY

As soon as the armistice with Germany was declared, before the ink even dried, the Fifteenth Air Force was assigned to carry out the "Missions of Mercy". On May 10th, we flew over Spittal, Austria and dropped food and medical supplies to the American prisoners of war who had been held there. I was with the lead crew along with Colonel Gregory, Captain Toth, and Lieutenant Goodfriend. It was a great feeling flying low over enemy territory and knowing that the guns on the ground had been silenced forever! There were many P.O.W. camps in Austria holding American prisoners and we knew that they were in dire need of food and medical supplies. The American Air Force had the responsibility to keep our American soldiers in good health until the regular American Army ground forces could reach them. As we dropped our supplies by parachute, it was a great feeling to see the soldiers running around the camp and picking up the packages. We were low enough that we could see the soldiers waving to us. When we emptied our precious cargo, Colonel Gregory gave them a little "show" by buzzing their barracks almost at roof top level. As a point of interest, the first time we flew over the town of Spittal to drop supplies, the people of the town ran for cover thinking that we had come to bomb the town. Once they saw the parachutes and realized that we were dropping supplies and not ordnance, they knew that we were friendly and came out of their homes and waved to us. This was a very uplifting sight and a great feeling knowing that we were helping our guys.

A few days later, some of us from Headquarters flew up to the Italian Riviera and took in all the sights. While at the Riviera, we bought some German P-38's and Lugers, great souvenirs! After a pleasant after-

*(Continued on page 23)*

**461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group**  
***Annual Reunion***  
**September 23-26, 2010**

**ITINERARY**

**Thursday, September 23rd**

Arrival and check in day. The registration table and Hospitality Suite will be open all day. We will hold our annual business meeting at 7 PM. In a historic move for the Association, we will install new officers that will be made up entirely of “kids” of the 461<sup>st</sup> veterans who are happy to serve and keep the Association running for the veterans and their families.

**Friday, September 24th**

We will visit the world renowned Chicago Field Museum located on beautiful Lakeshore Drive in downtown Chicago for a guided tour and box lunch. We will leave the hotel at 9 AM. After the museum we will also make a stop at the Sears (now Willis) Tower for a trip to the top to view Chicago from 1350 feet where one can enjoy a view of up to fifty miles and four states. We will return to the hotel by about 3:30 PM. Friday evening will be the traditional Squadron Dinner with a Pasta buffet. Social hour begins at 6 PM with dinner at 7.

**Saturday, September 25th**

We will begin the day with a trip to the Chicago Yacht Club, leaving the hotel at 8:45 AM. We are going to leave from the Chicago Yacht Club aboard the Anita Dee for a ride out around the break-wall along side Navy Pier then through the locks to the Chicago River where we will start the architectural tour of the Downtown area where we'll see buildings from the early 1900's designed by Daniel Burnham, Marina City, the Chicago Opera house and Sears tower to name just a few. It has been described as “The Official Chicago Architecture Foundation River Cruise.” Expert volunteer tour guides - called docents - interpret more than 50 buildings along the Chicago River, revealing how the city grew from a small back-country outpost into one of the world's most important cross-roads in less than 100 years. We'll have lunch at the Chicago Yacht club, whose dining room offers a panoramic view of Lake Michigan before returning to the hotel. This tour promises to be one you'll remember for a very long time! We will return to the hotel at about 3 PM. Saturday evening will feature our Group Banquet with social hour beginning at 6 PM and dinner served at 7.

**Sunday, September 26th**

We will have our traditional Memorial Breakfast beginning at 8:30 AM following which will sadly be the conclusion of our gathering this year.

# ***461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group-Reunion 2010***

## ***HOTEL INFORMATION***

**DATE:** September 23-26, 2010

**LOCATION:** **Holiday Inn Chicago OakBrook**  
17 West 350 22nd Street,  
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

**ROOM RATES:** \$69.00 per room, per night plus tax  
This rate will be good for three days prior to  
and three days after the reunion.

**RESERVATIONS:** (630) 833-3600  
Tell them you are with the 461st Bomb Group,  
booking code **FBG**.  
Major credit card required for guarantee.

**PARKING:** Free

**Free hotel shuttle to and from O'Hare and Midway Airports**

Small pets are welcome.

# 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group Reunion

September 23<sup>rd</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Chicago, Illinois



Please complete and return this form by September 1, 2010. Cancellations CAN be made with a full refund if you find later that you cannot attend so please, get this form in soon. Late registrations, however, will be accepted.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spouse \_\_\_\_\_ Family/Guest Names \_\_\_\_\_

(Note: Please enter names as you would like them to appear on the name tags)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$10.00 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons

September 24th

Field Museum, Lunch (at Field Museum) and Sears Tower  
 \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$60.00 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons ages 3-11

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$60.00 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons ages 12-17

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$62.50 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons ages 18-64

\_\_\_\_\_ @ \$60.00 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons ages 65+

Squadron Dinner – Pasta Buffet  
 \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$16.00 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons

September 25th

Lunch at Chicago Yacht Club, Lake Michigan/Chicago River Architectural Cruise  
 \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$77.50 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons

Group Banquet  
 Char-broiled Salmon \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$49.75 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons

London Broil \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$49.75 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons

Stuffed Chicken Breast \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$49.75 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons

September 26th

Memorial Breakfast  
 Deluxe Continental Breakfast  
 \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$19.50 per person Subtotal \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 # of persons

EMERGENCY CONTACT:

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

GRAND TOTAL: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS REGISTRATION FORM AND MAIL ALONG WITH YOUR CHECK TO:  
 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group, Attn: Dave Blake, 648 Lakewood Road, Bonner Springs, KS 66012-1804

## **A Note from the Reunion Committee Chairman**

Planning for our 2010 reunion is complete. Hotel information and the registration form are printed on pages 18 and 19. September will be here before you know it so PLEASE send in your registration forms as soon as possible. Should you find out later that you cannot attend for whatever reason, you will receive a full refund. Various tickets must be purchased in advance and the charter bus has to be paid for in advance, so we need to know how many to plan for. Early registration makes planning much, much easier for the reunion committee.

On Thursday evening, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, we will hold our annual business meeting. In a historic move for the Association, we will install new officers that will be made up entirely of "kids" of the 461<sup>st</sup> veterans who are happy to serve and keep the Association running for the veterans and their families.

On Friday, the 24<sup>th</sup> we will visit the world renowned Chicago Field Museum located on beautiful Lakeshore Drive in downtown Chicago for a guided tour and box lunch. After the museum we will also make a stop at the Sears (now Willis) Tower for a trip to the top to view Chicago from 1350 feet where one can enjoy a view of up to fifty miles and four states.

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Saturday evening will feature our Group Banquet and Sunday morning the Memorial breakfast will conclude this year's reunion.

I look forward to seeing you there; you won't want to miss this one!

On behalf of the Reunion Committee,

Dave Blake

### **HELP WANTED**

As a part of the last two reunions we have had a member of our group speak briefly during the Sunday morning Memorial Breakfast and everyone has really enjoyed that. Your reunion committee is searching for a 461<sup>st</sup> veteran who would be willing to give a short (ten minutes or so) talk about his time with the 461<sup>st</sup>. You could talk about ground or air memories or about the people assigned to the group.

If you would be willing to help out with this please contact Dave Blake either by email at [reunion@461st.org](mailto:reunion@461st.org) or by phone 913-523-4044 or by mail at 648 Lakewood Rd., Bonner Springs, KS 66012-1804.

## **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 [dstyves@pmn.com](mailto:dstyves@pmn.com).

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

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

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 17)*

noon we returned to our home base in Cerignola.

The next morning we received official orders that we were to return to the States. Crews of each bomber were assigned to fly their ships back home. I was assigned to fly with my radar ship No. 10 with some of the headquarters personnel including Major Rider, Captain Toth and Lieutenant Goodfriend.

There was no official date to return home so a few of us grabbed a ride on a B-24 and went to the French Riviera. Since there was no official time frame for our return, we decided to have a nice long stay, unless we were notified by headquarters to return to base. We stayed at a beautiful hotel and took in all the sights we could. We went sunbathing at the beach and boat riding. However, we always managed to end our days at a nice bar, sipping scotch and soda, and admiring all the lovely young French girls — not a bad way to end a war! Early one morning a letter was waiting for me at the hotel's desk informing me that my trip to Greece had been approved and to return to Group Headquarters. I hopped on the next B-24 and returned to my home base. The next morning, before I left, I went to all my buddies and collected all the clothing they could spare, shoes, shirts, jackets, whatever. Through their generosity I managed to fill two army duffel bags with clothes which I intended to bring to my relatives in Greece. I received my official orders to fly from Bari, Italy to Athens in a British bomber. The Royal Air Force had control of all of the airways surrounding Greece at that time.

On May 23, 1945 I finally took off for Athens with my two over-stuffed duffels filled with GI clothing for my relatives who lived in Tripolis, the southern part of Greece. I was flying in a R.A.F. C-47 (American built). It was hard to imagine that just six years ago I was attending the University of Athens. Now here I was returning under very different circumstances.

I was assigned a room in a very famous four-star hotel - The Grand Bretagne. It was very obvious that the British Army was in control of the country for there were patrols everywhere. However, it was still quite a treat to sit down at a luxurious hotel and have

a lazy breakfast of fresh eggs, biscuits and tea. Later that morning I arranged to ride on a British truck that was headed for Tripolis. I gathered up my duffel bags, jumped on the truck and off we went to visit my parents' home town. From Tripolis, I hitched a ride in a wagon pulled by a mule (the usual mode of transportation at the time) which was headed to the small village of Thana (approximately 2 kilometers). When I arrived in Thana all of my relatives came out to greet me. It was a day I will never forget. This was not the first time I had met my relatives. They remembered me from six years earlier when I was attending Athens University. I distributed all of the clothing I had brought and they were most appreciative. Whatever clothing they owned was on their backs, and many of the children did not even have shoes! During the German occupation they had lost all of their livestock, and their living conditions were almost beyond belief. I also did what I could with the few dollars I managed to scrape up. Even in the best of times this was still primitive farm country. There was no electricity, no running water, no indoor toilets. Seeing the deplorable living conditions in the wake of the Germans certainly made my heart heavy. However, it is a tribute to the Greek people to see how they endured the war under this cruel occupation.

I made my way back to the hotel in Athens. The R.A.F. was kind enough to give me passage back to my Army base back in Italy. As soon as my feet hit the ground, one of my buddies rushed up and happily shouted the words I had been dying to hear, "Kelly, we're leaving for the States tomorrow!" You never saw anyone pack so fast!

The next morning, May 30, 1945, I gathered my records, my orders, and my few belongings and we began our long awaited journey home. We took off in our B-24 and headed for Gioia, the first leg in our trip back to the States. Our crew consisted of Major Rider, Captain Toth, Captain Goodfriend, and Lieutenant Carlisle and his crew of six enlisted men.

A few days later we flew out of Gioia for Marrakech, Morocco. Surprisingly, we found the base there to

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be in very good condition. The next morning we left Marrakech and flew to Dakar, in West Africa. The weather at this base was hot as blazes!! Fortunately we got to spend the night in officers' quarters with fairly good air conditioning. The next day we went swimming in the ocean and spent the rest of the day touring some very primitive native villages.

At 7:00 the next morning we left Dakar with a full tank of gas and headed for Natal, in Brazil. During our flight across the Atlantic we noticed that the U.S. Navy had ships stationed at sea at regular intervals. This was a precaution in case any of our planes encountered mechanical problems during this long crossing of 1,900 miles.

After spending the night at the air base in Natal, we took off for our next destination, Atkinson Field. Atkinson Field was located approximately twenty miles outside of Georgetown, British Guinea. We were going to stay the night so we visited the local Officer's Club. The scotch and sodas were only thirty cents each so, needless to say, we treated ourselves to quite a few!

The next morning we headed for Puerto Rico. As soon as we arrived at the base we headed for the P.X. and had our first malted milk shakes and ice cream sundaes in over a year. We had almost forgotten how good they tasted.

On June 9, 1945 we left Puerto Rico and finally landed at Hunter Field in Savannah, Georgia - good, old U.S. soil at last!! Our trip from Italy to the United States was pleasant and uneventful but with lots of good times. Nonetheless, nothing but nothing could beat being back home. My first call was to my parents to let them know I was back in the States, safe and sound. Then, I called Georgiana, my intended.

From Hunter Field we flew on to Charleston, South Carolina. That was the end of our B-24 combat flying!! After dinner, we boarded a train for Fort Dix, New Jersey. We got in quite late so I called my family and asked them to pick me up the next morning and spent the night at the base. My brother George brought Georgiana with him and we had a wonderful reunion. When I arrived home, there were lots of

hugs, kisses and tears, all thanking God that I had arrived home safely.

On July 14, 1945 my orders sent me to Drew Air Force Base in Florida. From there, I went on to Sioux Falls Air Force Base in South Dakota. One week later I was again shipped out to Peterson Air Force Base in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Whoever said the Air Force was cheap? They flew me on an all expenses paid trip all over the country!

At Peterson Air Force Base we received further radar navigational training. We worked with the new B-29 bomber which was intended for use in the war going on against Japan. The training seemed to me to be on the light side, however, and rumors abounded that the war against Japan was coming to an end.

Then it all happened, the events that would change the world forever!! On August 6, 1945 the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, Japan and on Nagasaki three days later. The carnage was unbelievable as 100,000 Japanese died in these two cities, and many thousands more were injured. World War II was over!

It took the Army until October 15, 1945 to finally give me my orders for discharge. I returned to my home in Asbury Park by way of Andrews Air Force and Fort Dix.

Allied Air Power was the chief factor in Germany's defeat. Our B-24 bombers destroyed their oil industry and severely cut their vital supply lines.

Hundreds of German fighter planes were found intact at wars end. But due to the shortage of fuel, they couldn't get these fighters off the ground.

**HEADQUARTERS  
Public Relations Office  
Peterson Field  
Colorado Springs, Colorado**

A student at Columbia University prior to his entrance into the military service on July 15, 1942 1st Lt. John Panagiotopoulos served with the Army Air Forces as a Radar-Navigator Bombardier on B-24 in the Mediterranean theater for 12 months. He has been awarded the following awards:

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*(Continued from page 24)*

- The Distinguished Flying Cross
- The Presidential Unit Citation
- The Air Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters
- The Theater Ribbon with Eight Battle Stars

Upon his separation from the service he plans on going back to complete his education.

### **THE AUTOMATIC PILOT**

The automatic pilot is a device used by the pilot of an aircraft to fly without the use of manual operation as long as the aircraft is on a steady and straight course. But in combat, the bombardier and the radar-navigator can also use the automatic pilot, specifically on a bomb run to the target.

During a bomb run, with the bomb bay doors open and the Norden bombsight on the target, the bombardier will take over the group formation of B-24s with the automatic pilot. If there is a correction to a degree, either left or right, the bombardier will make that adjustment. Once the bombs are away and headed to the target, the pilot resumes control of the aircraft and guides it out of danger.

On the other hand, if the target is completely cloud covered and the bombardier cannot see the target, then the radar-navigator takes over the group lead with the automatic pilot based on his readings. Once the bombs are dropped, the pilot once again takes control of the aircraft.

### **RADAR - THE MIRACULOUS "MICKEY"**

Radar operates on radio principles only on a much higher frequency. Radar is used for the detection of non-visible objects, ranging the distance from the radar antenna to a detected object, and measured by electronic means.

Early in the war the British developed equipment to be used for navigation and bombing under non-visual weather conditions. This equipment was taken to the labs at M.I.T. and improved. It was first used by the Eighth Air Force in England in November of 1943, and later used in the spring of 1944 in Italy. I was

one of the early radar operators to use this equipment in Italy with the Fifteenth Air Force. Flying at 15,000 feet above a thick cloud blanket, I could look through the radar instrument and plainly see the outline of the Italian coast below, the instrument showing the line between land and water. A well trained operator could identify many other ground landmarks such as industrial areas, rail yards, and other built up areas. This radar equipment was installed in the lead and deputy-lead bombers. It also had the nickname of "pathfinder" (Miraculous Mickey was the nickname used by the British). During the winter months in Europe, the air war was primarily a radar war. Three out of four of the bombs dropped on enemy targets were wholly, or in part, with the aid of radar.

### **HARLINGEN ARMY GUNNERY SCHOOL HARLINGEN, TEXAS**

The sole aim of the training at this gunnery school was to aid in the immense task of making America the greatest air power on earth. In the short span of 145 days, a youth, who probably never destroyed anything more significant than a greenhouse window, was expected to learn to drop a ton of the most destructive bombs ever invented onto a space no larger than a baseball diamond from 20,000 feet in the air. A boy who had probably never squeezed a trigger before in 45 days learns how to bring down an enemy fighter with a .50 caliber aerial machine gun.

The U.S. Government, through this program, provided the best American power, trained in the best American planes, and in the best American schools. This gunnery school turned out the best aerial gunners for the best Air Force in the entire world.

### **A SHORT STORY OF THE B-24J as used by the Fifteenth A.A.F. stationed in Bari, Italy**

From the early model that was designed in 1939 to the war's end in 1945, the B-24 was changed several times, each new model better than the one before. There have been several books written that explain in detail the engineering make-up of the various B-24

*(Continued on page 26)*

*(Continued from page 25)*

models.

The combat crew of a B-24 consisted of ten men -

Four officers - pilot, co-pilot, navigator and bombardier

Six enlisted men - all trained gunners to operate the .50 caliber machine guns. Out of these six men, one each is also trained as a radio operator, mechanic, and an engineer.

\* \*The lead and deputy-lead B-24s carried a fifth officer to operate the radar equipment.

Each B-24 is armed with ten .50 caliber machine guns. There were a nose gunner, tail gunner, top turret gunner, and ball turret gunner. Each of these handled two .50 caliber machine guns. There were also two waist gunners with one .50 caliber gun each.

The bomb load was dependent on the fuel load based on the total weight of the aircraft. At maximum fuel load, for long missions, each B-24 could carry nine 500 pound bombs, average speed 185 MPH.

At an altitude of 23,000 feet, the temperature in the winter months is about 40 degrees below zero. The Air Force, therefore, equipped us with heated overalls. We were also issued oxygen masks and each location in the aircraft had its own oxygen tank. Each man was equipped with a parachute attached to his body harness. We all carried a .45 caliber pistol.

The Consolidated Liberator Company built a total of 18,482 B-24s, 6,678 of which were B-24Js. Each B-24 had four engines, powered by 1,200 HP Pratt & Whitney Twin Wasps. The only thing missing was a stewardess on board to serve our meals!

### ONE OF THE LUCKY ONES!

Yes, I was one of the lucky airmen to return home safely after forty months with the U.S. Armed Forces in the Second World War. This story was taken from daily notes I made in my diary. I made many close friends with the men of the 461st Bomb Group. Many of them were shot down, many sadly listed as M.I.A. A lucky few were able to parachute to safety.

While writing this diary, I tried to keep my notes on my combat missions on a professional basis. We were trained by the Army to be professionals - to take orders, to follow them to the best of our ability and, above all, to get the job done.

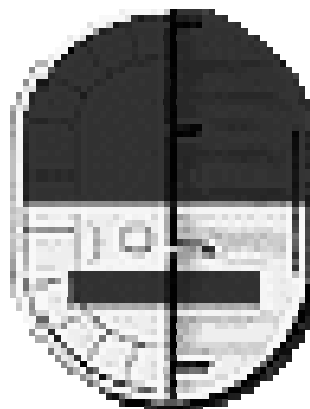
Every war had its great sadness, and there are too many stories written about our American troops killed in any war. I was just happy to come home to my family from my tour of duty and resume my interrupted life. I thank God every day that I was allowed to do so!

In retrospect, this story has a happy ending, but also a sad one. I returned from the war to civilian life and married Georgiana on January 6, 1946. Our happy day was celebrated at the Greek Orthodox Cathedral on East 74th in New York City.

We were blessed with two wonderful children, Nicholas and Joanne. My daughter is now happily married with two beautiful daughters, Kelly and Gina. My son is a very successful restaurant owner. Tom, my son-in-law is the editor of this book.

Sadly, after thirty-nine years of a very happy marriage, my wife succumbed to cancer in 1985.

This book is dedicated to the loving memory of my wife Georgiana.



*(Continued from page 1)*

to his superiors.

The Germans were aware of our security measures and tried to thwart them as much as possible. It was said that there were men in the Stalag who could make a radio out of a piece of glass, a spool of thread and a Klim can that would receive BBC and that was not too far from truth. The Goons pulled barracks inspections regularly and also unexpected ones at odd and inopportune times during which they turned everything upside down and even found contraband once in a while. I heard that we never had less than twenty-five operating radios at any time and therefore knew more than the guards about how things were going with the war.

The local German radio blared for about three daylight hours per day and I even got so I could understand a little of the news broadcasts since enough of the words like names and places were the same as English. One 'strange seeming' truth was that the German news reports were much more accurate when the Germans were losing and BBC was more accurate when the Germans were winning. The German guards and ferrets often passed on choice news items, which they wanted us to know that their radio didn't broadcast.

I heard and believe that no one ever escaped from Stalag Luft I via tunneling. That did not keep us from trying but in our compound as I've said our Blocks were about 4 feet off the ground on wooden piles so that there was little way to hide a tunnel entrance and the ferrets kept a careful eye on that area during their constant patrols. We could hear the ferrets nightly, crawling around under the floors, looking and listening.

The greatest deterrent to tunneling however was the terrain and soil, which was very flat and sandy. The water table was not more than six feet below the surface and we had no way to overcome that. The guards only had to listen for our tunneling noises so close to the surface to detect the activity even if the top of the tunnel didn't cave in which they frequently did. The soil was so sandy that even with almost solid shoring the sand kept seeping down and filling

the tunnel and exposing subsidence evidence on the surface. I was never personally involved with any tunneling except to act as lookout and sometimes dispose of diggings by dropping it around the compound from my pockets as we walked and played.

In spite of the lack of success in tunneling the Kriegies never gave up trying and by the time the war was over I only had 1/3 of my bed slats since the rest had been confiscated for shoring. Our block was so located that it was never considered as a base point for a tunnel.

About October 1944 the senior officers who had contact and the means to do so received directions from Allied Command to cease tunneling since, if successful, it would take longer to get back into Allied hands than they thought the war was going to last and was therefore not worth the risk involved. It was estimated that if one were lucky enough to get out of the Stalag and avoid initial capture it would take at least six months to make one's way to the allied lines. It would also have been necessary to have good German language capability as well as to find some civilian help along the way.

This information and timing corresponded closely with the Arnheim debacle, which if successful probably would have shortened the war a great deal. There had been some earlier attempts at escapes from compounds 1 & 2 when there were more enlisted personnel and consequent work parties.

I never heard of any one escaping for more than a few hours. The most nearly successful one that I know of occurred about late September 1944, shortly after we moved into Compound 3, when a major from our compound, walked out the gate with a German laundry detail and managed by excellent planning, briefing and a lot of luck to make his way to the Barth airfield.

Reportedly he even got into the cockpit of a ME-109 and got the engine started as he had been instructed by some of our people who apparently knew how. It

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seemed however that there had been a change in the fuel selection valve that our people were unaware of so he was thwarted at that stage when he made the wrong selection and the engine died of fuel starvation.

He was nabbed and returned to the Stalag and spent two weeks in the cooler while the Germans gloated about their success in his recapture and made a lot of security changes to prevent any similar occurrences. The rest of us spent many hours standing in roll call formations which the Germans called just to be nasty to us because one of our numbers had tried to escape and nearly succeeded.

Earlier when we were in Compound 2, one of the old timers apparently lost his marbles completely and ran in broad day light to the fence and started cutting through it in spite of repeated warnings and orders from the guards as well as calls from fellow POWs to cease. One of the guards apparently lost his head too and shot and killed him. He was the only one I heard of dying in the Stalag while I was there but there may have been others.

When I first got to the Stalag our guards were very experienced and able Luftwaffe personnel. Many had seen much combat and most had been injured and were recuperating from such action. Very shortly they were replaced by Wermach troops in much worse physical condition and mostly veterans of the Russian ground front. Then about January 1945 these were sent back to combat and replaced by the Wolkstrom, which was made up of men over 50 and kids 16 or 17 years old. The old men were no problem because most of them had served in WWI and had little taste for any sort of action in this one except personal survival. However the kids were a hazard which we had to be very careful not to rile.

By the time I was shot down most of the older Germans which, we came in contact with seemed to have the feeling that the war was lost and they were just marking time and going through the necessary motions in order to get an honorable peace. One of our goons was fond of telling us that as soon as Patton got across the Rhein they were going to welcome

him and join up and all go east and exterminate the Russians. The run of the mill common Germans seemed to have a great fear of the Russians and were unable to understand how we could side with them.

There was a compound about a quarter-mile from and on the opposite side of compound 1 from us which we referred to as the Russian compound which was primarily composed of Russian women prisoners who were rumored to be very poorly treated as compared to us. I never saw any of them except from afar in heavily guarded work details.

Speaking of women, (and they were spoken of a lot, second only to food) there were none working at the camp, even in clerical duties so we never saw any except on good weather Sundays when the local beauties and some not so beautiful would walk out from town and walk outside the fences to stare at and bait the Kreigies. I think the Germans in charge encouraged it although they denied it. Some of our numbers got very frustrated.

I think that I mentioned that the compounds 1 and 2 had facilities to show movies and produce plays, which they did regularly. Compounds 3 and 4 had no such capability so the Germans occasionally allowed us to go to productions at the other compounds. The most amazing thing to me at that time in my young life was how some of our fellow POWs played female roles so well that I was unsure that they were really men.

Shortly after we were settled into Compound 3 the Germans tacked a list on the bulletin board which stipulated that those listed were to move from wherever they were billeted to the last two blocks in the compound. This caused much apprehension and consternation when it became immediately apparent from the list of names that it encompassed all of the Jewish POWs. The senior POW officers complained but to no avail since the Germans insisted they were only doing the rest of us a favor. There was no further harassment of the Jewish POWs, but I think it made all of us realize how precarious our position was and how little we could do if the hand

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that held the gun decided to exercise a whim.

I mentioned in passing that the Arnheim campaign didn't do well which didn't help morale but it did cause a large influx of over 500 new Kreigies since many of the losses were glider pilots and other officers. Up until that time only flying officer personnel populated the Stalag, but from then on we received many allied ground forces officers.

In early January we had another large influx of officers captured in the Bulge and they were in very bad physical shape since most had injuries and had been transported in open box cars with little food and almost no medical attention which most of them needed desperately. I saw many cases of frost bitten limbs which were already blackened and I would not have given any chance of recovery but I understand that in the end there was almost no loss of limbs in our contingent. I helped carry some of them on stretchers to the blocks in Compound 4.

Now I'm going to relate some interesting incidents that I observed or were told to me. One which really sounds like a Hollywood plot involved a fellow who lived in the room next door who would tell about being shot down and bailing out with bad injuries from flak in the legs over Antwerp and landed in a walled courtyard of a private mansion. It seemed that there was only one family living in the house composed of an older man and woman and their twenty-something year old daughter who he claimed was very good looking. The family found him and took him in and nursed him for the next three months or so and he became very enamored with the girl and she with him.

She as luck would have it was heavily involved with the underground so he was in the best possible hands. Looking back he could see that he should have been content to stay there and wait out the war but he had an itch to be repatriated. At any rate he and the girl with the help of the underground went via train to the southern part of France and the Pyrenees with the intent of crossing into Spain. According to what he knew and told us when he got to our block, they were in sight of the Spanish border when the Ger-

mans picked them up in an operation which made him certain that the underground had been compromised. At any rate he was taken to Paris and interrogated several times over a three-week period before being sent on to Stalag Luft I.

He was very worried about the girl and what was happening to her or had happened already. He kept remembering that the German interrogators made a big issue of whether he was married to the girl, which he unthinkingly had denied. All the time we were there he insisted that the first thing he was going to do when the war was over was go to Antwerp and find and marry his girl. True to his word the rest of us hardly knew the fences were down when according to his roommates he departed for points west.

To complete the story, the next time I saw him was at Camp Lucky Strike (more later) accompanied by the nice looking civilian doll who had saved him. He was looking for General Eisenhower who had been at the camp the day before in order to get Ike's signature on some papers allowing them to marry. He told a group of us that the girl had been imprisoned in Paris the entire time since their capture and that the only thing that had kept her alive was her claim that the two of them were married which he had denied. The Germans seemed to have a fear of executing Americans, even if in the underground.

Another interesting item concerns one of the few Negro officers to come to our Stalag. When I first saw him he looked more red than black because it looked on close examination like every blood vein in his skin was about to rupture or had ruptured. He claimed to not be too uncomfortable but really looked terrible.

It seems that he had been flying bomber cover out of our area (Italy) and tangled with a ME-109 and after being hit waited too long for one reason or another to bail out. When he finally got out he was going straight down as fast as a P-51 could go which was about 400 MPH more than terminal velocity of a human body. At any rate he pulled his ripcord and

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swung once and hit the ground. He was probably doing 500 MPH when the chute opened instead of about 120 MPH like most of us and this had caused the veins and capillaries to rupture. He was petty lucky to be alive. I still wonder if that reddish appearance ever went away.

After the Battle of the Bulge it was apparent that it was only a matter of time until the war would be over. We would open the windows after lights out and yell "Come on Joe" or "Come on Blood and Guts" just to disturb the goons who tried to find out who was doing the yelling. (I think many of the Germans were echoing the latter yell) We were very disgusted with the powers that be when it became apparent that Patton and Montgomery were waiting for the Russians to finish the thing off.

About late January we began to get the Red Cross parcels only every other week and then not at all about the first of February and the German's excuse was that there was no rolling stock to bring them from Rostock where there were over a million parcels warehoused. We offered to walk to Rostock and carry some back but got a solid turndown. At the same time the delivery of the German ration became fewer and more sporadic to the extent that we lost much weight over the last few months before we were liberated. I personally lost down to about 115 pounds from my normal of about 145. The big men suffered worse than I did.

The very worst was a period when the Germans substituted rutabagas and turnips (which seemed to have no food value at all) for potatoes. All of us were continuously hungry and this contributed to short tempers and complaints but not enough to get me off the cooking detail. I remember often swearing to myself that if I survived the situation I was going to do absolutely anything to assure that I wouldn't ever be hungry again. Relative to that I think I have actually been hungrier on some of the diets I've embraced since then and not lost as much weight.

The Germans naturally did not provide much in the line of entertainment for POWs but one day they made a bit of a to-do about an exhibition boxing dem-

onstration which was for the guards but we Kriegies could see if we wished. It turned out to be Max Schmeling, the ex-heavyweight champ, who was on a German type of USO tour. I found it interesting and at least a diversion. Schmeling had his own sparring partners so we Kriegies didn't have to supply same although some of our men purported to desire a go at him.

I don't remember if I mentioned yet but each compound had a library. Compound 1's was the most extensive since they had been there long enough to get some books from the Red Cross as well as stuff from home and books are always a popular item. Compound 2's library was composed of about 300 books. They were mostly paperback and well read. I went through quite a few in the time we were there. When we moved to Compound 3, we had only a very few books that someone had begged from the other two compounds. This grew until it finally amounted to near 200 books. It is surprising that the Germans allowed books at all and they were carefully censored.

I can't remember exactly when but at least it was very late in my stay at Stalag Luft I that I finally got my first and only parcel from home. (Examination of a letter I wrote the day after the Russians freed us indicates that I actually got the parcel after we were freed.) It consisted of some kind of cookies which arrived as crumbs, but good, some candy bars, some personal items that we really didn't need but the people at home didn't know that and about six 10" by 10" knitted woolen squares to be made into an Afghan. If I'd gotten the future parcels, which were actually shipped, they would have been most useful. After I got home and the parcels were returned to mother. She made up the afghan which didn't look so good but was very warm and durable. I still have it.

In early April 1945 as the war in Germany was rapidly winding down, we got a trainload of Red Cross parcels and the Germans issued us about three apiece so we lived high on the hog for a few days. By now it was just a matter of when things would be over so we were making all kinds of plans but it still caught some of us by surprise when about dark on 28

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April someone reported that there didn't seem to be any guards about. Most of us stayed inside until about 10 PM as our little phonograph was blaring "Don't fence me in" we heard much racket outside and went out to watch Russian tanks drive up and down the fence lines, destroying same.

After about an hour the Russians proceeded to the west and most of us went to bed till morning since it seemed we were safe and there was little we could do in the dark.

The next morning Col. Zemke and his staff issued orders that everyone was to remain in the camp until the US Air Corps came and picked us up. This was in accord with the instructions, which he had gotten from Headquarters. However he wasn't too well heeded since more than 3,000 men departed before noon that day for points west and Allied lines. The rest and I elected to stay and wait for a ride, which we regretted after about 8 days in Russian hands and no airplanes in sight.

Those of us remaining settled down to wait a couple of days for the USAF to put in it's appearance but it stretched into ten days and became about as boring as POW life. The first night Constantino (my friend and roommate came back from a foray into Barth at about 6 PM and wanted to get 40 packs of cigarettes for which he would give me some souvenirs. I gave them to him with no strings attached and accompanied him back to town. I still had plenty if I needed. He traded them to a former Luftwaffe pilot for many trinkets including a 35mm Leica and another 35mm camera of Austrian manufacture plus a clock from a JU-88 and a bunch of German medals and a Reichsmuder medal and some arm bands and other insignia which he gave me half of all except the cameras which I didn't think I wanted anyway. (Cigarettes were going for the equivalent of one US dollar each on the black market at the time)

The morning of the day after the Russian front line passed us by, a couple of our top officers went out to try to contact the Russian second echelon to see where we stood. They took my friend Boychuck along to interpret and his story was most interesting

as a study of different thinking. After making contact with some lower ranking troops who ran them at double time to their superiors who after finding that they were US POWs greeted them with open arms and promises of help.

After killing some Vodka they got down to the nitty-gritty of what they could do for us. How many women did we want? How many cattle? How many hogs? We had to do our own butchering. The fools turned down the women but I was on the butcher detail that dressed out seven head of cattle and ten hogs before some other damn fools decided that the meat was not USDA inspected and might be contaminated so wouldn't let the rest use it but we butchers gorged ourselves on the first fresh meat we'd seen in many months and the rest went to waste.

A few days later seven of us from our room took a trek around the inlet and up the other side to a town called Zingst after about a 7-mile walk. There didn't seem to be a single person in the town but I'm sure they were hiding out and watching us. In our looking around we came upon a barge tied up to a pier and were stopped by a single Russian guard who when informed by Boychuck of our credentials, wrapped his arms around and kissed each of us and invited us aboard to join him in a drink. It seemed that the Barge was loaded with Marie Bols Liquors. The cargo consisted of about equal amounts of Cherry Herring, Blackberry Brandy and Champagne. We spent about three hours swigging the Champagne before deciding it was time to go back to camp although we would not have been missed. Since it was a long walk back and we could see the camp about a mile to the east across the inlet, our host offered us a boat which, was tied up nearby and insisted we each take a case of Liquor. Made quite a boatload but we were doing very well as I remember until our oars got tangled in some nets about halfway home. It seemed that the German fishermen had left in a hurry and the nets were full of fish of some variety that was about 16 inches long and weighed about 4 pounds. We loaded the boat to near swamped condition and proceeded to the camp where we were very welcome and proceeded to have the best fish fry I ever attended complete with liquid repast.

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For the next few days I did little except watch and hope and despair that we would ever get back home. Of course there were the usual amount of rumors and all bad naturally. The Russians provided food enough but there were many in the group who would still have starved to death rather than do their own preparation. Most were still living on their saved Red Cross parcels.

The Russians did try to help us as much as they were capable of but that was really not much since they were woefully lacking in the things that win wars except brute force manpower. On our walk to the other side of the peninsula as well as a couple of trips into town we saw vehicles that had been abandoned because of trivial breakdowns that any idiot could have cured with a screwdriver, pliers and a piece of baling wire. Except for the frontline soldiers every one moved by foot or horse. Sheer numbers obviously can pay off.

I also saw two very good Russian USO-type shows during the stay, consisting of Ballet as well as the Saber dance and others. All were very well performed by lovely girls who arrived at the stage in rough uniforms and combat boots and lay down their machine guns on the edge of the stage before going back stage to put on tutus. Their male performers were also very talented. All were very friendly and tried to communicate with us as much as possible and seemed to be wishing us well.

As I said I walked into town twice in that period and did not observe as much as I wish I had. I was very angry at everything German and truly wished that they were worse off than they seemed to be. The Russians took everything they had that might have any value. The first night I accompanied Constantino back into town with my 40 packs of cigarettes and after he had made the goodie exchange we walked around the town and observed some women being ravaged by the Russians but we only wished the men good luck.

We found a small beer bar which was actually open and serving (probably because the Russians didn't seem to have much taste for beer) so we had a couple of brews and as we came out found in the

next doorway an emaciated live skeleton in a black and white striped night gown type apparel who was trying to get a bottle to his lips but was apparently too weak. We ignored the situation and went home and on the way saw many other, more dead than alive bodies in the black and white stripes, but ignored them also. This was evidence of a reported underground concentration camp under the airport area.

As we neared the edge of town an older German man poked his head out of a house and spoke to us and when Constantino answered him in German he became friendly and according to Constantino he asked if we would spend the night with his young daughters so they wouldn't be raped by the Russians. We told him no and further we hoped the Russians prevailed. How dumb is youth!

On the other excursion into Barth we came to a housing development, probably for military families, which was deserted so we went through all the rooms trashing everything we didn't want to take away. It was senseless vandalism of the type I condemn so bitterly today but we were more than a little bitter at the Germans. I can't imagine that I could have spent 10 days in the hands of the Russian liberators and not have done more than I did about looking over the area.

True, we were kept on pins and needles by all types of rumors and our distrust of the saviors. Many, including me had almost despaired of ever getting back to civilization when, lo and behold, one lovely morning, what should appear but a string of hundreds of B-17s which landed and picked up twenty each ex-POWs and taxied out and took off for points west. We had been alerted that they were coming so had assembled and marched in twenty-man formations, the three miles or so to the airfield and were more than ready for their arrival. It was a very well run and orderly operation and one might have thought the people in charge had some experience in that field.

As I said they assembled us by groups of twenty and as the B-17s taxied to a stop we were already rushing forward to board as soon as engines stopped. There

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was no fuel available and no room to park the aircraft so when we were aboard which was to take no more than 5 minutes the plane was taxiing out for take off on a very welcome trip to paradise.

The skeleton crew that was flying the plane welcomed us and questioned us about any possible news of their buddies who might have been with us. The planes had been fixed so that about ten men could sit or stand in the bomb bay alternating every so often so that each of us could get to positions where we could see out while we flew over at about 1,000 feet above the ground, some of the areas we had seen previously under different circumstances. We were able to note the devastation that the USAF and RAF had caused at Frankfurt, the Rhur and Kassel as well as the Saar basin area.

As hard hearted as it may seem now after 50 years I remember that I and everyone I talked to were delighted to see the degree of destruction we had effected and only wished it were more. We felt that the Germans were being let off much too easily for what they had done.

After a flight of about 3 hours we landed at the airbase at Lyon, France. As soon as we got off, the planes turned around and proceeded back to their home stations in England and we were herded into delousing and shower facilities. Our old clothes were taken for burning which was all they were good for. We were issued new green officer uniforms with appropriate insignia and we finally began to feel like members of the human race as well as of the US Army Air Corps again.

We were finally fed small amounts of pretty good food but the nurses and medics wouldn't let us eat as much as we would have liked, which was kind of silly since we had been eating heavily for ten days already. Finally to a good bed (GI cot) for the first time in many a moon and I don't believe the authorities had much trouble keeping any one from going into town. The next day we were again herded (a descriptive word) into GI Gondola type trucks with about 100 men in each which meant we couldn't even sit down. This phase of our travels was

to Camp Lucky Strike near Fecamp, France, which was not far from LeHarve, France. It was an eventful trip standing up all the way over rough roads but at least with frequent stops to walk around and relieve ourselves to the audience of many French girls who pointed and tittered.

We were driven though Paris where we stopped in the railroad station for relief and what ever food we could scare up to supplement the box lunch we were issued. Our route took us within sight of Notre Dame and the Arch and the Eiffel Tower as well as some other landmarks. As we headed out of Paris we stopped again at a small town railroad depot and some of the fellows came on a rail car with three large casks of wine and someone managed to break the bung off of one so that the wine flowed all over and we drank as much as we could catch before the French and our authorities could put a stop to it.

We finally got to Lucky Strike late that afternoon after what seemed like a very long trip which I now figure must have been only 300 kilometers but standing and whatever in a gondola is no picnic. We were assigned to four-man tents, which were to be our home for the short time until we went home. (The short time turned out to be well over a month) The next day we were processed some more and at least this time we were given a \$75 partial pay so that we could raid the BX and act like we were officers again. Every time we asked when we would be shipped home the standard answer was "Anytime now, so don't go anywhere or you may be left".

For the first week I lulled around and got a little sun and a lot of dust. I played a lot of poker and craps and was lucky enough to run my poke to over \$300. It soon became apparent that there was not going to be any transport for several weeks so we might as well make the most of it. We could not get any passes or leaves but there was little effort to restrict us either so very soon most everyone went AWOL to Paris for a few days. I only went once for three days with a couple other men who had been in the room but we found little to do and very little to eat since we had no ration cards and had to eat on the local French economy which is to say the black market and

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pay the prices. We could use our officers ID to travel on trains and buses or we could hitch rides but there was no way to get food or bed without orders and ration coupons.

I managed to find a place to flop for the two nights and saw a couple of Girly Shows and walked around the town gawking like a tourist the rest of the time while studiously avoiding MPs since we had no orders. The MPs did not give us any problem and thinking back they couldn't have done much to us except send us back to camp anyway but we were careful to keep our noses clean.

During the second week someone set up a trip to the Monastery of the Monks of St. Benedictine who gave us a very good tour of their facility complete with much tasting. I still like that liquor but don't see it much any more. After two weeks had passed I began to despair of ever getting to the States again so I just sat around and ate and soaked up the sun, wrote a few letters, gambled some, complained a lot, listened to and passed on all rumors.

Some time in this era was when the incident I mentioned earlier about our buddy and his girl friend occurred. General Eisenhower had been at the camp the day before and given us a pep lecture to the effect that he had personally ordered that we be gotten back home by the most expeditious means. He probably meant it but I doubt if his efforts helped us any.

I will say that we were popular with the USO shows and I saw at least four with the most memorable being Crosby and Hope and all their lovely entourage. By the time we finally got orders to assemble to board trucks to LeHarve I had almost despaired of ever getting out of Europe. We got to the port at about 6 AM and were aboard by about 10 AM but they stalled around till about 6 PM before moving out.

I was not looking forward to a long voyage home like some of my cohorts described of their trips over. Officers above the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. were given quarters on the upper decks but since I was still a lowly Flight Officer I was below with the rest of the junior types and GIs.

The ship was the Admiral Mayo, which was built to

be a President liner after the war and happened to be on its maiden run. Since it had been designed to be a troop transport it was very well setup. To prove they were doing everything possible to get us home as fast as possible some were assigned two men to a bunk so that they had to sleep in shifts. I heard that they carried a lot more men on that run than the Queens ever carried.

There was lots of space for the men to lull in when not in bunks as well as much reading material and some other entertainment facilities. Unlike any other troopship I ever heard of there was no shortage of water and bathing facilities. Since the boat was on its trial run the Captain told us that we were going to be going as fast as the seas would safely permit so as to get a good shakedown. We did Forty knots some of the way and averaged thirty seven knots and the trip only took a little over three days so that we pulled into Boston harbor at about ten o'clock one beautiful morning in late June.

I must mention that the messing facilities on the Admiral Mayo were the best one could ask for on a troop transport vessel. There were two messes on the 3rd deck, which served twenty four hours per day. For the first day everyone lined up for the next meal as soon as they finished the last and the cooks never got a chance to change the menu. They were still serving breakfast at midnight.

The second day they asked for volunteers to punch mess cards, which they issued. Since I was borderline seasick the whole first day out I volunteered for two 6-hour shifts per day and had little more trouble. I spent the time talking to the men as they went through and to the head mess Sgt. who turned out to be Victor Mature of Movie fame. He was a real nice guy and not anywhere near as big a man as he seemed in the flicks.

The other 12 hours per day I spent playing poker and craps and never tossed my cookies. I don't think I spent six hours total in the bunk because as soon as I lay down I became nauseated. I did spend a little time walking on the deck when it wasn't too windy. At any rate I was more than happy to see Boston and the

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good old USA.

We disembarked, as soon as they got the ship tied up and we were immediately, formed up and marched, about 5 miles, through Boston, to Fort Miles Standish, arriving about 4 PM, to be offered a very good meal, which, most of us, were not as elated about, as the permanent party people expected, since we had been so well-fed on the ship. The mess serving and hair cutting was done by German POWs which created some friction with us but the Commander begged us to be understanding since if it weren't for them, the permanent party would be doing that work which would only slow down getting us home. They knew how to hit below the belt.

As usual we were told that we were restricted to the base while there for a couple days of processing. That was getting to be pretty old so like many of the rest I went over the fence with a couple of buddies to a waiting taxi and into town. Looked over downtown Boston and had a couple of drinks before deciding it was dullsville and caught a taxi back to the fence and bed.

I will end this now and state that I realize that every other man who was with me will give a different version of many events. I have found this true in most conversations I had with the few ex-POWs that I have met in the past fifty-five years including more than 100 who went to the site of Stalag-Luft I with me in 1986. Please charge any errors to my bad memory.



## **Election**

I'm sure that you are aware that at the Reunion this year in Chicago, we will hold an election and for the first time, the Association Board will be made up of children of the veterans. Your Nominating Committee has been hard at work trying to come up with a slate of officers for this election. For those of you who will be unable to attend the Reunion, we are including that slate of officers for you to vote on. If you do plan on attending the Reunion, please do not send in this ballot as you will have the opportunity to vote at the Business Meeting on Thursday evening. In addition to the slate of officers offered by the Nominating Committee, I'm providing space for you to vote for anyone else you would like to see fill each position. The only criterion is that whoever gets elected this year must be a Child Member of the Association. I included a list of the Child Members in the December 2009 issue of the Liberaider. If you no longer have that issue, it's available on the 461<sup>st</sup> website ([www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org)).

<u><b>Election Ballot</b></u>		<b>Vote For</b>	<b>Vote Against</b>
President	Hughes Glantzberg		
Write-in	_____		
Vice-President	Glenda Price		
Write-in	_____		
Headquarters Detachment	Lee Cole		
Write-in	_____		
764 <sup>th</sup> Squadron Director	Jeanne Hickey		
Write-in	_____		
765 <sup>th</sup> Squadron Director	Dave Blake		
Write-in	_____		
766 <sup>th</sup> Squadron Director	Barbara Alden		
Write-in	_____		
767 <sup>th</sup> Squadron Director			
Write-in	_____		
Please sign and date this ballot below and mail it to Hughes Glantzberg, Nominating Committee Chairperson, P.O. Box 926, Gunnison, CO 81230 no later than September 1, 2010.			
Name: _____		Signature: _____	
Squadron: _____		Date: _____	



# How to Display the American Flag



1. When the flag is displayed over the middle of the street, it should be suspended vertically with the union to the north in an east and west street or to the east in a north and south street.



2. The flag of the United States of America when it is displayed with another flag against a wall from crossed staffs should be on the right the flag's own right [*that means the viewer's left --Webmaster*] and its staff should be in front of the staff of the other flag.



3. The flag when flown at half-staff should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. By "half-staff" is meant lowering the flag to one-half the distance between the top and bottom of the staff. Crepe streamers may be affixed to spear heads or flagstuffs in a parade only by order of the President of the United States.



4. When flags of States cities or localities or pennants of societies are flown on the same halyard with the flag of the United States the latter should always be at the peak. When the flags are flown from adjacent staffs the flag of the United States should be hoisted first and lowered last. No such flag or pennant may be placed above the flag of the United States or to the right of the flag of the United States (the viewer's left). When the flag is half-masted both flags are half-masted with the US flag at the mid-point and the other flag below.



5. When the flag is suspended over a sidewalk from a rope extending from a house to a pole at the edge of the sidewalk the flag should be hoisted out union first from the building.



6. When the flag of the United States is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally or at an angle from the window sill balcony or front of a building the union of the flag should be placed at the peak of the staff unless the flag is at half-staff.



7. When the flag is used to cover a casket it should be so placed that the union is at the head and over the left shoulder. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.



8. When the flag is displayed in a manner other than by being flown from a staff it should be displayed flat whether indoors or out. When displayed either horizontally or vertically against a wall the union should be uppermost and to the flag's own right that is to the observer's left. When displayed in a window it should be displayed in the same way that is with the union or blue field to the left of the observer in the street. When festoons rosettes or drapings are desired bunting of blue white and red should be used but never the flag.



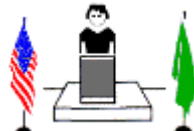
9. That the flag, when carried in a procession with another flag or flags should be either on the marching right; that is the flag's own right or if there is a line of other flags in front of the center of that line.



10. The flag of the United States of America should be at the center and at the highest point of the group when a number of flags of States or localities or pennants of societies are grouped and displayed from staffs.



11. When flags of two or more nations are displayed they are to be flown from separate staffs of the same height. The flags should be of approximately equal size. International usage forbids the display of the flag of one nation above that of another nation in time of peace.



12. When displayed from a staff in a church or public auditorium on or off a podium the flag of the United States of America should hold the position of superior prominence in advance of the audience and in the position of honor at the clergyman's or speaker's right as he faces the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergyman or speaker (to the right of the audience).



13. When the flag is displayed on a car the staff shall be fixed firmly to the chassis or clamped to the right fender.



14. When hung in a window where it is viewed from the street place the union at the head and over the left shoulder.



# **Bomb Run - 6 November 1944**

By  
Henry McCann  
765<sup>th</sup> Squadron

"Two minutes to our I.P., Bernie." The navigator's voice cracked over the intercom, "The 484<sup>th</sup> are already on the run." It was two minutes before we were to turn on the initial point, take the heading given by S-2 and drive for a touchdown.

I recalled the words of the briefing S-2 officer: "Your target for today is the Winterhaven Oil Refinery in the southwest section of the city of Vienna." He was a vigorous slight man with grey crew cut hair. He might have been telling plans for a field day to a group of college students. "There will be a possibility of some four hundred enemy fighters in the target area..." We looked for those fighters then. What a warmth we felt toward our fighter pilots who weaved above us like slivers in the sky!

Off to our right stood our target, the city of Vienna. Other ships were already dropping their bombs on specified targets within the city. Though some forty miles away, the target was discernible by the halo of black balls of smoke - flak.

We were the third group in a three group wing. We felt the roll of our ponderous B-24 and saw the sharper bank of the flight leader as we swung over the designated point and headed down the Bomb Run. This was pattern bombing. Only one bombardier exercises the skill that all are taught. The lead bombardier sights the target, controls his ship and with a contact of indicia in his bombsight releases his missiles. With the first glance of the lead ship's falling bombs every bombardier in the group snaps a switch and sends five thousand pounds of screaming destruction toward the Reichland.

There was a stream of B-24s creeping toward the black blotches in the sky. What a sense of power they inspire! Great birds of war, a tribute to the genius of mankind. These are champions of war. Why should such a tremendous achievement as mastery of the air be turned to unprecedented havoc and ruin? However, these birds of war, manned by youths with forty thousand dollar educations, do not always sow destruction. Human error is always the unpredictable factor.

Would we fail this day too? The tension had mounted incessantly.

We had now begun to close that last thirty miles between us and the target. Bomb runs are not always thirty seconds long. This one would take about twelve minutes. It would take twelve terrifying minutes of the most excruciating mental torture imaginable. Yet it was thrilling beyond comparison.

I stood in the nose of our B-24, burdened with heavy clothing, oxygen mask, head set and mike and a twenty pound flak suit, watching these puffs come nearer and nearer. I had only to flick my switch at the proper second and my duty would be done. Suddenly I felt cold, chilled to the bone. I had been fairly comfortable despite the minus forty-six degree temperature reading. I was glad that I did not have to synchronize with the sight this time, and yet to have the responsibility is to feel a major part of this gigantic, complicated weapon,

the Air Force.

As the belly of the lead ship yawned slowly open like the jaws of a great beast, I too opened our bomb doors. All there was to do then was to wait and wait. Little was said on the ship's intercom; "There's something out to the left, three of them," drawled Harris in the waist. "They're seventeens. I saw them." snapped Louis in the nose turret. Then there was silence. Flak makes no noise until it is very close. When you hear it it's too close.

We were walking up a wall of flak. The sky was darkened by the black puffs. This was Vienna, the largest city in southern Nazi territory, the nucleus of resistance to the Russians and the rail center of Austria. Three hundred and twenty anti-aircraft guns blackened the sky with a barrage. They had our altitude, our speed, and our heading. We used no evasive tactics. A tight formation against fighters is more important. It seemed incredible that those innocent black puffs were fountains of millions of pieces of slashing steel. Yet they spelled death. It seemed that no planes could penetrate that rain of steel without at least partial destruction but they did.

The first group was dropping its bombs. There was a white flash and like a child's toy a B-24 plunged earthward in a flaming spiral. No chutes appeared. Then two more planes, streaming smoke from the engines, were dropping rapidly. Then we were in it.

It was above us and below us and in front of us. There was a burst to our left that sounded like gravel being thrown against our side. It gave a quick thick bark. Our speed of two hundred miles per hour was apparent now. Then the ship rocked crazily from the concussion of two bursts directly beneath us. Time stood still. Would they ever drop those bombs! Number three of A flight slid out to the side and dropped away. That was Horn's crew. We had trained with them.

The target was clearly visible beneath the pall of smoke. In the city proper raged great fires caused by the shower of incendiaries from a B-1 group. We watched the flak and the lead ship. It's essential to release just as the lead does in order to insure a complete target coverage. The group plowed steadily on. Then a bomb appeared below the open bomb bay of the lead ship. I hit my switch. Nearly everyone shouted, "There they go."

I looked at the target as the smoke thickened and closed over it. The city was ablaze. The thousands of incendiaries with the hundreds of five pounders made Vienna blaze like the lights of Broadway. I wondered what it was like to be down there. How impersonal this war was! Perhaps we had killed hundreds and several of our boys had died, but none of us saw the carnage of it. This was the aerial war.

We wanted to jam the throttles and peel off our heading to escape the fearful bursts, but we held our formation. The flak lessened, the formation swung in a slow turn; the bomb run was over. We headed for Italy.

Back home the papers reported: "High flying B-24s of the Fifteenth Air Force blasted targets at Brux, Linz and in the Vienna area."

## **461<sup>ST</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)**

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

## **Webmaster Comments**

Another year of change on the 461st website. The changes take a bit of explanation. If you haven't been to the 461st website recently, let me encourage you to take a look at it. The biggest difference you're going to see is in the address. You can still go to [www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org) in order to get to the website, but once there, you'll notice the address is now [www.15thaf.org/49th\\_BW/461st\\_BG/](http://www.15thaf.org/49th_BW/461st_BG/). What has happened?

It really very simple. In my effort to tell the whole story of what went on during WWII in the Mediterranean Theater of Operation, I started a website for the Fifteenth Air Force. This website ([www.15thaf.org](http://www.15thaf.org)) contained enough space to host websites for all the organizations that made up the Fifteenth Air Force. For some, I only have a link to the website run by a particular unit. In other cases, I've started new websites for those units that didn't have one. To conserve space and save expense in maintaining the 461st website, I've moved our web-

site into the space available in the Fifteenth Air Force website.

The result of this move will save our organization around \$150 per year by not having to have our own space. There will still be some expense as I've kept the domain name ([www.461st.org](http://www.461st.org)) and have simply pointed it to the new location of our website. Now, instead of costing us \$150 per year, our presence on the Internet will only cost us \$10—\$20 per year.

I can still produce CDs of the website for those who are interested in having a copy of this historic information. The website is so large at this point that I have to put the information on a DVD instead of a CD, but the information is the same. The only difference is that your PC must have a DVD player in order to view the website on it. The cost is the same—\$25.00 for the first copy and \$15.00 for a replacement.