



The 461st

Liberaider



Vol. 345 No. 1

JUNE 2018

SOMEWHERE IN THE USA

Reunion Information

In 2018 the reunion will include the 98th, 376th, 451st, 455th, 460th, 464th, 465th, 484th and 485th bomb groups in addition to the 461st. It will be held in Dayton, OH. This will be a return visit to this city as we have been here twice before, but there are some surprises for this year that are sure to please everyone. Check out the details on page 20 and sign-up information on page 19.

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Edgar M. Trenner

Edgar M. Trenner
Pilot
Crew #18
764th Bomb Squadron
461st Bomb Group

We have been Maine citizens for 20 years. We started in New York.

The following is an interview with Ed Trenner conducted 1995 by a student as a class project. Ed was told it would be published in a local newspaper, but it never was. My thanks to Norene Trenner for sharing this.

My name is Edgar Trenner. Everybody calls me "Ed". The last time anybody ever called me Edgar, I punched 'em. It's Ed Trenner. We now live in Yarmouth, Maine, in the "Junipers", and I guess the story begins back in New York City, because on De-

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December 1944

Robert M. Kelliher
765th Squadron, 461st Bomb Group
Torretta Field, Italy
Routines, Lows, Highs in a Dismal,
Somber Month

12-1. Field socked in by dense fog, 4th straight day. And Link Trainer was inoperative. Got to drive the Jeep on the way back. What a vehicle! .45 and ammo issued again today. It's a routine give and take event. Stars and Stripes: Maxwell Field, Alabama, pre-flight school to be discontinued. I'm '44C graduate.

12-2. Mission got off to Blechhammer today. No opposition, good strike, except our squadron. Officers Club pizoni help: Giuseppe, Fillick, Salviare (Joe), Salvatore, etc. Salvatore claims he was a bombardier in Italian Air Force, showed photos of Caproni 3-engine bomber at Bengazi. Boasted about whipping those tough Abyesinians.

12-3. My crew #89R all busted up with diphtheria, and navigator, Keatley, semi-transferred. He's to

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Taps

May they rest in peace forever

Please forward all death notices to:

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764th Squadron

<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
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765th Squadron

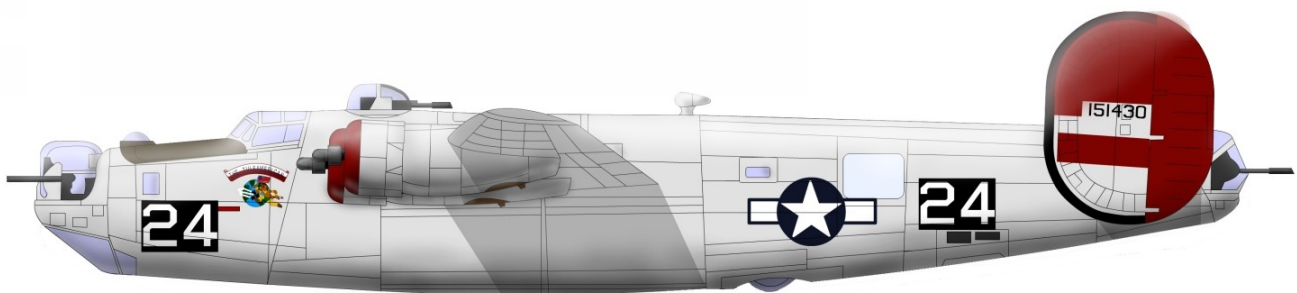
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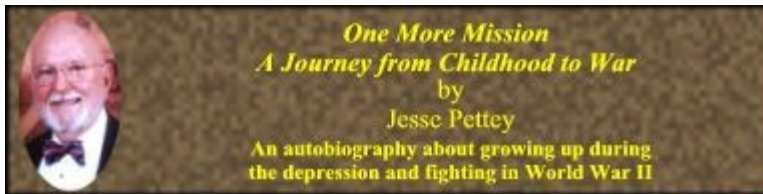
766th Squadron

<u>Name</u>	<u>Hometown</u>	<u>MOS</u>	<u>Date of Death</u>
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767th Squadron

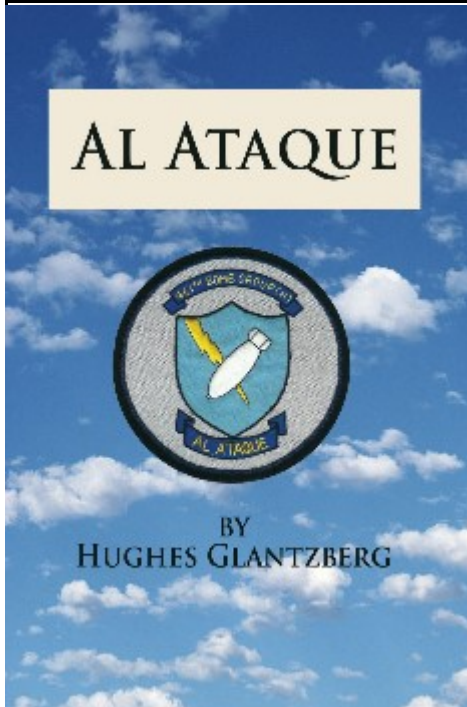
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With a special interest in World War II and the 461st Bombardment Group in particular, I found this book excellent. Most of the men who fought during WWII were in their late teens and early 20s. It's amazing to be able to read about their activities.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

Trade **Hardcopy**

Publication Date: Nov-2006

Price: \$36.95

Size: 6 x 9

Author: Hughes Glantzberg

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

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.

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ember 5, 1921, I was an unexpected twin born at the kitchen table. That street - 176th Street was replaced by the George Washington Bridge. That's enough to make you famous, right from the word "go". I was 2 lbs. 11 oz. So, if someone was even expected to EXIST...I was ahead of the game.

I was a typical street kid. I went to NYC schools. I did very well in school. I even did better than my twin sister. I was the first Eagle Scout from my Scout Troop, where 85 members of that particular troop went into WWII. I was the first and only Eagle Scout. Living in the inner city, it was very hard too - I don't know if you're familiar with Eagle Scouting, but it's very hard to get bird studies, and things like that. But I was determined. And in that process, I started camping out. It was typical scouting, but we, as a troop, even built our own little scout camp...up in a place called Suffern, New York. The next-door neighbor was Dan Beard who started the Boy Scouts of America.

Q. What did your parents do?

My mother was, in those days, a stay-at-home mother. I think she may have worked before they were married. My dad was the manager or superintendent of a group of people who managed one of the big buildings in New York. He did that for many years until he became ill. He ended up as an elevator operator, and I don't think he ever made more than six or seven thousand dollars a year his whole life. In the depression everybody was poor, but we didn't know whether we were poor or not. But we always had enough to take care of our family - and I think that's one of our strengths - particularly my mother. I ended up being a pretty good ballplayer. I used to make extra money playing ball. I

was, at one time, scouted by the Atlanta team, which was triple-A at that time, and was offered the magnificent sum of \$500, which if you contrast it now, incredible!!

Through scouting, I became involved in summer camping. We had our own summer camp. Twelve dollars for two weeks. It was really our first experience.

Of course, Pearl Harbor happened, and I guess I was about 20 years old when it happened. We all knew we'd eventually be drafted, of all things. I was walking down Whitehall Street, and I saw the Army Air Corps poster. And I said, "Gee, that sounds good." I got all the information, brought the papers home to my mother, and she signed it. I don't know why, but she signed it. I needed parental permission.

Q. Tell me about Pearl Harbor. Where were you when you learned.

Let's see. It was a Sunday. They announced it during a Giant ballgame, but I was listening. I wasn't at the game. Almost everybody claims they were at the game, but I wasn't. It was at Yankee Stadium, or Polo Grounds. I was at home listening to the game. And it was a shock to everybody. It shouldn't have been, but it was. Within months everyone was trying to get into the service. The whole atmosphere was like, "Get in!" I never had been in an airplane before I took my first army ride so I didn't have any motivation like kids do today to fly. But I decided that it sounded good, and I was determined that I could make it. Out of the first 150 in that class that went from Whitehall Street to the Nashville Classification Center, four of us got our wings as pilots. Some went to bombardier school, some went to navigational school. And within six months, I was flying four-engine bombers. It's incredible what the

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system was. To this day, I am impressed by the wisdom of someone in the Air Force who decided that the crew concept could work. The crew concept was just like the Boy Scout Patrol concept. I don't know if you are familiar with the Scouts, but the Scouts started at the basic level, which is patrol. Seven kids and a leader, a year or two older, who was the patrol leader. Four or five of those cells became part of the troop and so on. The concept in the Air Force, of course, was crews. However, first they had to teach you how to fly. We didn't know where we were going to go. There were 200 hours of training after being selected to take the pitot training. First, they sent us to Nashville, TN and there we took all kinds of tests - psychological, physical, all of that stuff, and they decided whether you could be a bombardier, navigator, or pilot. And I qualified for all three, and had the choice. Of course, I chose pilot training. Pilot training consisted of three phases. The first one was with a civilian pilot. The second one was with a military pilot and then advanced. They put us into two-engine school. I thought because of my size (5' 9"), I might be a fighter pilot. But they were turning out B-24s and B-17s like crazy then, and all of us, in that particular class, went into that kind of training.

Q. Did you have a desire to be one kind of pilot over another?

I would have loved to have been a fighter pilot, at least before I knew anything about it. After all you're trained in Stearman bi-wings, a little tiny plane you could fit into this room. What was fascinating to me, is that you had to solo in 8 hours. I had never been in an air-plane before. The first ½ hour of the first army flight was a joy ride. They take you for a ride, tell you how the plane grabs into the wind, and all of this. They ask you, "Is your

belt on tight?" "Yeah!" He says, "It's not tight enough. Tighten it up some more!" This is the ideal teaching situation, because he could talk to me from his seat, but I couldn't talk back. It's one of the brilliant things that the Air Force did to teach you how to fly. First thing you know, I'm upside down! Hanging!! He says, "Let go of the stick." I said, "NO WAY!" He banged the knees. He had the same control stick as I had. They moved together. He moved his back and forth, banging his knees, therefore banging my knees. I let go and there I am hanging. To prove to you that the seat belts will keep you in the plane, and to give you the feeling that you're upside down. That's the second half hour. The first half hour they let you fly a little bit.

Then, believe it or not, you had to solo between four and eight hours. Otherwise, you were washed out of the program.

Q. What do you mean by that?

That means if you did not complete the basics in eight hours, then they could judge that you could not continue. Then they sent you to either one of the other schools, or back to the Air Force itself to be whatever the Air Force wanted you to be. They threatened you with the infantry, but I don't think they could've done that. I have a letter in my album - a letter to my mother that my sister saved - that describes the first time I soloed and the feeling is that I had. I was actually very good at it. And here I was a street kid. Well, none of us knew anything about airplanes then.

Then, quickly we went from that primary, to basic, and in basic they had us in twin-engine planes, which meant that we were heading for four-engine training. And, when I graduated, and got my wings, I was sent to B-24

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school. And then proceeded to Idaho, where they were forming crews. I was able to get two friends of mine on my crew. They had started pilot training with me, and one, Alfred P. 'Al' Markavitch, who lives in New Hampshire now, did everything right, except he couldn't land. He landed 15 feet too high off the ground. Then, he'd hit, and groundloop. After the second time, they washed him out. After he broke the second wing, they sent him to navigator school. John J. 'Jack' Smith, from Trenton, NJ, who now lives in California, was my bombardier. We played on a basketball team together, so I got to know him, and he got sick every time he flew. They didn't want anybody who got sick, as a pilot. Interesting, they sent him to bombardier school, and they quickly discovered that he handled being sick all the time. And every time he flew with us, on all of our 47 missions, he flew them all with me, he was sick until we got to 15,000 feet. We had the bag ready for him. He was very good at his job. We're dear friends to this day. When I picked the crew, they assigned six sergeants and four officers. All the enlisted men were sergeants after their initial gunnery, engineering, etc. training. The officers were the pilot, co-pilot, bombardier, and navigator. So!! When I picked the crew, we were assembled in the 4th Air Force, headquartered in California with part of it in Idaho. And, I had gone in when I first arrived there, looking over the list and lo and behold I saw my two friends on the same list. I had gone on to advanced school and training, and they went to bombardier and navigator schools. And I was able to get my friends. We had a corps of people who knew one another. We were assigned a young man from New York Staten Island, as a co-pilot. Now he got his wings, but they didn't send him to 4-engine training school. They assigned him to a person, like myself, who had been in and taken 4-engine

training. So, I trained him how to fly in the co-pilot seat. And we did a lot of practice missions. We were finally sent to Fresno, CA, thinking of course, believe it or not, 200 hours to get your wings, 200 hours to get your 4-engine training, and about another 100 hours just flying a B-24 in practice missions and stuff. And, my first real long-distance flight was from South America to Africa. We flew from Belem, Brazil to Dakkar.

Q. ?

Typical of the Air Force, we got trained in California. So, we got sent to Europe. We came all the way across. We had all of our gear and everything with us, no bombs, but lots of gear. My first experience with a loaded plane was having to land with a flat tire in Memphis on the way overseas. That was kind of fun. This was all in 1943.

Q. Tell me a little bit about what your awareness was of the war in Europe before Pearl Harbor before we go into more of your personal experiences as a pilot.

Well, the only information we got, until I got back home, about the war in the Pacific was in the Army Air Force newspapers. But we did know an awful lot about what was happening in Europe. What's fascinating is, that they had already established the Eighth Air Force out of England. They could reach the targets in the northern part of Europe down as far as maybe Vienna, Berlin, and that area. They invaded Africa, because they wanted the base to jump off to go into Italy. One of the main reasons to take Italy, despite, or in addition to, breaking up the Axis, was to have airfield space. And, when they finally freed the lower part of Italy - from Naples down - the planes went to Foggia where they put about 15 groups like ours. There were airfields all over the place. But to get back to

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your question, I was very much aware. We didn't know about concentration camps and stuff like that, but we all, everybody, had the spirit that we had to fight Germany and the Axis. I mean, there was just no question. I don't think there was a kid that I knew who was objecting. It was completely different than the modern era.

Q. Were you aware of the Jewish persecution?

Well, I was. I happen to be Jewish. I was always pretty much aware. I listened to the radio and read the newspaper. There was no TV in those days.

Q. I mean when Hitler first came to power and living in New York and being part of a Jewish community at that time, were you more attuned to what was happening to the persecution of the Jewish people prior to the outbreak of the war?

Not as much as we should have been. I had an altercation with another man, while going through training, where I was accosted for being a Jew.

I'd been Bar Mitzvah'd. My twin sister was very much involved in the Temple, and was aware of people's problems in Europe. They were collecting clothes, but really had no idea. Helping people with food and clothing, is not like worrying about whether they were being exterminated or not. And, remember,

Americans took a long time before they had the information, and even accepted it. I think even our government didn't accept it. That was one of the raps against Roosevelt for a while. They had their reasons, you know. But I had gone through the scouts and all of that, and was very patriotic. Just like I still am. But I think in the right sense. If your country is in trouble, it was time to get involved. After Pearl Harbor, we certainly felt threatened. It's just fascinating to me how the system seemed to work. I don't think it was because I was anything special. It turns out that I was very athletic. I've always been. School was a breeze. I mean, within months, you had to learn code, you had to be able to hear it, because in those days it was very elementary communication, had to learn military science. They threw that at you when you weren't flying. You went to school. You had to learn how to march; you had to learn how to be an officer – there's a whole book on that. And I think my scout training, and my "instinct to lead", which I've done all my life, was what kept me going. Nine of my guys are still alive, and I'm sort of the catalyst that keeps them together. And every one of them swears that the only reason they're living, that they came back alive, was because of me. Now I know that's not true. It's because of what we did together. We started to learn more and more about it, because while we were training, and overseas, and during practice missions, while we were in Africa before we got up into Italy, we

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

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were getting a lot of news about it.

Now obviously, the news was slanted. But it made you glad you were there to do this. Now we were young and crazy enough to not be worried about it. We were always worrying about the other guys. You were always going to make it. You had to have that mindset, by the way. How else would you go on some of these crazy missions that they sent us on? For example, we'll get to it, but Ploesti was the toughest target. The Ploesti oil fields was a major target in Rumania. For example, Vienna which we used to attack had over 800 major anti-aircraft guns that could fire higher. We flew missions between 22 and 26 thousand feet and the guns could go higher. That's a pretty big city. Ploesti is about the size of half of Portland, yet it had seven huge refineries. And, it had the second most guns in Europe - there was Berlin, Vienna, and Ploesti. So, if you went to Ploesti, then you knew it would be rough. The first Ploesti mission, a low level one that was flown from Africa, they lost 75 percent of the planes. The leader got the medal of honor for it. The whole mission was screwed up. But they accomplished something like when Doolittle raided Japan and dropped a few bombs which meant nothing. It was a very psychological, a very important step. But the Ploesti missions, which were very important in terms of the oil supply that the Nazis had, was hit five or six times. I went on three of them. My first 25 of the 47 missions I flew, we didn't have fighters that could take us to the target. I was actually home before we invaded Normandy. The trick was to complete your 50 missions in the Fifteenth Air Force. In England, the Eighth Air Force was flying 25 missions. So, after all the bitching that we did, they decided that any mission we did over 7 1/2 hours, would count as two, so my

25 was over 30 some odd missions. Now could you imagine that you take off while it's still dark, and you assemble, and for 7 1/2 to 8 to 9 hours, you're twenty feet away from somebody's wing. Now you're taking turns flying with your pilot and co-pilot, but you're staying in formation. There are two reasons for staying in formation, flying that close and you don't have to fly that close once you're over enemy territory. The whole concept is self-preservation. If you flew close, and you flew good, and all of you did it right, and the next group down the line, the next 18 planes down there, or 32 planes down there, were a little sloppy, the German pilots, theoretically, would go for them, not us. And that's the way it worked. It's interesting. If you didn't fly close enough, and a German fighter could come through you, aiming at you, he's liable to hit you. But if he sees they are "tight" he makes a pass at you. Now mathematically, if you're on a curve, he could be shooting a thousand bullets a minute. But there's only one tiny place, mathematically on that whole curve that he could possibly hit you. So, it was a good reason to learn how to fly in formation. Later on, when I went back home, and was instructing pilots in B-24s and you tell them to fly close they'd be in the same sky and I'd tell them "No, I'm going to have to show you how!" It's pretty scary to be 15 feet from somebody's wing. The trick is that you're underneath on this side, and this side you're above. You can slide. But the way planes were configured in those days, if you bumped wings, you were done!!! That's pretty hairy stuff. You can only do it when you're 21 and 22 years old. I was really the youngest on the crew, but since I was the pilot, I was the boss. I had two gunners that were married men with children, that were in

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their thirties and I became “poppa” to them because I was the “boss”.

Q. The whole strategy, the whole knowledge of flying close, was that something that was taught in class?

Oh, absolutely. They had very few people to teach us. Remember, we were one of the first groups to go over there. We didn't fly so tight at first. But the first time we were shot at, instead of this, zhooooop, you were right in there, and you could do it. You can really do anything, if you've set your mind to it.

I was talking about the group concept, but I think the most important concept was the crew, that they made us a team. I took every one of my enlisted men, and some time on every practice mission, I'd have my co-pilot step out and go back to their position, and put them in the seat, and let them get the feel of it, teach them how to handle the plane. That doesn't mean I'd ever think that they could land the plane, but I wanted them to know what we were doing. I wanted them to know the plane engineer's main job. Now in a B-24, you've got 24 cells of gasoline. You couldn't just have one big one. And they all had this self-sealing stuff. If a bullet hit it, it sealed. But you had leaks, and stuff. The flight engineer, who was from Oklahoma, was responsible for transferring fuel as you use fuel. I talked to him the other day. Remember, you've got 4 engines to feed and if you have this engine go out, you have three so you had to know how to turn the fuel supply to that one off. It's very complicated. In fact, we had one leak where the way Jesse Luke (from Oklahoma) solved it we had a line that was leaking. He had a condom, and he tied the condom around it and stopped the leak. I think we were young enough not to know what condoms were for, but we knew

there was a pretty good use for it.

Our radio man, Manny Webber from Philadelphia, only flew 13 missions with us because he was hit by a piece of flack that looked like a thumbnail. It went in the shoulder, and went all the way around. To this day he has no use of his left arm. He stayed in touch. In fact, he went home after he got out of the hospital and got assigned to a land job, and he helped in intelligence. He knew how to type, and all this stuff. He didn't want to go home; he wanted to stay with us. So, we became a really close team. What's fascinating is if we went to Yugoslavia, we had instructions on how to find the Partisans. If you didn't find the Partisans, you'd get shot by the other people. Remember, they were fighting each other then. There were the Chetniks, and the Partisans, and Tito was the Partisans. And we had to find them. These were very easy missions, by the way. We flew missions over what is now Bosnia and Serbia. It turned out I got the Distinguished Flying Cross because of my first mission. And, I don't know if you read through the stuff that Noreen had sent you.

Q. I did a little bit, yeah.

The DFC award was given because of finishing all the other missions, but they wrote up the first one because typical of the Air Force, there were 18 planes assigned, and we were on one of the planes. We had problems with one of the engines. It wasn't getting enough oxygen to one of the superchargers. Remember, the air is very thin up above and unless you have a way of getting enough oxygen in to the engine to mix with the gasoline and stuff, you had engine trouble. It was lucky we didn't know any better. We dropped down. We knew where the target was. We happened to have one of the cameras with us

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and we sought out the target. And we hit the target. It was a little marshaling yard where the trains assemble and we thought, "let's go get it" and Jack bombed it. The navigator found it and the bombardier hit it. I think they had one gun and they were shooting at us. When we got home, we told our story. As it turned out, the 17 other planes never found the target. They jettisoned their bombs as they came home. Our squadron got credit for the mission because we hit the target.

Q. You had to drop out, and leave formation.

Yeah, we didn't know what we were doing. We were on our own. We weren't attacked by any fighters. Luckily, we got back safely and found out we were heroes.

Q. I'm curious now. The idea of family. Some of the others I've spoken to didn't have that experience. They were infantry people, and they'd be moving around quite a bit. But this idea of the family and the crew, and how you had the fear of going on more difficult missions.

Well, it's interesting. We were all afraid. But if you look back on it, it's a different kind of being afraid now. I'm afraid of different things now than I was then. I think the biggest thing that we were afraid of was that somebody would say we were afraid to go. But, it was almost theatrical, because when we were assigned, we knew that we had 18 pilots in our squadron. Four squadrons (764th, 765th, 766th and 767th) making up a group, and a group (461st Bomb Group) was part of a wing (49th Bomb Wing). The wing was part of the Fifteenth Air Force. But, meanwhile, our world was our squadron, and our place in that squadron. And for the ten of us together, our world really was our plane. I had three terrific guys: our crew chief, and

two guys that were assigned to take care of this plane. They worried more about us, than we ever did. It was their responsibility to repair everything. There were missions where we had three or four hundred holes in the plane coming back. The ground crew took care of that. So, they became part of our team, too. Typical of Hollywood, you'd see the ground crew sweating out the returning planes. It was absolutely true. These guys were more worried about us because these guys felt if anything happened to us, it was their fault.

Q. Tell me. There's a period of time. You come back from a mission. Four hundred holes in the plane. What was that experience like? In combat.

Well, what's fascinating is they gave us easy missions the first three or four. We were all together. We came up from Africa. We were all rookies together. Col. Glantzberg was in charge. He was just as much a rookie as we were. When we got briefed for a mission it was just fascinating. It was theatrical. You went into a room, and they'd have this all covered. They'd get everybody assembled, make sure everybody is there and first they brief you on the weather, and then they pull the curtain. And there, from Cerignola (our airfield) there's that big red line going up to the initial point, and then there's the target. And you'd see Vienna, or you'd see Herman Goering Tank Works, or you'd see one of those and you knew where you were going. They'd even have the way you were supposed to come back! So, from that point on, you could hear the gasps. I could picture the Eighth Air Force guys when they'd said Berlin!! It was the same thing if it was Vienna. In fact, we even hit the submarine pens in Lyon, France. Nine and half hours in the air over the Mediterranean for that one just on

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the shore there. But the adrenalin starts flowing right away. Now you're involved with the mission and at the initial point. Hopefully, you hit it correctly. And the weather is all a guess. The guesstimate was worse than it is now. You had alternate targets just in case. And in those days, you couldn't land with bombs. So, if you got weathered in, you went over Bucharest or Budapest, and toggled them out.

Q. Talk about leader's role.

I will. Now, they actually showed you your position in first flight...and you're on this echelon or that echelon. Usually, on about half of our missions, I'm the lead plane because I was only one of three others. There's four of the original team that made it. After you complete five or six missions, all of a sudden, you're not a rookie anymore. You know what you're doing. I think if you noticed in the material that Noreen sent you, in that year that we were over there, the Air Force lost 20,200. Now that's the compliment of airmen. So, the replacements were coming in. We didn't know about the statistics. I'll digress for just a minute. We were flying a practice mission, in Italy, before we flew our first enemy mission. I was leading six planes. A West Pointer, a Capt. Talent was leading six planes. He had joined us. He hadn't practiced or trained with us. He had gone through Air Force training - at that time there was no Air Force Academy - so West Pointers could choose Air Force, or engineering, whatever it was. He knew it all. So, we take off on this mission, and I saw a big weather front, and the weather started to turn bad. And I was already pretty sensible about what to do. I learned the lesson that if you don't know what's up ahead, don't go. Do a 180 and come back. I took my six planes - mine and five others - and we land-

ed. We came back. We sweated out the other six. Turns out that he decided to go under this front. Before we flew one single combat mission we had to go to Bari, Italy for the funeral for sixty airmen that had run into a mountain in Italy. People don't hear about these things. Now picture this: a bunch of twenty-year-olds, like ourselves, going to a funeral - the only time we had to wear our good uniforms, our good hats, before we flew a mission! So, we knew life was serious at this point. Once you were briefed on a mission, say, for example, we were going to Vienna. Now you knew that there were approximately how many German fighters in that area. Now German fighters usually came up timed after you dropped your bombs because they don't want to go into a flack area. They don't want to get hit by their own flak, but they figure as you come through....

Q. I'm not exactly sure what flak is.

Okay. This is a target, say the size of Portland. And you're flying 5½ miles up. And you're flying close together. So, you're a target. So, if you see - right now you see the B-52's fly over Portland once in a while. They're flying three times as high as we were. So, they could see us, you know. When you're in formation, the whole trick about being a target - remember they didn't have the sophisticated stuff like they have now, you're in a line. Well, in Vienna there might have been 500 planes, three groups, 12 squadrons lined up some at this height, some at that height, they didn't have proximity fuses, so they were just shooting at you. Unless they hit you, the bomb could, any shell that could explode above you or below you didn't mean anything because you could see it. It scared you, but it didn't mean anything. Flak was the thing that made it explode. It was the gun powder in it. They usually figure it's a

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fairly big shell, and it would explode into thousands of bits - thumbnail size, and if one of those hit you it'd do you in. Certainly, planes were mostly aluminum - for weight - and the self-sealing tanks did work, by the way. They were this thick, and inside was this gooey stuff. As long as there was no air to get into the gasoline it wouldn't explode.

Q. The fighter pilots wouldn't dare go up into the same air space because they would be targets like we would?

Oh sure. They were smart enough to know that if we were here, and our target was say a mile and a half over here, they knew where we'd have to turn. This is where the anti-aircraft fire was. And honestly, it's like seeing a blanket of black that you had to go through. The one tenet that you had to follow is that you cannot do any maneuvers. Once you're on the bomb run, no matter what you're going through, no matter what it looks like ahead, your job is to keep it absolutely level which means that everybody else has to keep it level. So, you've got 18 planes bunched - nine here and nine there, and you're all going in, and you can't move. And every plane has a bombardier, but we're all on the lead one. Now, on occasions when the lead got knocked out, the next guy goes up, and that bombardier takes over. You move up, and another one slides in to the position. Interesting at age 22 you're more interested in, more concerned mechanically, you see a plane here, and all of a sudden, it's gone. And you're not saying: "Oh God, look at those poor guys". You're saying: "oh, oh. Where do I belong?" And you move up. you can only do this when you're twenty. After the bomb run, which hopefully, they think that making passes at us, that maybe we won't hit the target because frankly if you're at 24,000 feet and you go like this as the

bombs are dropping, that little maneuver will throw the bomb a mile and a half off its target at five miles down. You know it's pretty elementary compared to now, you send a bomb out and you turn on a little motor in it, and it finds its target. That didn't happen. So, what happened was we were all dropping together. Here's eighteen planes spread out, so hopefully some of the bombs will hit. Start at the target and go over the target. So, in other words, a lot of waste involved. But you had to do this. And then, of course, you turn off. That's when you were worried about enemy fighters.

Q. The formation would all turn together?

You'd have to. Sure. Remember the sky is full of planes. You have to stay together. Now, if a plane got an engine knocked out, and they had to drop out, the job was to stay in your position. They had to worry about getting home themselves. And you had to be lucky. I mean, 47 times you do this. The very hard targets, like Vienna, Ploesti, people like myself, first lieutenants, second lieutenants were in the lead planes. None of the colonels or the generals flew. They flew over Yugoslavia to hit a little corner drugstore, or something.

Q. They knew the risk?

Sure. They didn't have to take the risk. We had no choice. We were just names up there. They could choose which missions they'd fly because they wanted to get their missions in, too. I'm not really complaining. They'd go if they had to.

Q. Did you have any regrets in that time? Did you ever have the feeling, "I wish I was in a different station. I wish I wasn't putting myself into such grave risk."

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No. The apprehension came from numbers. You got five missions in and now you're aiming at 50. Now you had ten. Getting better at it. Now you got 15. The worst part is when you get to 40. You knew you were much better at it, right? You know, your attitude is, "If I was going get knocked out of the sky, it should've happened a long time ago. I don't want it to happen now." As a matter of fact, on our last mission, which turned out to be our 47th, we had engine trouble. We were hit. We dropped out. We came back on 2 engines. And then one more dropped out - you probably have that in the material.

Q. It's good to have the story from your voice.

But here we are. We're trying to get back. So, I had everything that could be loosened thrown out of the window except the guns at that point. We didn't know that the hydraulics were out at that point. Then I started to feel that we were actually controlling flying the plane without hydraulics. Now that's like steering a Cadillac without power steering. But again, we were working on trying to hold position. We were alone by that time. And I came through the Alps because I couldn't maintain altitude, and I was determined to get back to the base. With that many missions on, I said, "Guys - get your parachutes on." Pilot and co-pilot always had parachutes on because they were attached to us - but I made the guys put their parachutes on. When we finally got back, I thought we could reach the base. I said we're never going to get a second pass. I said, "If we don't do it right the first time, we'll try to get some altitude, and we'll all jump out." I had the last two parachutes in the bag, attached to the waist guns. Ok?? Because I knew we didn't have any hydraulic brakes. We had mechanical brakes, but not hydraulic brakes, so as we landed, I

told the two waist gunners, "Pull the damn things at the same time or else we're going to..." Nowadays they have parachutes on the space shuttles to help slow them down. It did slow us down. We got down. We landed. And, as the weight settled the right landing gear collapsed. It had been hit. We ended up that picture of the crash 300 yards off the runway. The runway, by the way, was dirt. Had it been a concrete runway, the sparks alone would have blown us up. The rescue crews were following on the runway, down each side, as we landed. They're already moving, so that they're pretty lucky because we could have hit them. They were throwing the foam up in the air before they reached us and covered the plane with foam!! We didn't blow up. Who knows why. It should have blown up.

I was banged up getting out of the plane. After the briefing and before anything else happened I went to the local Air Force hospital. The guy who first examined me told me that I'd probably never walk again. I said, "Time out! I don't want to talk to you again. Get me another doctor!!" Something told me....

Q. So what happened?

I was crushed in the plane. I really don't know. None of the guys could describe those few seconds when we were tumbling off the runway.

Q. You literally just...

If we'd had tumbled that way we would have been killed. We ground looped, and the wing caught the ground, and we went this way, but we never went over. And it was a complete wreck. I don't know how we ever got anybody out of the thing. I got out of the thing. Nobody pulled me out. When I was on the ground, I realized there was something

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wrong. I mean, you know what adrenalin can do. Luckily, the doctors were able to handle the thing. To this day, I have a problem bending and touching my toes, but it's not a disability. I'm considered a number one racquetball player at my age in the country now, so I still play pretty well.

It is fascinating now. Of course, when I got back from overseas - one other interesting story. The only time this co-pilot buddy of mine flew himself, as a first pilot. (they wanted to make him a first pilot, he was very good, but he didn't want any part of it. He said, "I'm one of the crew, and I want to stay with the crew, and I don't want to fly with anybody else.") Two days before this final mission I was telling you about, we were a "stand-by" crew, which meant that our crew has to be on alert, just as the other crews that were scheduled to fly, in case a pilot got sick, or a gunner got sick or a radioman got sick. If they needed a radioman, they'd pull him out of our crew. I left word, that if they needed a pilot to call me. They didn't wake me up. They woke Bill up. And Bill flew, two days before our last mission, and the last we heard was that the plane had been knocked down. And nobody had any word about it. And we lost our co-pilot. He was the only married officer we had. When I got home, one of the first things I wanted to do, was to go to Staten Island to see Edna, his wife, and his mother and the morning that I was due to go out there to tell them the little I knew about it, they had heard word that he was in a prison camp. It turned out to be the greatest party. I didn't have to tell them that I didn't know what happened to their son. So, this is one of those things you could write a book about. I think he's the only prisoner in that theatre, that gained weight in prison camp. He made up his mind that no matter what they fed him he'd eat it. If it was gar-

bage, he'd eat it. He was going to make it. It was terrible, he said. But he didn't lose an ounce. Other guys were emaciated. They looked like they came from Dachau. He came back fine. Yeah, he lives in Staten Island, New York. He looks like he's fifty (very young). His wife looks like an old lady now, but he's incredible.

Q. Psychologically, being in an airplane, so far above your target, it seems like you become part of the machinery of war in a way you don't have a sense of the people.

I think I know what you mean. We know if we complete the mission, we're going back to a nice soft bed and back at the base. We're not going to be in a foxhole; we're not going to be worried about someone shooting at us. It was almost impersonal. We were killing people. To think that is your job - that if you can't find the target - to go over a city and knock the bombs out. I mean, we're throwing 4,000 pounds of bombs out. We're killing people. But that was the mindset. These were the people that wanted to take our freedom away. I don't think I could see the confusion of the kids that went to Vietnam. We, at least, thought we understood what we were fighting for.

It took ninety men in support positions to keep us flying in that squadron to match the ten of us in the plane. I mean, thousands of parts - the motors now - the aircraft engine. Now, it's so much simpler and more powerful than then. It's like 16 cylinders and one cylinder goes, you're in trouble with an airplane. So, I think I was conscious of the fact that we were in danger. Our biggest worry was that we would not make the fifty. Now that was another brilliant thing that the Air Force did. It was not open-ended, like in Vietnam. The pilots in Vietnam did hundreds

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of missions. I can imagine psychologically what that can do to you. We had a goal. We resented the fact that the people flying in the Eighth Air Force in England had to do only 25. But at least we had a goal to shoot for. And after we crashed, the first thing that this flight surgeon came around and told me was, "Ed, you've now done your fifty." There was none of that business. You're better, now you have to go out again. So that was the icing on the cake.

Q. What year was that?

1944

Q. You reached 47 in 1944?

That was 1944. By that time replacements were starting to come through. Replacement planes and replacement crews. And it was interesting that from 25 missions on, we had fighters that could finally reach our targets. And that made a big difference. One of the most impressive things was the 332nd Squadron. It was an all-black squadron that General Davis came up with - and when they (the Tuskegee group) showed up, Boy! It was nice to see them.

Q. Tell me why.

They were so good. They were the cream of the crop. They probably were hassled more in training than we were. It was harder for them to make it than for us to make it. So, it's a mindset. Just incredible. Once in a while, when we get together, we grin at one another, and laugh at everything and we wonder why we're here. This is fifty years later - fifty-two years later.

It's an incredible kind of thing. I feel that my experience as a leader there, carried over when I got into summer camping, and all of

the things I've done through my life. I think my main talent is leadership talent. In fact, the fellow who wrote that one blurb in my records about qualified to be in command position, he became a general (and he's dead). He had actually given me my first instrument check-ride. He called me a three-cushion pilot. Really funny. He's six-two I used to have 3 cushions behind me so I could reach full pedal. I turned out to be his favorite. That was Col. then General Glantzberg. Now that was praise from above. And I flew more combat missions than he did. Because they wouldn't let the commanders and the echelon go on too many.

Q. Talk a little bit about the plane and how you had the same plane throughout.

I was the only one who flew that plane. It was mine. I have in my scrapbook, a receipt that I had to sign, when I picked up the plane at Willow Run. Lt. Trenner, one each B-24, four each Pratt & Whitney engines, one each bombsight. Incredible. I had to sign for this thing. At that time, they turned out 18,000 B-24s. More than B-17s, by the way. And at that time, they were probably the equivalent of \$300,000. In those days, that was a lot of money!

Q. That was like having....

You know, a car cost about \$1,500. I had to sign for it. What were they going to do?? Sue me for it??? But another interesting thing about the plane. It became OUR plane. I mean, it was Ed Trenner's plane. No question about it. We were able to name it. Almost everybody in the Air Force had naked ladies on their planes, right? And we were in California and I don't know how the contact was made, but the guy who drew Popeye, drew this insignia for us. So, we didn't have any naked lady. It is/was Swee'Pea. I still

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have a jacket that fits (!!) and has the Swee'Pea emblem on it on the back. By the way, among the original ten of us - none of us smoked. Whether that means anything or not, I don't know. Interesting. In those days they gave you free cigarettes. Two of the older guys were beer drinkers, but we didn't have any drinkers even. We went to Capri after our 28th mission. They gave us a week off on the Isle of Capri. Crazy. Here they have the finest hotels for the officers, and the second-rate hotels for the enlisted men. Typical of the Air Force. So, during that whole week, the four officers took extra uniforms along and we had spares for my six gunners. And for that week, they all wore officers' uniforms so we could be together. Teamwork, right? What were they going to do to us?? Send us back to? Now we had one mission. Anzio had started. Remember the invasion of Anzio. We had supply depots we had to hit. We had two groups that operated out of our home base. The group on the other side were the ones that hit friendly fire. And that was, boy! Were they unhappy about that. They bombed our own soldiers. And it was a foul-up. They were supposed to mark the line here and they marked it in the wrong place.

Incredible!!! In that particular war, it happened a lot of times. But if - one other thing - if you think - did you see the movie "Memphis Belle"?

Q. Yep.

The picture opens with the planes landing from the missions, and the ground crews are all playing ball, horseshoes, and stuff like that. And they're waiting out this one plane. This was before the credits even ran. This was the opening of the picture. The plane lands, and you see the ground crew rushing,

towards them and all of a sudden, the plane ground loops, and blows up. Absolutely what happened to us, except we didn't blow up. And then it goes into the picture. Now that picture was kind of silly, because they have them flying with their good uniforms on, and no oxygen masks, but that's Hollywood. But that first picture, boy! That brought it all back. You see the plane approaching, two engines out, lands, hits the ground, loops around and blows up. Fascinating.

Q. Did that experience, that landing, haunt you?

Never. Never. I've been accused of being too stable. No. It never did. I don't often think about it. I don't think I could recall the actual moment again because it happened in seconds. I recall being glad I was alive. And one other interesting, kind of, side story that illustrates what's happening. The Air Force, of course, kept replacing pilots and stuff like this, and I get back after my leave, and I get assigned to Liberal, Kansas, and I was instructing B-24s. I didn't want to do it, but you do what you're told. At that time, I don't know if any of the gentlemen you've spoken to have told you, but there was a point system. At a certain number of points, you could get out of the service. They were 85, a point a month, two for overseas, whatever it was. At the time they made the first count of points I had 130. But, the rules only counted if they wanted to count for you. They wouldn't let me out. I had 4 Air Medals, I had the Purple Heart, the Distinguished Flying cross, and all the time overseas, and it all added up, but they said it wasn't enough so they sent me to Liberal, Kansas to instruct on B-24s. The first Air Force instructor that I had in basic was an SOB. It was his technique, whatever it was. I mean, he just was nasty.

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He could've done it in different ways, but he was nasty. Lt. George Annis was his name. How could I forget him? Well, time passes, and I'm back from overseas, and now they're taking all of these officers who were teaching in many schools, and they're starting to rotate them. He was a Captain by this time, and lo and behold, he was assigned to learn how to fly a B-24. Who becomes his instructor?? Me. He didn't remember me. He had dozens and dozens of students. Well, I gave him such a hard time for the first 3 or 4 days. He couldn't understand it. He actually wasn't that good a pilot. He was very good with small planes. Finally, he came to me, and he says, "What gives with you?" I said, "You don't remember me, do you?" And of course, I explained the situation. This is what's called "getting even". I said, "So now we're on sound ground, I'll teach you how to fly this plane." Really fascinating, fascinating.

Now I could have stayed in and joined the Reserves. If I had, which they tried to get us to do, I'd have been called back for Korea. Just like Ted Williams. But for some reason, I had decided NOT to stay in. I thought I was a civilian at heart. I got out.

Q. What does that mean? A civilian at heart.

I was very good in the military and if I stayed in I would have become one of those possibly dead generals. I mean I had that flare. I loved the system and I understood the system. But the system is very unfair. A system that requires every supervisor to grade every person under him all the way up to the line. You know, the Navy has it, the Army has it. It's there. There is so much tension put on people to play this military game and I'd already realized that they'd spread the word about the G.I. Bill and I was going to do more with my opportunities. That's the best thing that happened to us -

the G.I. Bill. At that time, it was complete school. Four years - allowances, books, housing allowances, cash allowances. I sent most of it home to my mother, but it changed me from a city kid, to a world citizen. During the years I went to college, I got involved, because of scouting, a friend of mine said he had a job as a camp counselor and I joined him, and decided that the first day I was in the crummy camp that I was going to do this the rest of my life. So, 40 some odd years later I retired from a career in camping we could brag about a little bit.

Q. Interesting. Going back to the plane, I am thinking of the picture that was sent. There was a lot of graffiti on the plane.

Graffiti is the wrong word. My name was by my cockpit. The bombardier's name was down at the bottom. In other words, wherever. Plus, every time you flew a mission they drew another bomb on there. I think this is a drawing. This is a painting by the way. If you recall, the number was 18. You see the bombs there? Then, you can just about see a name there. This was known as Ed's plane. In training, by the way, in California, the teacher that had this drawing made was the one that had the research on the two planes that were lost in a flight over the Rockies. Fascinating story. Two planes were missing. We went on a search mission, but never found them. Possibly, I think, in the eighties, in one of the dams over a lake in the Rockies, they lowered the water to fix the dam and they found the planes.

And, this particular California teacher, his kids took it on as a project. A little school near that area. And, at our 50th reunion, in Fresno, they had this whole big thing about these planes that were found, and they had these kids represent each one of the men on the planes. And they had people from every one of those airmen, every family from

HOTEL INFORMATION



Crown Plaza Dayton Hotel 33 East 5th Street, Dayton, OH 45402

Single, double or handicap accessible rooms are all \$114 per night (plus taxes). Room rate includes full, hot breakfast buffet for all. Group rates are good from September 8 through September 20, 2018.

To make your reservation, call (800) 689-5586 and mention the **Bomb Groups Reunion**.

All walks in this hotel are short, but if you have mobility issues, be sure and ask them to house you close to the elevators. Handicap accessible rooms are available. Please ask if you need these accommodations. They won't know your needs if you don't tell them.

Reservations absolutely **MUST** be made NO LATER THAN **August 16, 2018**. Reservations after that date are **NOT** guaranteed at the group rate and are subject to room availability. There are no overflow hotel options available in downtown Dayton so to be sure that you get the room you want at the group rate, reserve before this date. Any reservation may be cancelled **WITHOUT PENALTY** if cancellation is made 24 hours or more before the check-in date.

Complementary valet parking is available. This is a downtown hotel. The parking garage is across the street with a 2nd floor enclosed skywalk to the hotel. You can leave your car at the front door, check in and they will park your car for you. Of course you can always park yourself if you prefer.

Complimentary airport shuttle is available, but you'll need to call the hotel in advance with your flight information to reserve a ride to the hotel.

See the itinerary for the reunion on page 20.

BOMB GROUPS REUNION**September 13—16, 2018 Dayton, Ohio**

Veteran's Highest Rank Attained _____

Name _____ Group _____ Squadron _____

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Names as they are to appear on name tags: _____

Registration fee # people _____ @ \$15.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

DO NOT include 461st Veteran in sub total

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH—Tour National Museum of the US Air Force—and Military Memorial Ceremony

people _____ @ \$15.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Individual Group Dinners

INCLUDE 461st Veteran in sub total

Prime Rib # people _____ @ \$41.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Grilled Salmon # people _____ @ \$37.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Eggplant Parmesan # people _____ @ \$30.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

DO NOT include 461st Veteran in sub total

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH

All Groups Banquet

New York Strip # people _____ @ \$41.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Rosemary Lemon Chicken # people _____ @ \$34.50 each Sub Total \$ _____

Pasta Primavera # people _____ @ \$30.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

DO NOT include 461st Veteran in sub total

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH

Return to National Museum of the US Air Force # people _____ @ \$15.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

INCLUDE 461st Veteran in sub total

Dayton Art Institute with lunch and shopping at

Second Street Market # people _____ @ \$10.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

INCLUDE 461st Veteran in sub total

Taste of Italy Buffet # people _____ @ \$37.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

DO NOT include 461st Veteran in sub total

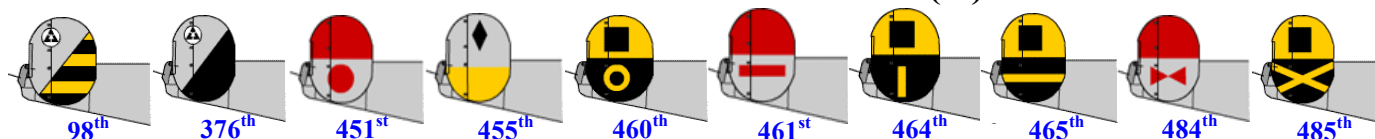
Do you need a wheelchair? Yes _____ No _____ GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

Emergency Contact _____ Phone # _____

Please send this form along with your check payable to Bomb Groups Reunion to:
 Bomb Groups Reunion Attn: Dave Blake | 648 Lakewood Rd. | Bonner Springs, KS. 66012-1804

2018 BOMB GROUPS JOINT REUNION

98th, 376th, 451st, 455th, 460th, 461st, 464th, 465th, 484th & 485th
BOMBARDMENT GROUPS (H)



Thursday, September 13th – Sunday, September 16th.

Thursday, September 13th is arrival and check in day. The hospitality room and registration desk will be open from 10:00AM till 5:00PM and then again at 8:00PM until ? The Hospitality room will feature the usual heavy hors d'oeuvres and beverages.

From 5:00-7:00PM Thursday, the hotel is hosting a welcome reception that will feature assorted cheeses in addition to fresh fruit and vegetable trays with dip, coffee and fruit punch.

At 7:00PM we will transition into our all groups welcome meeting at which time we will go over the upcoming schedule of events.

Friday, September 14th will feature activities at, and a tour of the National Museum of the United States Air Force.

Friday morning, we will depart the hotel at 8:00AM for a short drive to the AF Museum.

Another bus trip will be made from the hotel to the museum a little later in the morning for those who might want a little later start.

Upon arrival we will be allowed some private time with ropes down visiting the B-24 "Strawberry Bitch", an original B-24D that was assigned to the 376th BG, "Flash" Gordon Byfield, Pilot, one of our participating veterans and bomb groups.

At 9:15AM we will move to the Carney Auditorium for a special presentation of commemorative Presidential Unit Citation medals to each of our veterans by a General officer from Wright-Patterson AFB.

Also in the Carney Auditorium, we will then have the traditional Military Memorial Ceremony, conducted by Chaplain/Captain Chris Cairns, Grandson of the last CO of the 485th BG and Reunion Chaplain.

As a part of this Memorial ceremony a multi part wreath will be presented. This wreath as a whole will represent the combined effort of our bomb groups that worked together in the Fifteenth Air Force to secure victory over the Axis powers during WWII. The wreath will have removable sections with each section representing one of our individual Bomb Groups.

The individual group members can then take their part of the wreath to their respective marker in the Memorial Gardens outside on the museum grounds (each of our groups has a marker in that garden) to conduct any type of ceremony they desire.

Following that, everyone will be free to tour the museum at will.

Lunch is on your own today.

Buses will leave the museum at 1:15, 2:30 & 3:45PM to return to the hotel.

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Friday evening will feature our Individual Group Banquets as we have done in the past. Social hour will begin at 5:30PM with a cash bar in the commons area. Dinner will be served at 6:30PM

Saturday, September 15th will feature an expanded program of Veteran speakers, discussion panels or speakers from outside our organization. It will be a day when we “stay in house”. Everyone can relax, visit, attend the speaker presentations or do whatever their heart desires.

Lunch is on your own today. In addition to the hotel restaurant, there are numerous places within 1 or 1 ½ blocks of the hotel. A list of local restaurants can be found in your registration packet.

Saturday evening will feature our all groups Banquet.

Social hour will begin at 5:30PM with a cash bar in the ball room.

At 6:30, the Sons of the American Revolution will present and post the colors dressed in authentic Continental Army uniforms; immediately following we will recite the Pledge of Allegiance followed by the National Anthem sung by a vocalist from the GEM City band. Dinner will be served immediately thereafter at 6:45. The GEM City band will also provide big band music for our dinner.

Sunday, September 16th will begin with the 376th (Rev. Bob Oliver) hosted church service at 9:00AM.

We will leave at 10:15AM to return to the museum for more exploration. This museum is huge.

Lunch is on your own at the museum.

A bus will depart the museum at 1:15, 2:30 & 3:45PM to return to the hotel.

There will also be an alternative tour Sunday that will depart the hotel for the Dayton Art Institute at 10:15AM and then continue on to the Second Street Market at 12:30PM for shopping and lunch on your own. Departure for a return to the hotel will be at 2:30PM.

Sunday evening will feature our Farewell dinner which will be served at 6:30PM.

That will conclude our joint reunion for 2018.



461st Bombardment Group (H) Association Membership

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

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

If you have any questions, you can E-Mail Dave at dstyves@pmn.com.

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

- **Life Membership** – Men who served in the 461st during World War II and their spouses are eligible to join the Association for a one-time fee of \$25.00. This entitles the member to attend the annual reunions held in the fall each year, receive the newsletter for the Association, The 461st Liberaider, and attend and vote at the business meetings usually held at the reunion.
- **Associate Membership** – Anyone wishing to be involved in the 461st Bombardment Group (H) Association may join as an Associate member. The cost is \$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 461st Liberaider. You are not a voting member of the Association.
- **Child Membership** – Children of men who served in the 461st during World War II are eligible to join the Association as a Child Member. The cost is \$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 461st 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:		

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across the country. This was a very nice kind of thing because in all these years, they never had a funeral. They never had a thing to "end it".

Q. Nice Story

It was a very nice thing. And my bombardier lives in Fresno, and knew this teacher, and they fell in love with our crew and this picture has gone into the Air Force Museum. It's really great. The plane itself was like home base. If we had nothing to do, I would have the men out there, learning how to operate the radios, learning how to transfer gas. We never reached the point where we said "we know it all." I made them practice and practice and I said, "This is the way we're going to do it." Funny you know. You make a landing after a mission, and I'd hear from the tail gunner, "That was about a seven, Ed!" And this one says, "No. I give him a six and a half." because you bounced the plane in. Great guys! Incredible!

Q. When you were back home, and Europe was being liberated, the European war was coming to a close, what was your - when did you first become aware of concentration camps?

I think I became aware of it when the newsreels started. Remember when the guys first went in. I think we were already. I was already instructing back in Liberal Kansas already. So, I found out just like everybody else found out. I was horrified. It was incredible. Fortunately, I don't think any of those camps were placed around any of the targets we had hit, but who knows. I would hope that we never hit one of those. By the way, they had constructed a complete facsimile of Ploesti. About 5 miles from Ploesti to try to fool us into bombing a fake city. And

we learned which ones to hit. Imagine, you could hit six or seven of those refineries and within 4 weeks the Germans would have them running again. That's why you had to keep hitting them. But they ran out of gas. We felt that that was one of the reasons. You know, there were controversies about whether strategic bombing really meant anything. In the long term, ultimately, the infantry has to go in, and stuff like that, but it certainly did have an effect on their air force. They needed special gasoline to fly in those days, anyhow. Nowadays the Jets fly on kerosene. That's it. Inexpensive fuel - refined - but engines are much simpler and much more efficient.

Q. It's interesting. And that your initial fears that you might have had about your bombs being dropped...

Oh, sure, we might have killed Bill, my copilot! Can you imagine him. They put him in a prison camp that was a school in Budapest - a schoolyard, he said. And there was no basement, even. And so, he said, there were bombing raids, and when the weather was bad, they knew the planes were coming over. They knew we were going to drop bombs. After all, that's what they were told to do themselves. The worst moments, he said, were when you guys came over.

Q. So let's begin again. Let's look a little bit at the close of the war, in terms of what was your experience - where were you - do you remember?

Let's see. A more emotional time was being in Denver, when FDR died. That was something!! Boy!! You really felt that! Well, I'd finally gotten out so I was just another civilian by that time. When MacArthur was on the boat signing. The end of the WWII. I

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felt very good that I'd done my share. And I was very happy not to be in the military any longer. I think I didn't realize how lucky I was when Korea finally came along, because I knew I'd have been picked for that.

Q. What about the dropping of the Atomic Bomb? How did you respond to that? Your thoughts.

My thoughts at the time were I'm glad they did it, because I had the feeling that they saved a lot of marines and GIs. I didn't know whether they needed to drop the second one, but the first one I thought was sufficient. And the people who try to make a fuss about it now are silly because there would probably have been 2 or 3 million Japanese soldiers, and another million GIs killed if we had to go up into Japan. A cousin of mine, who was on Okinawa was a Marine Major. He could tell stories. He spent six months in china after everybody thought the war was over. Remember the war in the pacific was over, but we still had divisions in china fighting. In the middle between Chiang Kai-Shek and the other Chinese. So, the stories abound - just incredible. I can think more about being more involved in the flying than the rest of it. After all, you know it's fifty years. It's hard to reconstruct actual feelings. I know that I was happy that I was in college and happy that I was succeeding in college and that I had already decided that the first day that I spent in that summer camp job as a counselor, that was what I was going to do for the rest of my life and that was what took over my life. I feel I was very lucky doing what I did.

Q. Describe the image of the poster that you remember seeing in New York.

Well, there was an Uncle Sam wants you

poster, but this was a picture of a pilot with the old leather helmet on it, with the two Air Force planes flying. And it was a typical recruitment poster. I had gone down to Whitehall street to see what the options were. The more I thought about it, and the more I inquired about it, I thought it was pretty exciting. You know, coming out as an aviation cadet, they didn't tell you anything about the danger, the excitement. I think the Air Force song had just been adopted. It was pretty exciting.

Q. Have You ever flown since?

I was in two more accidents while instructing - lucky to walk away from them. And I decided that was enough flying. I'm very happy to fly with any kind of plane as long as the pilot's willing to go, I'm willing. When the pilot hesitates, I'm with him. No. Never been afraid of flying.

Q. You've never wanted to take on the role of responsibility?

No, I had enough. You know, you only do that once when you're that age and you're young and full of pep. Isn't it a shame that wars require lots of young people.

Q. It's true.

Now I have two sons who just missed Vietnam by age and I'm very glad that they missed it. I think we could talk about Mr. McNamara now, too, but we won't do that.

Q. Were you involved at all in doing outreach for some of the people who came to America after the concentration camps were liberated?

No, because the next 4 years I was involved. I decided at NYU it was much too much of a hassle and that I needed to be in a different

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environment. So, a friend of mine and I went to Florida, to the University of Miami and the GIs turned it into a good school. And I was able to go to school, work a night job, and earn my money playing baseball. You could only do that in Florida where it was warm. I always kept up with what was going on in the world, but the concentration camp story was just a horror. Everybody knew about it by then. You know, when you're going to school, and the pressure was on. The GI Bill of Rights – you had to pass. If you flunked your courses you were out. I wasn't about to do that. I went on to a different way of life. Then I discovered camping.

Q. Sounds terrific. Is there anything else that you would like to mention? Is there anything you thought of before coming in? Is there anything that you might like to add.

There may be things that I could think of before we met because I really had no idea. I don't know if this rambled for you. But, you know, one thing triggers another. I remember being at the Isle of Capri, and the week turned into ten days because Vesuvius started to send sparks up. So, they wouldn't let the boats go and come out to the Island of Capri. We had three more days of R&R (rest and relaxation). That's what you remember, right??? Incredible stuff. It was pretty hard, too. The course of flying those many months - to keep breaking in new crews – you know, one day the guys are sitting next to you and then there's another group. And some days you had to help pack up their stuff and send it home. Luckily, I didn't have to write any of the letters. Oh! Another interesting thing I had to censor all my enlisted men's letters. What a joke that was. One last story.

My mother, very nervous, lovely lady. I never wrote to her about a mission. I wrote to

her the day we visited Bari or we visited Naples or we had a day off. What I was writing to her, you'd think that I was on a summer Boy Scout camping trip. Right. My tail gunner, Eddie Rose, from Newark, New Jersey, worked out a code with his mother. And every time we flew a mission, he wrote a letter home. She knew exactly on the map where we had bombed! First thing she did, was to call my mother. I could have killed him when I found that out afterwards. By the way, he was a clown in the Aquacade - with Johnny Weissmuller - out at the Elliott Murphy Water Show in Queens. Stories about him would have to be censored. But it was just fascinating. My mother knew every time we flew and where. And I'm giving her all this bland garbage, trying not to worry her. Well...

Q. That experience; having been in flying formation, and having to go into the flack. The technique of it - more the emotional experience.

It's hard to reconstruct the fact that you knew, after all, the guns that are shooting the flak up, are shooting continuously. So, what you're seeing up there, you know more is to follow. When you're going through that stuff, you know in that minute or minute and a half that you're on that bomb run. If you don't stay absolutely level, there was no purpose in you going there in the first place. So, that took nerves. Even if the plane got hit, you had to straighten it out. You'd come home with holes that you never knew. This was a breeze, and all of a sudden you start counting all the holes in the plane. You find out how lucky it was they didn't hit anybody.

My top turret gunner got the Purple Heart. However, remember when you're flying, it's pretty cold up there - about 50 to 60 below.

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You lose two degrees every thousand feet. So, you've got your GI underwear on, regular uniform stuff on, insignia off, then you got your electric flying suit, then they got that great big Air Force stuff, that great big thing on you, and then you got the oxygen mask, and the helmet and then a parachute. He was in the top gun turret, and he got hit by a piece of flak that went through all these layers of clothing and hit him right in the can - right in his rear end. If you had been shaving it would be that kind of cut. Well he got the Purple Heart in front of the whole squadron. He has been teased for the rest of his life. Cracked his skin. Really funny. That's the kind of thing you joke about. We had one guy who got sick and had diarrhea. We threatened to throw him out of the plane. You know, you're on oxygen coming home, and you're down around 15,000 feet, off comes the oxygen mask. And all of a sudden, the smell started. The poor guy was so sick. We threatened to throw him out the bomb bay. To this day, when we get together, he has to go through this whole memory. That's what he's famous for. It was like you tease your brother or your sister. Things that happened when you grow up.

Q. Was flying missions, like you mentioned, was that like playing Russian roulette? Did you have that sense of continually being in front of one of the planes that would be hit?

I think it was a different mindset. You always knew that that was there, but you'd go to a briefing and you'd look around the room and depending on where the target was, you'd feel sorry for the ten or twenty guys that wouldn't be coming back. Thirty guys, or forty guys. Feeling sorry for them. Glad it wasn't going to happen to us. Especially, when you got a few missions on you, you felt sorry for the "rookies". I mean it's just a

game of chance, but your mindset has to be that way. I think some of the guys that failed at it, couldn't hide that - couldn't fool themselves enough. It was dangerous. We'd start engines, and you'd top it off, and you'd get out. Just before your turn to take off, they'd have the gas trucks there, to "top off" - to put in an extra 3 or 4 gallons on top of the 6,000 gallons or 7,000 gallons - because sometimes that's just what you needed to get back. But, so many things going on. You could only do that once in your life. I don't think you can repeat the process again. I know you couldn't. And all of a sudden you find yourself in clouds and sometimes that you can't see anybody else and you have no idea whether the clouds are stuffed or not. What if you run into another airplane. Once you got up above the clouds you could see each other, then you could assemble with one another, but you're coming up through the clouds. And they'd send us out in bad weather. Some general at Foggia is saying, "Go!", you know.

Q. Those stuffed clouds, there's no way of communicating with your

No. I suppose nowadays they probably have ways of detecting a plane that's near you, but nowadays there's no reason to fly that close. Here you got not only your group assembling, but if you've got 500 planes going to hit Ploesti, you got about twenty different places where they're assembling because you have to assemble, circle, and get into position before you take off. It's crazy. Think about it now. Why did we do that stuff? You had to have a lot of confidence in yourself.

Q. One other question that I've been sort of using for a standard. Do you remember your enlistment number? and your officer's number?

Yeah, 0801079. That was my officer's num-

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ber. Had a different one when I was a cadet. But I wouldn't remember that.

Q. Do you want to give specific memory to people who died during the war?

Well, I have a couple of crew members and stuff like that, but they're not from our area.

Q. No, it doesn't matter.

Jimmy Affinito, one of our gunners from Patterson New Jersey. I still stay in touch with his wife and family. But we're lucky. Nine of us are still alive. In a crew of ten, that's pretty good. I had a replacement guy who flew with us occasionally. It's hard to say that I had two guys killed, but I don't even remember their names. I have one fellow who flew with us once, Jimmy Jones, who calls me every week especially when he's

loaded. He flew once on that last mission when we crashed. So, he's one of my boys forever because he flew once with us. In fact, he was a member of crew 11, and that's why I got his picture on that thing. One time out of all the missions he flew, he flew with us.

When we came home, we were put in a stadium in Naples waiting assignment. We came home by ship. What would happen if the Germans decided to bomb us? They didn't have enough gasoline to reach us, but we got frightened anyway. They wouldn't let us dig foxholes. We'd completed our missions and they wouldn't let us dig any foxholes. Let's get out of here already.

Amazing. The officers were assigned to staterooms, eight to a stateroom on the Santa Paula. One of my gunners won \$8,000 in a crap game on the way home.

go on 'lone wolf' sorties with other crews, and on single plane day sorties by PFF radar when weather is too bad for formations. Up at 0330 to go on one, returned, sour, 0900. Plane redlined, crew chief left pitot head cover on, with heat on, and burned out the tube. 1300 parade formation. Presidential Unit Citation for raid on Budapest plane complex last summer. (Liberaider V14-2, 1990 says it was Ploesti Creditu-Minier refinery.) General Twining, Commanding General of the Fifteenth, flew in, made the presentation, and also the DFC awards. Site was plowed field down at group, where all became paddle feet, 20 lbs of mud on each shoe. My co-pilot snafu again, only ones wearing service caps and green pants, pulled out to be platoon leader. A P-38 buzzed the formation. Mickey ship from morning raid back with No. 1 engine feathered. Real high point of day: Eggs for breakfast. Whole, complete, un-dehydrated, un-powdered, un-scrambled, un-anythinged, genuine fried eggs. One per man. 21-gun salute is in order. Jack and Naves in dispute re Christmas package pick-up.

12-4. My crew #89R disintegrating. Gunners Cokrhame and Main went to the Cerignola hospital a couple of days ago to join gunner Bradford in the diphtheria ward, and today they took radio operator Jim Stack to join them. Keatley, navigator, is on lone wolf raids and now Roy Naves is to be bombardier for other crews. Dunlap was co-pilot for Jenkins today, to Naples to take Tom Welton's crew to rest camp and bring Blakes's crew back. It was my turn to fly a desk in squadron S-2 office, censoring enlisted men's letters home. Creepy, snoopy feeling, but with humor rewards. "I'm off today, and it's raining, and I ain't got nothing else to do, so I might as well write to you, Darling", "Darling, precious, sweet, lovely, utterly adorable, how I long to hold you in my arms...", "...the low down bastardly sonofabitch of an engineering officer wouldn't send me to rest camp...", etc. (Happily, we had to black out only on military security grounds.)

12-5. Morning mission was stood down, crews

to practice formation instead. Wheedled Baker, got on it, co-pilot for Moore. Waited at line while armorers toggled out the 7 RDX bombs. Un-nerving "thump, thump, thump..." 0955 take-off in #25. Assemble over salt flats near spur, taking #4 position. R/C was "Der Fuerher's Face", et el. West, in #2 spot suddenly broke away to right as though aborting, so Barnes scooted up from #5 to take his spot - easier flying. The West veered back in and started hollering for his old spot. Barnes wouldn't give it up, and there was a terrific wrangle on radio for a long time. Finally West moved back in, "sat down" 10 feet above Barnes, making him drop back to #5. Torretta Field was closed due to 50 MPH cross wind, so we were sent down to "Race Card" (464th Bomb Group) 20 miles southeast to land on their east-west runway. Crossing the Ofanto River, we hit some of the most violent turbulence I've ever experienced, and had to 'bicycle' on controls to keep from rolling over. Landed 1305. Half the Fifteenth was already at Race Card, lined up nose to tail on taxi strips, making it a memorable display of fuselage art. The wads of pink Dentyne chewing gum on the breasts of "Cherokee Rose" were the hit of the show. (Had no camera, but from memory I drew a few mini copies of some of them.) They fed us, after the art appreciation walk, loaf in planes until wind let up a bit. 1555 take-off, back in trail to Torretta, 1610 land in still vicious 25-30 MPH cross-wind. 1815 Pilot and co-pilot meeting. "There's a lot of good co-pilots to take over if you 1st pilots snafu", etc.

12-6. 23rd birthday anniversary. Day off, by mere coincidence. Mission of the day was a milk run to northern Yugoslavia. My co-pilot, Jack, had a clash with the mess officer at breakfast. Jack threw a burnt pancake across the room at the mess line, and the mess officer came over and chewed him out. "Take what you get, and like it, this ain't the Woldorf!" Traded beer rations to welder to weld spigot on our water can. Mike, the fattest and snottiest of the little 'pizon' camp boys, in with a kilo of walnuts ("machi") to trade for cigarettes. Unhappy with his end of

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the deal, he threatens, “Kick in ass, me you.” Wrote letters to Pa, Ma, sister El, younger brother Filliche, also, “finis amigo”, because his lire er Gene – in subs at Newport, R.I. don’t buy him enough cigarettes. Salviare re-

“DREGS” Air Crew’s Adventurous Flight to USA

by
Robert M. Kelliher
Crew #89
765th Squadron, 461st Bomb Group

PROLOGUE

Wednesday, April 25, 1945: 18th and last mission. Linz, Austria RR yard. Planes both sides down aflame from anti-aircraft fire. No chutes.

Sunday, May 6, 1945: Air parade celebration of end of WWII in Europe, max effort, entire Fifteenth Air Force and support. “Targets” were MAAF Headquarters at Casserta, Rome, Fifteenth Air Force Headquarters at Bari. 8,000 feet “low” altitude, very hot, sweaty, in “friendly” fighter escorts, fiendish turbulence.

Monday, May 7, 1945: Unofficial celebration of war end in Europe. Much drinking, shooting of weapons, in camp, and more drinking in town. It got our bombardier, Naves, so “high” that he went into delirious babbling about his nightmare experience of escape and evasion in Yugoslavia after bailing out with another crew. Long time for Keatley and me to soothe him to sleep.

Tuesday, May 8, 1945: “Victory in Europe” officially. Unofficially “happy the killing, maiming, destruction, is ended.” Brief AM formation to announce it. Major Baker subbed for Group CO Rogers – “not well.” Rowdy all day revelry. Raucous “parades”, singing, speeches, drinking, fist and gun(!) fights. Music by ragtag Italian camp boys, assembled via gun point auditions. Promotions announced at lunch. Made 1st Lt.

Wednesday, May 9, 1945: Supply drop low level missions to POW stockades in Austria foothills today. Keatley (N), Naves (B), were at Klagenfurt area, saw RR M/Y areas “knocked flat.”

ported smuggling bread out of the mess hall. Wrote letters to Pa, Ma, sister El, younger brother Gene – in subs at Newport, R.I.

Beach party near Barletta, to swim in Adriatic, for most of the rest of the group. “Sand” is crushed seashells, water shared with herder’s flock of filthy sheep. Lone signorina on beach, entirely surrounded by an acre of military personnel.

Saturday, May 10, 1945: Visit to Henry Banks, high school classmate, in engineers near Foggia.

Sunday, May 20, 1945: Night takeoff and landing practice, with three other pilots.

Monday, May 21, 1945: To Bari, with CP, visit Willie’s grave and F.E. Yarbrough, still in hospital.

Wednesday, May 23, 1945: To 764th Squadron for info on pal Lalewicz’s crew fatal aerial collision.

Saturday, May 26, 1945: Night flight to Sicily, navigator “celestial” practice for ocean flight. Stromboli active volcano an awesome side trip spectacle en route.

Wednesday, May 30, 1945: 765th Squadron main body, 14 crews, to Gioia, in our best B-24s. Will fly the southern route, Natal in Africa to Brazil, then up to USA. My navigator, Keatley with Staples, and bombardier, Naves, with Traetta.

Official Song of the Army Air Forces

Off we go into the wild blue yonder,
Climbing high into the sun;
Here they come, zooming to meet our thunder,
At 'em boys, Give 'er the gun!
(Give 'er the gun now!)
Down we dive, spouting out flame from under,
Off with one hell-uv-a roar!
We live in fame or go down in flame.
Nothing'll stop the Army Air Corps!

Here's a toast to the host of those who love the vastness of the sky,
To a friend we send a message of his brother men who fly.
We drink to those who gave their all of old,
Then down we roar to score the rainbow's pot of gold,
A toast to the host of men we boast, the Army Air Corps!

Minds of men fashioned a crate of thunder,
Set it high into the blue;
Hands of men blasted the world Asunder;
How they lived God only knew!
(God only knew then!)
Souls of men dreaming of skies to concur
Gave us wings, ever to soar!
With scouts before and bombers galore.
Nothing'll stop the Army Air Corps!

Off we go into the wild blue yonder,
Keep the wings level and true;
If you'd live to be a gray-haired wonder
Keep the nose out of the blue!
(Out of the blue, boy!)
Flying men, guarding the nations' border,
In echelon we carry on.
Nothing'll stop the Army Air Corps!

President's Corner

It is Memorial Day 2018 (May 28) as I write this column. I can't help but take a few minutes to remember all the heroes of the 461st that gave their all to preserve our freedom. We are ever so thankful for the heroes what made it back, but we cannot forget the ones that didn't. If I had room, I would list the names of every one of them. They deserve to be remembered all the time and especially every year at this time.

Plans for the 2018 reunion are now complete as you can see elsewhere in this issue of the Liberaider. Although we have been to Dayton and the United States Air Force Museum a couple of times in the past, I feel this visit will be very special and I would encourage everyone to make a special effort to attend. I have never managed to see everything the museum has to offer and there are always changes.

The museum will take down the ropes surrounding the "Strawberry Bitch" allowing us to get up and personal with this 376th aircraft. I understand they still won't allow us to climb into it, but to be able to reach out and touch one of the planes that was actually there during WWII will be very special indeed.

During WWII, every bomb group that will be in represented this year received the Presidential Unit Citation at some point during their tour. This year, every veteran in attendance will be presented with the Presidential Unit Citation. I'm sure there will not be a dry eye in the house during this presentation.

I'd like to put in a special plug for the Editor of the Liberaider (me). In case you hadn't noticed, the Liberaider is getting smaller. In-

stead of the usual 40 page newsletter, this issue is only 32 pages. How come? Well, it has to do with the material the Editor is receiving. He can only publish what he receives. If he doesn't get material, he can't put out the Liberaider. I know we still have veterans out there that have memories of events that happened over seventy years ago. And I know there are family members who have been told about those events. Let me ask everyone reading this issue to please take the time to submit those stories so the Editor has something to put into print. It's always nice to see something you wrote show up in the newsletter. Don't worry about what your story looks like. The Editor can do his job and make it look nice.



461ST BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

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Webmaster Comments

The 461st website continues to grow although the other squadrons to work on when I am at a much slower pace than in the past. I'm done with the 764th. not receiving as much material as I have.

This is okay as there are a number of things I have been wanting to work on that had been put on the shelf until such time as my work load let up. Now is a perfect time.

One of the things deals with the Roster. Hopefully everyone's name is on the appropriate Roster page, but if you see an error, please let me know. My current activity centers on the 764th Squadron roster. If you look at that page, you'll notice that some, but not all, the names are links. Those links tie the name to the crew page that individual served with. For example, Harry C. Abele, Jr. is a link to the Kursel #6-1 crew page since Harry served on that crew. I am no where near done with the 764th Squadron and I still have

The other thing I'm working on is a little more difficult to explain. It involves changes to the 49th Bomb Wing rather than the 461st. I'm sure everyone is aware that the 461st was part of the 49th BW thus changes there feed the 461st. If you look at the 49th BW page, you'll see a section called Missions. In there I'm listing the orders issued by the 49th BW to the three bomb groups along with the reports each bomb group sent back at the completion of the mission. In essence, the orders say what the bomb groups were suppose to do while the reports say what the bomb group actually did. This information along with the history of the bomb groups provides a more complete view of the activity performs during the war.