



CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

Fall, 2005 Editor, Craig Ward, 813 Peterstow Drive, Euless, Texas 76039
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Gus Wendt ends his tenure as Executive Director / Treasurer of the 455th Bomb Group Association

It was truly a sad day early this year when our Executive Director / Treasurer Lt. Col. Gus Wendt asked to be replaced after eight years in that position. Gus had represented the 455th Bomb Group across our nation. He has traveled from California to Virginia as our representative, and when we voted to install 455th Bomb Group plaques in such places as the March AFB Museum in California, Cannon AFB, N.M. (birth place of of the 455th B.G.), and our training base at Langley AFB Virginia, Gus was our representative.

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President's Message

William Gemmill, Lt. Col (ret.)



Editor's Note: This column was submitted prior to the 455th BG Association reunion in Kansas City, Missouri ...

Our reunion in Kansas City is fast approaching, and I sincerely hope to see a good representation of 455th'ers at The Westin Crown Center on October 19-23. It will be interesting to again be side-by-side with the 454th ... sort of "de-ja-vu all over again".

The Armed Forces Reunion folks have again done a masterful job, and the fact that the Collings Foundation's Liberator (and that "other" bomber) will be in Kansas City will be the icing on the cake.

(continued, next page, left column)

President's Message (cont.)

You all received the 455th 2005 Reunion Package from Greg Riggs, our newly appointed Executive Director.

Our ever-faithful Executive Director and Treasurer, Gus Wendt, found it necessary to relinquish those heavy reins after serving our Association for many years. Let's face it, we're all getting a bit long in the tooth!

We will hopefully get to honor Gus in Kansas City for his loyal service.

You will remember Greg Riggs from our last reunion in Orlando. He is the son of former 455 President Ed Riggs. Greg, along with our very capable editor of the *Cerignola Connection*, Craig Ward, were voted into our ranks as full-fledged members in Orlando.

When it became necessary to find a replacement for Gus, Colonel Gregory Riggs stepped forward. As your President, I appointed Greg to immediately assume the position so capably filled by Gus in the past.

Frankly, I don't know if all the "t's" were crossed or all the "i's" were dotted when it came to our Association's by-laws, but I'm sure it will all come out in the wash at our Board of Directors meeting in October in Kansas City!



Aviation Wisdom

There is no reason to fly through a thunderstorm in peacetime.

Gus Wendt (cont.)

Gus never missed a reunion in all those eight years and was always at the board meetings with a fine report of his activities and an up-to-date Treasurer's report. He traveled thousands of miles to represent us, many times at his own expense, and always displayed the highest degree of integrity and honesty in his oral and written reports.

He served under four Presidents of the Bomb Group Association, and always with the same enthusiasm and vigor.

Gus joined the 741st Bomb Squadron in March, 1944. He earned the Distinguished Flying Cross and five Air Medals in combat. He flew many of the toughest missions that were assigned to the 455th B.G.

After completing his tour of combat, Gus returned to the USA for various other assignments in the USAF.

He married his lovely wife Marie in 1949, and retired from the USAF in 1966. Gus and Marie were two early members when the 455th Bomb Group Association was formed at Colorado Springs.

On behalf of all members of the 455th Bomb Group Association, we extend a big "Thank You" to Gus Wendt for a job well done!

Aviation Truism

The three most common expressions ...
or famous last words ...
in aviation are:
"Why is it doing that?"
"Where are we?"
and
"Oh, Sh..!"

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

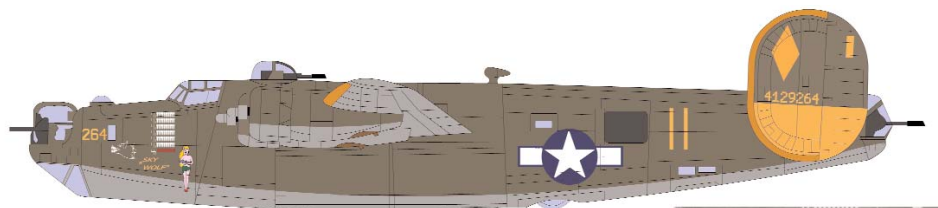
I am sending an improved drawing of Sky Wolf.

I have one question. On June 26, 1944, 455th BG Liberators were attacked by Me410s. Can you please send me some details, memories or excerpts from a mission report related to this attack?

Which planes were lost due to these twin engined fighters? Are any crew names, photos of planes, or photos of crewmembers available?

I am researching actions of Me410s in the summer of 1944. There were only six missions during which these aircraft attacked 15th AF aircraft. This June 26 mission seems to be the biggest one!

Best Regards,
Peter Kassak
pkassak@yahoo.com



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Craig Ward

Editor, *Cerignola Connection*

817-540-1068

Can You Help ?

Dear Editor:

In reading the article (last newsletter) about the World War II memorial in Washington, DC, and the meeting of Ed Foley (741st) and Howard Cooper (740th), I was not aware of the 455 BG insignia that Foley wore on his cap.

Is there anyway I can obtain one for myself?

Sincerely,

Al Klinek (743rd)

6798 Meadowwood Drive
Mayfield Village, OH 44143

Can You Help?

***Results from a
previous column request***

Dear Editor,

We now have five good, solid, eyewitnesses to the crash of Lt. Harris. Your newsletter has been unbelievably effective.

I have published notices like this in other BG newsletters, and have NEVER found five good witnesses.



Each of these vets have some very solid recollections of what happened that day.

They pretty much all agree that Harris may have been on a couple of prior missions but this was mostly the first one with his own crew.

There are other photos out there showing the wreckage from other angles. Two of the vets promised to make me copies.

One witness says that the first men on the scene knew that at least one person inside was still alive and "suffering badly". As soon as the men that were able to get out of the aircraft by themselves were evacuated, everyone was ordered away from the aircraft because the plane was loaded with time-fused bombs.

They had to leave at least one man to die, pinned inside.

The plane stood like that for several hours before it was deemed safe enough to approach.

I have also obtained some other USAAF files while I await others. When everything finally comes together, I'll donate an article for you to use about this tragedy/crash.

Best Regards,

Brian Lindner

**2006 B-24 Liberator
Wall Calendar**

Each page is 11" x 14", and opens up to 22" x 14". Each month's calendar is accompanied by a different picture of a B-24 Liberator.

Send a check for \$12.45 (\$13.41 in CA.), which includes postage & handling, to:

Bomber Legends
1672 Main Street, Ste. E-124
Ramona, CA. 92065
1-866-788-3624

A Message From Gregory Riggs Executive Director / Treasurer of the 455th BG Association

I assumed the responsibilities of Executive Director / Treasurer from Gus Wendt on May 30, 2005. Gus' health had taken a sudden turn for the worse, and it became necessary for him to pass the baton. First, it is appropriate to thank Gus for his eight years of dedicated service to the association in this position. It is a demanding job, and as you know, Gus worked tirelessly at it. He will be a tough act to follow.

I am a second-generation association member. I started attending reunions in 2001 following my retirement from the Air Force. I consider it a privilege to serve the generation who preserved our nation's freedom and passed that along to my generation.

Approximately 130 people attended our reunion in Kansas City. Let me summarize a few items of business that was conducted at several board and membership meetings:

- (1) The requirement to have ten directors was modified to permit between six and ten directors.
- (2) The association will function as a clearinghouse of contact information for association members. In other words, we will help members stay in touch with one another by providing names, addresses, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses if we have them. Be assured that we are not going to sell mailing lists. This is just a way to help friends find friends. However, if you do not want your contact information shared, please let me know in writing. I will keep confidential anyone's contact information who does not want it to be available for sharing.
- (3) Speaking of addresses, please let me know anytime your address changes. We spend between \$100 and \$160 with the USPS each year because some addresses are no longer current. This is a simple way you can help our association save money.
- (4) Another way to help the association financially is to stay current in your dues. Response to our last plea for support in this area was gratifying, and we now have thirteen additional life members since our last newsletter.

Our reunion was a great chance for our association members to visit with old friends and to make new ones. The Collings Foundation flew in their B-24 and B-17. At least three of our members' sons took flights in the Liberator! Our finale was the Saturday evening banquet. Lt. General (Ret) Mike Short spoke to us about the status of air power today, connecting the foundation the 455th pioneered with air power's foreseeable future. Gen Short was Director of Operations for U.S. Air Forces in Europe during the Bosnia conflict, and he was commander of 16th Air Force during the Serbia Air War. He continues to advise the Air Force as a Senior Mentor.

The next reunion is scheduled for 2007. Following that reunion, our plan is to move to annual reunions. We will explore joining forces with other 15th Air Force bomb group associations to keep our reunion numbers strong. The test case this year with the 454th Bomb Group was successful. The location for the 2007 reunion has not yet been established, but mark your calendars now to be there.

Thank you again for the opportunity to serve the members of our association.

Sincerely,
Gregory Riggs
Col. USAF Ret.

455th BG Association Executive Director / Treasurer

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am trying to get some information concerning my father, who was a radar officer (ultimate rank, Captain) with the 454th Bomb Group between 1944 - 1945.

I contacted the historian of the 454th. He said that, based on his records, my father "was assigned to the 455th Bomb Group, who shared parallel runways with us. Their location was on the other side of a large farm near Cerignola."

According to the roster, he was assigned to the 741st Squadron. His name appears on page 271 of the Group History "Flight of the Vulgar Vultures, 1943-1945."

My dad's recollection was that he was originally assigned to the 455th as a 2nd Lt., but that the 455th already had a radar officer, Harold Glick. After a short time, he was re-assigned to the 454th. Do you have any information on this?

I have located all of my dad's papers, and I see that according to his service record, he was assigned to the 738th Bomb Squadron of the 454th Bomb Group from Sept. 14, 1944 to Dec. 7, 1944, as Radar Officer. From Dec. 8, 1944, to May 6, 1945, he was with the 741st Bomb Squadron of the 455th Bomb Group as Group Electronics Officer.

Any information your readership could provide me would be appreciated.

Best Regards,

Joseph T. Moldovan, Partner
Morrison Cohen, LLP
909 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022-4731
Tel: 212.735.8603
jmoldovan@morrisoncohen.com

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I don't know how many of you with e-mail addresses in the newsletter responded to Viliam Blaknik, but I have found it very interesting.

He got me an enlarged picture of the plane our crew flew, the Linda Ann, #492.

When I looked at that photo presented at full screen size on the computer, it made me feel like I was standing there on the hard stand and looking at her 60 years ago.

Viliam is writing about our bombing near Dubova, Odertal and Bleckhammer, which were some of our longest and roughest missions. He sent me some close-up ground photos of destruction of the synthetic oil plant at Dubova, Slovakia. Some bombs did hit the target.

He also mentioned a Slovakian uprising in September, 1944. Fifteenth Air Force planes flew in to rescue downed air crew members held by the Slovakian underground. I had never heard about these events before.

He is very interested in bomb- fall photos. If anyone has some, please forward them to me. I will make sure he receives them for inclusion in his book.

Charles E. Stark (740)
carbchar@comcast.net

Can You Help?

My name is Gabor Horvath, an aviation historian from Canada. My research area is the history and planes of the 15th AF in Italy in 1944-45, including the planes of the 455th Bomb Group.

Recently, I am working on a graphical project, reconstructing the historically accurate color profiles of the 455th BG B-24G,H,J,L,M aircraft.

I have many great photos, memories, etc., but only a few mention the planes' accurate fuselage (battle) numbers they wore between their waist gun position and the tail section. On OD planes it was white, on natural metal planes, this was black.

Do you or your readership have a resource that could help me in my research ... matching a plane's nose art to a color, serial number, and to the assigned pilot?

Example: Nose Art: 'YO-YO', S/N: 44-41199, black #31, etc.

Any help would be much appreciated. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Gabor Horvath
ggghs@hotmail.com

You have never lived until you
have almost died.

For those who fought for it,
freedom has a flavor the
protected will never know.

Anonomous

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I was happy to find the history of the 455th Bomb Group on your website:

www.awardphp.com/455th_BG_History.php

My father, John Frantz, served in the unit. He died in 1991.

I'm trying to get more information on his service. It appears he was in the 740th Squadron.

I think he was a mechanic. While going through the 455th BG History posted on your website, I saw a photo of the 740th squadron maintenance personnel on page 182. The resolution isn't the best.

Do you have a higher resolution image of this photo, or if you know where I could get one? I would be happy to pay for a copy.

I was hoping that either my mom or myself could identify my dad in the photo.

I appreciate any help you or your readership could provide.

Regards,
Steven Frantz
10804 Lakespring Way
Hunt Valley, MD 21030
phone: 410-440-7423

God grants liberty only to those who love it and are always ready to guard and defend it.

- Daniel Webster

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am an aviation artist completing a painting for a former 455th BG copilot, commissioned by one of his daughters.

Since it is supposed to be a surprise, I can't dig on him directly for any additional information. However, the one photo I have to work from appears to be a 743rd BS (not a 742nd) aircraft.

Although most of the rudder has been "clipped" in the photo, it appears the squadron marking is a black horizontal stripe like the 743rd, rather than the diagonal one like the 742nd.

Another contact told me that it was not uncommon for aircraft to be shuffled between the four squadrons depending on attrition, replacements, etc. I assume this may be the case with his aircraft, but I can't be sure.

Any more information you can furnish would be deeply appreciated.

Sincerely,
Gerry Asher
6837 Northpark Drive
Fort Worth TX 76180-2669

Memorial Day, May, 2005 Nettuno Anzio American Cemetery

Olimpio Guidi, representative of the Defense Department, and attached to the American Embassy in Rome, along with personal friend and former ambassador, George

McGovern, invited Mario Capocéfalo to attend the Memorial Day ceremony.

The current American ambassador read a message from President Bush praising those that gave the supreme sacrifice to liberate Europe from tyranny.

When Mario goes to visit these beautiful sites, he always places flowers on the gravesites of his fallen friends killed in action. In particular, Mario paid his respects to 2nd Lt. Gerald C. Thaxton, 454th Bomb Group, 737 Bomb Squadron, from San Antonio, Texas. Lt. Thaxton was killed in action over Ploesti on his 6th mission, May 18th, 1944.

Upon Jerry's death, Mario was bequeathed Lt. Thaxton's personal effects.

To this day, Mario cherishes these remembrances, and proudly displays them to former flyers when they visit Cerignola.



Mario Capocéfalo of Cerignola, Italy, visiting the Anzio grave of Lt. Gerald Thaxton (Texas native), 454th BG, killed in action, May 18, 1944.

Final Flights

Lt. Charles Fredrickson (743)

Lt. Fredrickson, 80, of Woodland Hills, Calif., died February 26, 2005. He served as a navigator on a B24 bomber. He flew 31 missions out of San Giovanni Field in Cerignola.

He was shot down 7/27/1944 and captured the next day outside of Budapest, Hungary. He was held prisoner for nine months. He spent eight months in German POW camps.

He received the following medals: Purple Heart, Prisoner of War, Air Medal and Presidential Unit Citation.

Burial was at Arlington National Cemetery March 30, 2005 with full Air Force honors. He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Jeanne, two sons and two daughters.

Col. Charles Painter (741)

Col. Charles W. Painter, Jr. passed away in December, 2004. Col. Painter's wife, Margaret Painter, is an active member of the 455th BG Association.

Col. Painter's daughter, Christine Painter, has been trying to contact some of his old friends, but has hit a few dead ends. If you would like to contact Christine, please email her at the following address: (painter1112@comcast.net).

Editor's Note: *If you don't have access to email, mail your correspondence to your editor at the address in this newsletter. I will make sure Christine receives it.*

Editor's 2nd Note: *Col. Painter was described in the book "The Wild Blue" as "one of the best pilots in the 741st BS & the 455th BG".*

T/Sgt. Angelo Marcotrigiano (741)

T/Sgt. Marcotrigiano passed away March 26, 2005. He was 83 years old.

Sgt. Marcotrigiano was a radio operator / gunner nicknamed "Trigger". His plane was named the BTO ("Big Time Operator") B-24J #42-78504.

The crew of BTO was:
Pilot: Captain Bill Jerchelle
Co-Pilot: Lt. Lloyd Reynolds
Navigator: Captain John L. Clark
Bombardier: Lt. John Croplin
Radio Operator/Gunner: T/Sgt. Angelo Marcotrigiano (Trigger)
Gunners: S/Sgt. Fred Francis, S/Sgt. Art Holloway, S/Sgt. George Hofer, T/Sgt. Lou Kent

On Mission # 198 over Moosbierbaum, his plane took heavy flak, destroying the nose of the plane. They made it to Bari without brakes or a nose wheel. They used parachutes for brakes, and ended up standing on its nose, the tail pointed straight up.

Sgt. Marcotrigiano saved John Croplin's life on this mission, but did not receive the DFC.

M/Sgt. James J. O'Boyle (743)

On Friday, April 29, 2005, James J. O'Boyle, Sr. of Phoenix, Arizona, went on his final flight ...

Destination HEAVEN...
His wife was at his side at the

moment of his passing. They had just celebrated 58 years of marriage three days earlier.

Lt. Galand Douglas (743)

Lt. Douglas, bombardier on Ed Dahl's crew, took his final flight on Sept. 19, 2005.

Lt. John Brett (743)

Lt. Brett, navigator on Ed Dahl's crew, took his final flight earlier this year.

Capt. George Crum (742)

Capt. George Wilbur Crum, of La Habra, passed away peacefully on July 11, 2005. He was 85.

Born in Provo, Utah, in 1919, Mr. Crum was a Captain in the U.S. Army Air Corps in WWII and served with distinction as a B-24 bomber pilot in Europe.

George is survived by his wife of 59 years, Sheila, his son, Norman, and his daughter, Sally.



*George Crum (above),
circa 1943*

Editor's Note: *See the next page for an article written by the son of Capt. Crum, regarding an evening of baseball and a tribute honoring his late father.*

San Francisco Giants Honor Captain George W. Crum

As the largest Chevron retail marketer on the West Coast, I was asked to throw out the first pitch at "Chevron Fireworks Night" at SBC Park in San Francisco on Tuesday, July 19, 2005. After my dad's passing on July 11th, the funeral on the 16th and all the events and emotions surrounding such a time, it was nice to get away and do something fun.

Little did I know that a few of my employees had gotten in touch with Chevron and the Giants regarding my dad's passing and had cooked-up a special tribute in his honor.

My wife and I, my two sons, my daughter-in-law, a cousin, and a few key employees arrived at the ballpark nice and early on a beautiful, cool evening. We had dinner on the club level and were then escorted down to the field level.

We stood along the fence between home plate and the Giants' dugout for about 15 minutes while the infield was cleared, the national anthem was sung, and the crowd was welcomed by the public address announcer.

Then, "Lou Seal," the Giants' mascot, came over and accompanied me to the mound. The Atlanta Braves were the evening's opponents and a full house (43,000) was expected.

Everyone had told me that, whatever else happened, I must NOT bounce the ball to home plate. If I did, I'd probably be booed by the crowd.



I'd warmed up a few times in the previous days with my son and was feeling pretty confident ... the old left arm still had some pop in it.

As Lou Seal comically accompanied me out to the mound, I said to him, "Any last bit of advice? I'm feeling pretty nervous." From deep inside the mascot's head came the words, "Just don't bounce it." Oh, thanks ... like I hadn't heard THAT before!

I walked up the pitcher's mound, turned around and caught the full effect of standing in that special place in front of a sold-out stadium. People were still filing in, but it was getting pretty packed and noisy.

Everything was ready for "the pitch." Then I heard the announcer proclaim, "Now, in honor of a true American hero, Captain George Crum, a WWII bomber pilot who passed away last week, his son Norman will throw out the first pitch!"

I was astonished.

I looked at my wife, and she motioned urgently to the center field scoreboard. I turned around and there it was ... a jumbo-sized picture of my dad, circa 1943, with him standing proudly in front of his B-24.

I couldn't believe it.

The whole stadium rose to their feet and applauded. What a moment. With no fear or nervousness at all, I reared-back and chucked the ball squarely over the plate. As I ran off the field, the catcher caught up to me, placed the ball in my hand and said, "Congratulations. You must be very proud."

I was, indeed.

My dad was a humble person, really. He never called attention to himself and, if he was somehow able to look down on the scene, I'm sure he was thoroughly embarrassed.

However, it was not only a tribute to him, but to all the veterans of WWII and the other members of The Greatest Generation. I'm very thankful to my employees, Chevron, and the San Francisco Giants for making this special occasion possible.

Best Regards,

Norm Crum

Email: norman.crum@vpps.net

Basic Flying Rule

Try to stay in the middle of the air. Do not go near the edges of it. The edges of the air can be recognized by the appearance of ground, buildings, sea, trees and interstellar space. It is much more difficult to fly there.

A Voice From the Past **by Alfred (A1) Asch**

Naomi was going through her files a few days ago (which she has maintained for some 61 years). She found the following letter dated November 20, 1988 written by Marge Cool, the wife of the late Colonel Kenneth Cool, our first Group Commanding Officer.

We share this letter with you as it has information about Colonel and Mrs. Cool's activities after the Colonel left Italy and the 15th Air Force.

The letter is quoted here:

Dear Naomi and A1,

Thank you for your beautiful letter. I am now having my own version of 'War and Remembrance'.

I very well remember that trip to Alamogordo. (Naomi and Mrs. Cool drove together from Orlando to Almagordo and then to Salt Lake City.) I felt so sorry for you for you were really ill. I remember the blackout along the Gulf and not being able to get a hotel room in Salt Lake City.

We had to stay in a boarding house in Ogdon. We were afraid we were in a 'house of ill repute' and moved the dresser in front of the door to keep anyone out.

Over the years, we have seen the Harris's, the John's and Uppie. We became good friends of General Upthegrove and his wife. His wife Sally died a number of years ago. He later remarried, but since then, we didn't see much of him, although we kept in touch.

Just talked yesterday with Ad Baker's wife. He went down on that big Ploesti raid. He took over the 93rd and Ken came home to start the new group (455th).

A brief summary of our life follows:

Our daughter Nancy lives outside of Philadelphia, son Denny in Columbus and son Kenny here in Cleveland. We have ten grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

When Col. Cool came home from Italy, he spent six months in the hospital with a bad knee, fever and what-not. While there he decided to quit flying and take up sailing. We had a 36 ft. sailboat and spent 14 fun-filled years, racing and cruising with it. After that, Ken didn't feel sure-footed enough to handle the boat so he went into old cars. I didn't care about that too much.

We had always talked about a trip around the world when Ken retired, so we did that by boat in about three months. It was a wonderful trip, but hard at times. Ken's illness had already started and I just couldn't explain to people on the ship.

He sold his business before he retired, which makes me believe he knew it sometime before he told me. He had Alzhimers and was ill for six and one half years. Those were sad years; it's awful to watch a loved one's mind go.

Stop off and see me sometime on your way to Gull Lake. I have plenty of room if you'd care to spend the night.

P.S.: I had a blood clot hit

my spinal cord which paralyzed me from the waist down. I've recovered since, but that's why I'm in a wheel chair. That's ten years ago.

*Best Regards,
Marge Cool*

Naomi and I have always regretted we didn't stop and see Marge Cool. We thought the visit would be too much, with her being confined to a wheel chair. Hugh Graff made a special effort to maintain contact with the Cool family to give them copies of our history book, published in 1991. But, the family disappeared from the Cleveland area just before book publication, and Hugh was unable to locate Mrs. Cool or her son. Naomi and I also lost contact with Mrs. Cool.

If anyone knows the whereabouts of the Cool offspring, please let me know. I still have a copy of the original book for the family. My address is: 6205 Meadow Court, Rockville, Md 20852. Phone: 301 881 1376.

Did You Know?

Chicago's famous gangster Al Capone had a very good attorney nicknamed "Easy Eddie". This attorney kept Capone out of jail for many years with his slick legal tactics.

Chicago's O'Hare airport is named after Butch O'Hare, the Navy's first ace and winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroism in the Pacific.

Butch O'Hare was Easy Eddie's son!

A 60-year homeward journey for WWII flier

DNA testing, records help identify body

April 12, 2005

When the B-24 Liberator carrying 20-year-old S/Sgt. Robert W. McKee to a bombing mission crashed, his family didn't know what happened to him.

They got their answer nearly 60 years later with the help of the Internet, DNA, the military and an amateur Hungarian historian.

McKee, an Army Air Force aerial gunner and former local resident, is no longer missing in action. He was buried Tuesday with military honors in Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Scientists of the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command and the Armed Forces DNA Identification Laboratory relied on several forensic tools, including DNA, to identify McKee. In December 2004, mitochondrial DNA was used to match his DNA with two maternal cousins.

"It was pretty incredible," said McKee's son, Larry Drake, 62. "It was 60 years when we figured out exactly what happened."

Drake's wife, Holly, and her mother, Phyllis, attended the funeral. "There's closure now," Holly Drake said. "I think everybody is pleased. Everybody cried."

McKee was born in Long

Beach, CA. He and his wife, Phyllis, were graduates of Garvey High School and had a son in 1943.

McKee was an aerial gunner on a B-24 Liberator that took off from Pantanella, Italy, on Dec. 17, 1944, to bomb enemy targets near Bleckhammer, Germany, according to the Department of Defense POW/Missing Personnel Office.

The family received a telegram he may be missing in Czechoslovakia but they didn't know what happened to him, Holly Drake said.

McKee's mother, Nona, spent years searching for her youngest son. She died in 1985.

The Drakes were living in Anchorage, Alaska, three years ago when they saw a restored B-24. Holly Drake went on the Internet, found a message board for B-24 bombers and asked for information on Robert McKee. She received tips on what to do from the World War II vets and got a copy of the crash report.

Then Dennis Friedbauer, who was then working as an analyst for the Department of Defense POW/MIA Office, found her query on the Internet and called her. The Navy man was working on the McKee case.

He also got help from Nandor Mohos, a Hungarian computer programmer who is interested in WWII. Mohos gave him a list of fliers shot down over Hungary which included McKee.

Friedbauer later found a Nazi document in the National Archives that said McKee was

shot down over Bohonye, Hungary. He turned over his information to the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command. The military later found two cousins in the maternal line who donated blood for the DNA testing.

"It finally came true. The final chapter has been written," Friedbauer said.

Military officials said McKee and a second crewman were killed when their aircraft crashed over Hungary near the towns of Bohonye and Felsősegeds.

In 1992, an undertaker recovered remains believed to be those of an American in the Bohonye cemetery. Aerial gunners wings were found in the grave, as well as other items worn by U.S. bomber crews in 1944. There were no dog tags, though.

A decade ago, Friedbauer said the Germans were in Hungary looking for their war dead. They found their remains along with those of a lone American. Those remains were shipped to Hawaii and were identified as McKee's.

The Drakes now have McKee's gunner wings and his pocket watch compass.

Friedbauer presented Larry Drake on Tuesday with a piece of the B-24 that carried McKee. He got it from a lady during his visit to Bohonye.

"I'll tell you one thing. I served in the Navy 24 years and this is the highlight of my career. Impossible to describe," Friedbauer said.

Courtesy of SGV Tribune

455th BG E-Mail Roster

Below is a list of e-mail addresses of 455th BG Assoc. members. If you want your e-mail address included in this roster, please email your Editor at aphp@comcast.net.

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Donald Anderton Crew (743)

Bottom Row (L-R)

Gabriel Lahaire - Ball Turret
Gordon Webber - Armor & Gunner

Herman Simon - Tail Gunner

Middle Row (L-R)

Donald Shores - Nose Gunner
John Sims - Radio & Waist Gunner

Virgil Froussard - Engineer

Back Row (L-R)

William Hulen - Navigator (later became group radar officer)

Evert Gustafson - Bombardier
Harold Syverson - CoPilot (finished missions as first pilot)

Donald Anderton - Pilot

This crew was in the 743rd Squadron of the 455th BG, arriving in Italy in October, 1944. Don Anderton finished his 35 missions in April 1945, and returned to the USA in May.

Donald Anderton's Memorable Mission

My most memorable mission was on December 29, 1944. We had a load of incendiary bombs for Udine in northern Italy. The weather over the target was cloudy so we headed north of the Alps for Plan Baker. Same problem ... bad weather over the target.

We headed back to base

with our bombs. We soon lost the supercharger on the #4 engine.

Shortly thereafter, we shut the #1 engine down due to fire. At this point, we were way behind and low on fuel. We dropped our bombs in the Adriatic, and flew to the nearest fighter strip south of the front lines.

The airstrip where we landed (the name escapes me) turned out to be the base of the fighter squadron later to be named the "Tuskegee Airmen". Some of the crew got on their hands and knees and kissed the ground.

I received the DFC for that mission.

After the war, I became a pilot for United Airlines. In my 37-year career with United, I logged some 22,000 hours and over 9 million miles.

Don Anderton
177 South State, Box #9
Morgan, Utah 84050
801-829-6484

Can You Help?

Don Anderton is asking for anyone who knows the current status of William Hulen (743) or Herman Simon (743) to please contact him at 801-829-6484.

"If you're faced with a forced landing, fly the thing as far into the crash as possible."
- Bob Hoover (renowned aerobatic and test pilot)

Diamond Lil' B-24

The oldest Consolidated Liberator in existence casts shade from its high-aspect-ratio wings on the tarmac at AeroShell Square during EAA AirVenture 2005.

Nicknamed *Diamond Lil'*, this historic airplane was to have been a pug-nosed Liberator in the Royal Air Force in 1941, carrying RAF serial number AM927. A mishap before it could go overseas sent AM927 back to the Consolidated Aircraft plant in San Diego for repairs.

Following its rebirth, AM927 remained in the United States for the duration as a several-times-modified Consolidated Aircraft company transport.

A jewel in the crown of the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) museum, AM927 has been in flying service continually for 64 years, according to one of the crew tending the warbird at AirVenture.

The CAF bought AM927 from the Mexican petroleum company PEMEX in 1969. The nickname *Diamond Lil'* was borrowed from a wartime B-24 Liberator, said crewmember Frank Carrigan. The CAF chose to drape the nose art figure of Lil' in furs, he said, as a latter-day concession to modesty.

*Diamond Lil'*s restorers have made the one-time bomber appear much like an Army Air Forces B-24D Liberator from the North African campaign, complete with desert sand camouflage and a greenhouse bombardier nose.

What sometimes throws veterans and Liberator purists are the round engine cowlings on Lil', common to early Liberators, but changed to a characteristic wide oval shape on the B-24C and subsequent models.

Diamond Lil' carries another rare vestige of its early birth in the Liberator program: The extreme aft fuselage is smaller than later Liberators, resulting in a slight upsweep in the fairing meeting the horizontal stabilizer.

Consolidated changed the cockpit canopy on several Liberators to a version with fewer ribs between windows, and Lil' received this treatment, along with late-style outward-opening nosewheel doors.

And sometime after late 1943, photos indicate the nose of AM927 was slightly lengthened over the measurement of a Liberator I, more closely matching that of later B-24s. The results make *Diamond Lil'* an interesting smorgasbord of Liberator genealogy, with features running the gamut from early to late production.

One of only two Liberators currently air-worthy, Lil' is a rare and welcome addition to the AirVenture scene. Not scheduled to fly during the show, the bomber will be available to inspect on the ramp.

Crewmember Carrigan said the sons and daughters of World War II B-24 veterans sometimes seek out *Diamond Lil'* at air shows in an effort to learn more about what their fathers did during the war. Some

are very knowledgeable already; others were never told their fathers' stories.

"You have to kind of help them out a little bit," to sleuth their fathers' probable places and types of service, Carrigan said.

Diamond Lil' has been in CAF flying operations for decades. A typical air show season for the Liberator runs from May to October. This vintage bomber winters in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where mechanics, some of whom are volunteers from the American Airlines base there, tend to AM927's needs for the following season, Carrigan explained.

Joe Broker, a retired Delta Air Lines pilot from Peachtree City, Georgia, is a new copilot on *Diamond Lil'*. He's still learning some of the quirks of this bomber, a design that pushed the envelope when the prototype first flew in December, 1939.

The airplane's storied Davis wing, key to the Liberator's long range, has a "finicky center of gravity", Broker said. This becomes apparent when passengers are moving about the fuselage. "If they move a foot, you know it," he explained, saying pitch sensitivity is very pronounced in *Diamond Lil'*.

Takeoff begins with rotation at 80 knots, Broker said, following which *Diamond Lil'*, no doubt at a lighter operating weight than a wartime B-24 bomber, gets airborne at about 95-100 knots.

(continued, left column, next page)

(Diamond 'Lil', continued)

The long main landing gear legs of the Liberator hinge up and out into faired recesses in the lower surface of the wings.

Broker says the flight crew taps the wheel brakes to stop the mainwheels from spinning before starting the arduous hydraulic process of gear retraction.

Diamond 'Lil' is a fascinating emissary from the past.

Article Courtesy Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA)



The 110-foot span of the Liberator Diamond 'Lil' is greater than that of a B-17. This wing incorporates the Davis high-lift airfoil and Fowler area-increasing flaps, new concepts on the cusp of World War II that helped give the Liberator its legendary long range and load-carrying capabilities.



first day of issue ceremony

I had a drug problem when I was young ...

I was drug to church on Sunday morning. I was drug to church for wedding and funerals. I was drug to family reunions no matter the weather. I was drug to the bus stop to go to school every weekday. I was drug by my ears when I was disrespectful to adults and teachers. I was also drug to the woodshed when I needed it.

Those drugs are still in my veins, and they affect my behavior in everything I do, say, and think. They are stronger than cocaine, crack, or heroin, and if today's children had this kind of drug problem, America might be a better place.

Signed,
Older than Dirt

Lt. Carl Stracka (743) B-24 Stamp Issue Experience in Oshkosh

Lt. Carl Stracka received a call from Washington, DC's US Postal Service requesting his presence for the launch of the new stamps.

Carl and his family were at the presentation. The US Postal Service awarded Carl with a picture of the stamp of the B-24 in a 16" x 16" frame.

(see canceled stamp below)



Dear Editor,

My father was a tailgunner in the 455th BG, 741st squadron. I've been to three reunions - Dayton, San Antonio and San Diego.

We are doing a feature film that has a Liberator in it. The film is 75% done. We use some actual WWII footage, some computer generated graphics and some footage of *Diamond 'Lil'*.

Hopefully, it will be complete by the 455th BG reunion in October. I'd like to show it to the attendees at the hospitality room, if possible.

We have four of the major studios looking at the film to pick it up. If you or your newsletter readers would like more information about the film, please contact me.

phone: (818) 825-4667

emails: cald4him@juno.com

(or)

scaldwell@visionbuildersgroup.com

Kind regards,
Shawn Caldwell

Bill Heitkamp Takes his First B24 Flight in 60 Years!

On April 17, 2005, Bill Heitkamp (Tail Gunner, 743rd Squadron, part of the J. Helbig crew) took a special flight around the skies of southern Nevada, his first flight on a B-24 in 60 years!

The Collings B-24 "Witchcraft" on which he flew is one of only two B-24s still flying (the CAF *Diamond Lil'* is the other).

Your Editor hopes those of you who attended the reunion in Kansas City were able to see the video from his flight.

(Bill is in the back row, 2nd from left, in the circa 1944 photo directly below)



Bill Heitkamp manning the waist gun on "Witchcraft".

Without ammunition, the USAF would be just another expensive flying club.



Bill Heitkamp making his way through the "spacious" interior of the Collings B-24 "Witchcraft"

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My father-in-law, Lt. Richard Peter Pelosi, was a Bombardier in the 455th Bomb Group, 741st BS. He has not kept in touch with other squadron members, and I think he would like to re-acquaint himself with these gentlemen.

He flew on "Ten Hits and a Miss" (see photo next page). I have a picture of him with a flight crew in front of a B-24 with the block letters "B.T.O." low in the nose area. I also have a few pictures of my father-in-law posed with flight crews in front of B-24s that I can't identify.

Crew #234-40 Sept. 22, 1944. The number 1619 in large block letters is on the fuselage. (See photo next page). These names were written on the back of the photo:

Front Row - left to right

1st Lt. H. A. Surbeck - Pilot
2nd Lt. E. V. Schlake - Co-pilot
2nd Lt. J. T. McKniff - Navigator
2nd Lt. R. Pelosi - Bombardier

Standing - left to right

Cpl. J. Micheal - Nose Gunner
Cpl. K. Sumwolt - Tail Gunner
Cpl. J. English - Upper Turret
Cpl. R. Berndt - Radio
Cpl. G. Kirby - Lower Ball
Sgt. A. Pomales - Engineer

Another photo was taken in Cairo (see photo next page), and he has written on the back of the picture: "This was the day we left Cairo for our return trip to base in Italy. Note the hats!"

(Pelosi continued, next page)



(Pelosi, continued)

The crew members listed on the Cairo photo are:

Front row - left to right

1st Lt. Dixler
S/Sgt Maggio
T/S Dunham
S/Sgt Dupree
S/Sgt Burkhart

Standing - left to right

1st Lt. Howarth
Lt. Col. Doring
Maj. Horten
M/Sgt. Beesom
T/Sgt Woodward
2nd. Lt. Pelosi
M/Sgt. Kromnick



Of all the names above, every one appears on the 455th BG History "Roll Call" roster except for Lt. Pelosi, M/Sgt. Kromnick, and 1st. Lt. Dixler.

Of the guys who appear, all are in the 741st BS except Major Horten, who is listed as part of the 742nd. BS.

Lt. Pelosi was in Bombardier class 44-7. I want to find fellows from that class, and / or crewmembers from any of the squadrons in the 455th BG that might have known Lt. Pelosi.

Please ask your newsletter readers that have information about these aircraft or crews to contact me at the phone number or email address below. Thank you.

Best Regards,
John Devito
Son-in-Law of Richard Pelosi
phone ... (973)347-2243
email ... jdevito@touchtown.us



Frank Lashinsky ... Former President of the 455th BG Association

Editor's Note: After a conversation I had earlier this year with Mr. Lashinsky, he agreed to allow me to post the story of his military career on my website. Below are excerpts from his compelling personal military history. Log onto <http://www.awardphp.com/Lashinsky.php> to read the complete text.



Frank Lashinsky is seen bottom, right in this circa 1944 photo

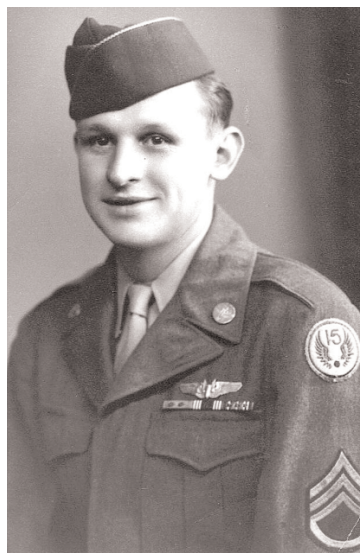
Frank Lashinsky, on being a Prisoner of War

People today ask, "How long were you a prisoner-of-war?" When I say from March 12, 1945 to April 29, 1945, they have remarked, "You're lucky you weren't a prisoner very long."

I wonder if they would feel the same way if they had been in my shoes. Television and movies have trivialized the experiences of POWs with shows like "Stalag 17" and "Hogan's Heros".

I suppose I shouldn't fault the ignorance or insensitivity of such remarks.

One day is too long!



Miraculous Survival:

Direct Hit by 88 mm Flak

Our crew narrowly escaped death on February 21, 1945. On a mission over Vienna, as we attacked railroad marshaling yards, the plane was straddled by close bursts of flak on each side. In the same millisecond, the plane shook and heaved upward.

An 88-millimeter anti-aircraft shell hit our B-24 about three feet in front of the wing root on the pilot's side. It tore up a large wiring bundle as it peeled away a section of skin. It crumpled the upper escape hatch above and behind the pilot. It hit the upper turret, destroyed the turret's Plexiglass dome, then hit one of the turret's .50 caliber machine guns, stripped away the perforated cooling cover, and bent the barrel into a 90 degree angle.

It failed to explode. If it had exploded, we would have been blown from the sky. If our impact with the shell occurred a fraction of a second later, even as a dud, it would have hit and ripped off the left wing. Our speed was 160 mph, or 235 ft. per second.

We survived to live one more day, because of a difference of ten feet and less than five hundredths of a second. Walter Lipps was in the turret, when the shell tore off the Plexiglas and bent the gun barrel. A two-inch piece of flak, from the same salvo, missed me by inches. A photograph of the damage appeared in Stars & Stripes, in the next edition, as well as a news item. The combat photographer gave each crewmember a copy of the photo printed by the Stars & Stripes.

A Soldier's Christmas

The embers glowed softly, and in their dim light, I gazed round the room and I cherished the sight.

My wife was asleep, her head on my chest, my daughter beside me, angelic in rest.

Outside the snow fell, a blanket of white, transforming the yard to a winter delight.

The sparkling lights in the tree, I believe, completed the magic that was Christmas Eve.

My eyelids were heavy, my breathing was deep, secure and surrounded by love I would sleep.

In perfect contentment, or so it would seem, so I slumbered, perhaps I started to dream.

The sound wasn't loud, and it wasn't too near, but I opened my eyes when it tickled my ear.

Perhaps just a cough, I didn't quite know, then the sure sound of footsteps outside in the snow.

My soul gave a tremble, I struggled to hear, and I crept to the door just to see who was near.

Standing out in the cold and the dark of the night, a lone figure stood, his face weary and tight.

A soldier, I puzzled, some twenty years old, perhaps a Marine, huddled here in the cold.

Alone in the dark, he looked up and smiled, standing watch over me, and my wife and my child.

What are you doing?" I

asked without fear, "Come in this moment, it's freezing out here!"

Put down your pack, brush the snow from your sleeve, you should be at home on a cold Christmas Eve!"

For barely a moment I saw his eyes shift, away from the cold and the snow blown in drifts,

To the window that danced with a warm fire's light, then he sighed and he said, "It's really all right,

I'm out here by choice, I'm here every night."

"It's my duty to stand at the front of the line, that separates you from the darkest of times.

No one had to ask or beg or implore me, I'm proud to stand here like my fathers before me.

My dad stood his watch in the jungles of 'Nam, and now it is my turn and so, here I am.

I've not seen my own son in more than a while, but my wife sends me pictures, he's sure got her smile."

Then he bent and he carefully pulled from his bag, the Red, White and Blue....an American Flag.

"I can live through the cold and the being alone, away from my family, my house and my home.

I can stand at my post through the rain and the sleet, I can sleep in a foxhole with little to eat.

I can carry the weight of killing another,

Or lay down my life with my sister and brother.

Who stands at the front against any and all, to ensure for all time that this flag will not fall.

So go back inside," he said, "harbor no fright, your family is waiting and I'll be all right."

"But isn't there something I can do, at the least, give you money," I asked, "or prepare you a feast?"

It seems all too little for all that you've done, for being away from your wife and your son.

Then his eyes welled a tear that held no regret, "Just tell us you love us, and never forget to fight for our rights back at home while we're gone, to stand your own watch, no matter how long."

For when we come home, either standing or dead, to know you remember we fought and we bled is payment enough.

And with that we will trust that we mattered to you, as you mattered to us.

In this holiday season, please keep our Airmen, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Guard in your prayers. They are risking their lives to protect what we take for granted. We are losing soldiers every day.

They won't be home with their families this Christmas. Pray that God will bless them, and keep them safe.

Happy Holidays to All

Capt. Charles Stark (740)

A Chance Meeting

Recently, it occurred to me that sitting down beside Mike Tarcha on the train bound for Miami Beach for basic training had a very profound effect on my military career, and in fact the rest of my life.

Mike and I remained close friends until he ultimately washed out of pilot training. After 9 weeks in Miami Beach, we were on a train again headed for a College Training Detachment at Knox College at Galesburg, Illinois. Mike finally confided in me that he was actually married.

He and Sue had planned the wedding date, but the induction notice arrived and they quickly married in the few days remaining. However, mother nature interfered, and the marriage was not consummated.

At the end of our first weekend at Knox, Sue, a registered nurse, was there with a job at the local hospital. Friday morning, we stood inspection on the drill field and Mike got his 7th "gig" for the week which meant he would be restricted to the campus for the weekend. He had a fresh hair cut from the day before, but still got a gig. Mike was LIVID !!!

I thought it was almost comical. He and Sue were jinxed. I'm sure he got to see Sue that weekend.

In five weeks instead of five months (the normal time at a CTD), we were on our way to the classification center at San Antonio. Mike and Sue were again separated. Sue could not follow Mike there.

After three long months, we were classified for pilot training and headed by bus to Vernon, Texas for Primary Flight Training.

Enroute, we made a rest stop. Picture this --- 3 bus loads of cadets relieving their kidneys over a guard rail. I thought it would have made a great photograph!

Sue arrived in Vernon almost as soon as we did and already had work at the local hospital. Mike said Sue could get me a date with a hospital volunteer for the Friday "Welcome Dance" at the Victory Field Hangar. Primary Flight Training was a private contract operation with a nice dining hall and good food and a juke box playing the current popular tunes. I enjoyed the dance and the company of Betty Joyce (B J) at the dance but an allergy was bothering me. With watery eyes and a runny nose, I figured I had bombed out with this girl and didn't call her for a second date on Saturday.

This was a "no-no" for the local girls. Sunday morning, I called her and we were off on a whirlwind romance. Arriving back at her home Sunday evening, we sat down on the couch, and the next thing I know, we are huggin' and kissin'.

WOW!!! This is new to me. I figured this girl really likes me. On subsequent week ends, we roller-skated and had all kind of good times, including sodas at Huber's Drug Store. Ma Huber called us cadets, "Lil' ole bitty cadets".

The people of Vernon were warm and friendly. Despite my keen desire to learn to fly, I began to think I would like to stay in Vernon.

Boarding the shuttle bus back to the field on my last night in town, B J and I kissed goodbye. When the bus driver had closed the door he said, "Man!!, she almost sucked your lungs out" in a typical southern drawl. I had three sisters but I didn't know anything about girls.

Our next stop was Basic

Flight Training at Garden City, Kansas. It was like going from heaven to hell. The food was bad, the weather was cold, the military education officers harassed us constantly, and the civilians in Garden City hated the cadets.

Constant letter writing to Vernon followed. Letters arrived from B J with "S W A K" on the sealing flap (Sealed with a Kiss).

On a three-day Christmas pass, two cadets and I, along with a lieutenant flight trainee, all bitten by the love bugs, drove back to Vernon. We sacked out on empty bunks at Victory Field at night. It was a great Christmas since we couldn't get home to celebrate.

I had opted for twin-engined advanced flight training, and couldn't believe it when I found out that I was assigned to the Air Base at Altus, Oklahoma, just 50 miles north of Vernon.

WOWEE, Hot-dog and all that kind of stuff! No one ever washed out at Advanced Flight Training and I paid less than full attention to my flying. Letters still flowed back and forth with airmail stamps on mine, even though I knew they couldn't possibly go by air.

Every weekend, I headed to Vernon, mostly by thumb. Once, I went in the cab of a trailer truck loaded with hogs, and another time in a fellow cadet's 1941 Chevy. A broken fan belt on the Chevy left us stranded, but a nice cab driver towed us back to Altus for \$10. As I said, the folks in Vernon were nice.

Graduation Day came with the Silver Wings and a Lieutenant Commission. B J was able to attend the ceremony, and I knew it would be a long time until I would see her again.

(continued, next page)

(A Chance Meeting, continued)

After two weeks leave at home in Pittsburgh, it was off to Salt Lake City for a week, and reassignment to Overseas Training at Davis Monthan Field in Tucson, Arizona. Letters continued to flow back and forth, and I sent B J a nice wrist watch as a high school graduation present.

I didn't think I was robbing the cradle.

Leaving Tucson late in June of 1944, it was off to Topeka, Kansas, then to Newport News, Virginia, Cerignola, Italy, and then back home in Pittsburgh on Christmas Eve.

What could be better?

Very quickly, I got on the phone and arranged for B J to come to Pittsburgh. However, my family did not like this girl. A high school teacher friend later said, "She is not the girl for you".

After two weeks R&R in Miami Beach, I was assigned to a B-24 base in Alabama. I didn't want to go there, and asked to what else I could be assigned.

The choice was an AT-6 field at Sherman, Texas, which is only 100 miles from Ft. Worth, Texas, where B J was now living with her mother and grandmother.

I was all for this.

I quickly bought a 1937 Chevy Coupe for wheels to travel to Ft. Worth, which I did on every possible weekend.

One night, I hit two rabbits and a dog driving back to Perrin in a fog. The stay at Sherman was short, and I was then off to Eagle Pass, Texas. That is in the middle of nowhere and we had nothing to do there. No flying of any account.

It was now March of 1945, and I was assigned to AT-6 Instructor School at Waco. Waco is just 50 miles north of Temple, where B J was now in nursing

training. This was almost unbelievable!

Traveling by private conveyance, I could spend a day or so in Temple on the way to Waco from Eagle Pass. At Eagle Pass, I had become friends with a guy by name of Richard Waggoner. He liked to tell the story about the girl he dated in Waco. She passed out when he kissed her!

He became known as "Lips Waggoner".

He would say "Maybe I should marry her. She's got heart trouble and money, and probably won't last long".

Somehow, B J and Waggoner got together. B J ended up kissing my buddy. Later he very seriously said, "She's not the girl for you". Even a palm reader at a county fair said we would never get married. I would hear none of this.

While in Waco, President Roosevelt died, and Victory Europe occurred. By the end of May, I was qualified as an AT-6 flight Instructor, and was sent to Moore Field in McAllen, Texas. To get there from Waco, I stopped at Temple for a day or so.

While at Moore Field, I was able to get an AT-6 one weekend and fly back to Waco, and then went by bus to Temple.

It was a clear night flying back to Moore Field, but I was still concerned about over-flying Moore and ending up in Mexico. That rotating beacon sure looked good that night.

I only instructed a group of five cadets about two weeks when I found out I had enough points for separation from the service.

I was gone.

So it was back through Temple, and on to Pittsburgh. After separation at Ft. Dix, I was a civilian again.

However, I was in Pittsburgh and B J was in Temple.

I decided to return by bus to Temple with an engagement ring. I was wearing my Ruptured Duck pin, which got me first choice for seating on the buses.

The bus went through Sherman, Texas, and a young lady boarded in a sheer silk dress. She was a real doll! There were no seats available, so she sat in my lap.

I thought maybe I should lay over a night in Dallas, since I felt my company would be welcome. But I decided to go on to Temple.

B J accepted the ring with enthusiasm.

However, in March of 1946, I was advised during a phone call that my ring would be sent back. The lack of lovin' was too much for her.

I was all broken up for a while. However, as I began to piece things back together, I also realized that B J was not the girl for me, just as I had been told so many times. The association with B J had been thrilling, and I learned a lot about the opposite sex in the process.

I am sure my military career would have been much enhanced had I not bumped into Mike Tarcha on the train to basic training in Miami Beach. I'm also sure I would not have become acquainted with the girl I did marry, who is a jewel if there ever was one.

All this just because of the guy that I sat next to on a train.

In some respects, my military career was three years of basic training in human relations!



Reunion2005 Kansas City, Missouri



Mrs. Frances Hansen and her grandson enjoyed touring the Collings B24 "Witchcraft" at the Kansas City Airport



Banquet Speaker General Mike Short (left), 455th BG Association President Bill Gemmill (center), and Association Executive Director Greg Riggs



C.W. Cooper (741) and his lovely bride Louise celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary at the banquet Saturday night



George Defenbaugh (743) and Rod Clarke (743) take in the tour of "Witchcraft"

Some highlights of General Mike Short's remarks at the banquet Saturday night.

"The United States Air Force became a separate service because of the incredible successes of you and your peer groups in WWII."

"Today's United States Air Force is the finest air force in the world, but it is **NOT** the finest air force the world has ever seen ... that honor goes to the American air forces of WWII."

"You taught future American air force strategists the value of:

- 1) strategic attack
- 2) counter-air (integrate bombers & fighters)
- 3) interdiction
- 4) close air support
- 5) importance and value of the individual air crew's initiative to positively respond to stressful situations for which they had not been trained"

"The lasting legacy of your incredible courage, heroism, and dedication during WWII inspired and motivated future generations of airmen in the United States Air Force."

Reunion 2005 Kansas City, Missouri



Mr. and Mrs. Collings,
the owners and pilots of several WWII
aircraft, including the B24 "Witchcraft"



John Davis tickles the ivory, much to the
enjoyment of folks in the hospitality room



Nancy Hosimer & Jeanne Vogelfang



455th BG Executive Director Greg
Riggs (left) with his father Col. Ed Riggs
(center) and their friends at the banquet



At the 741st Dinner ...
Horace Lanford, Carl Barr,
Carole and Bill Gemmill



Pam and Gene Hudson, John Davis, and
Joyce Lanford sharing laughs at the banquet



Attention:
All 455th Bomb Group
Association Members

Remember that your membership dues pay for the costs of this newsletter, along with many misc. expenses related to the Association's activities. If you haven't paid your 2005 dues yet, please mail your check for \$15 to the 455th BG Assoc., Attention: Gregory Riggs, PO Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.

Note your mailing label on this newsletter. If there is a year number earlier than 00 on the top line, you're going to be dropped from the newsletter mailing list. This number indicated the last time you paid your annual dues, and we haven't heard from you since then. Thus, we are deleting those names from our newsletter mailing list.

To re-establish having your name on the mailing list, please send \$15 for 2005 dues to P.O. Box 93095, Austin, TX. 78709-3095.



EDITOR'S REMINDER

I have received many excellent, written personal histories from members of the 455th BG Assoc. They include memories, photos, documents, and other memorabilia related to their time in the military. These fascinating stories are too lengthy to produce in their entirety in this newsletter. Editing them down would not do these stories justice.

I have created a website on which I have posted these stories and pictures in their entirety. Friends, families, researchers, and historians can access these personal histories & photos via this internet website.

To access the personal histories page, go to:

**[www.awardphp.com/
transcripts.php](http://www.awardphp.com/transcripts.php)**

Available now on the internet: ALL of the previous editions of the Cerignola Connection, going back to 1990!

To access the archived back-issues of the C.C., go to:

**[www.awardphp.com/
veterans.php](http://www.awardphp.com/veterans.php)**

Also, available now on the internet: The entire 455th BG History book is available online at the following web address:

**[www.awardphp.com/
455th_BG_History.php](http://www.awardphp.com/455th_BG_History.php)**

Would you like a computer CD with digital copies of ALL back issues of the *Cerignola Connection*, PLUS a digital copy of the 455th BG History book? Send \$15 for unpaid 2005 455th BG Association dues (not applicable for lifetime association members), plus \$12 (cost of the CD, protective mailing case, & postage) to the 455th BG Association at the address below left.

This CD has over 900 pages of 455th BG information (in pdf format).

If you don't have a computer, you can take the CD to any neighborhood print shop in your area. They will be able to print these pages out for you at the cost of about 8 cents per page.

Disclaimer: *The APHP website referred to in this section is related to a part-time, DFW-area personal history service business. No business solicitation is intended.*

455th Bomb Group Assoc., Inc.
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