



CERIGNOLA CONNECTION

455th Bomb Group Association Newsletter

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Message from the President

**Louisville Was Great --
What's Next?
By ROD CLARKE**

The reunion in Louisville turned out to be great fun as I expected it would be. At least that was the conclusion that Marian and I came to. But, looking back, weren't all of our gatherings (excluding those in 1944-45) worthy of fond recall.

First of all, the weather was perfect -- not too hot, not too cool, with plenty of sunshine. The hotel accommodations -- once we found them -- were completely suitable for our needs. I state that proviso because some of us had difficulty finding it. It turns out that the owners had decided to change the hotel's name three days before our arrival.

You'll recall that the

name published in the Spring edition of the *Cerignola Connection* called it the "Downtown Holiday Inn"; for your future information, it is now the Hotel Louisville!

Reunion Highlights

As usual, the greatest highlight of the visit was the time we spent in the Hospitality Room for reminiscing and practicing attitude adjustment.

We were particularly blessed when the entertainer in the hotel bar loaned us his spare synthesizer which allowed John Smoot, the very talented son-in-law of Ormond Buffington, to provide the background music for our schmoozing -- all the Golden Oldies from the 30s and 40s.

Of course, the attitude adjustment activities were mainly in the hands of Ormand's daughters -- Laura Flannigan and Eunice Smoot. As was the case at earlier reunions, they saw to it that there were always goodly supplies of libations, ice and munchies available for our enjoyment. When needed for heavy lifting, John and Ormand took time out to do whatever was necessary.

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Another attendee deserving of our thanks is Mark Mason, son of deceased member Robert Mason. He was busy assisting us throughout the gathering, mostly behind the scenes where his efforts would not have been noticed.

Of course, there would have been no reunion at all if it weren't for the extraordinary efforts of our stalwart Executive Director, Greg Riggs. He, too, is a son of a member, Past President Ed Riggs and worthy of highest praise for his efforts on our behalf.

The tours announced in the Spring, 2008 issue of the newsletter came off as promised. Our guides and bus drivers went out of their way to ensure that we had a good time. The city tour and luncheon cruise on the Ohio River were particularly enjoyable. The visits to the Museum at Churchill Downs and the Louisville Slugger bat factory were equally informative and interesting. The only one that might have been better was the visit to the General George Patton Museum at Ft Knox which was too short.

However, to see it completely would have taken a whole day or more, and part of Saturday had to be devoted to business matters.

Before discussing those matters, there is another highlight that warrants praise -- the banquet on Saturday evening. As banquet fare goes, the food was adequate.

The highlight was the speaker -- Colonel Eric L. Nelson, now stationed at Eglin

AFB, FL (as Commander, Joint Forces Fires Integration Team) but before that, Commander of the 455th Expeditionary Operations Group at Baghram Airbase, Afghanistan.

The 455th E.O.G. oversees the operations of A-10, F-15, F-16 and other combat aircraft squadrons in that vital war zone. He started his Air Force career in 1987 at O.T.S., followed by earning his navigator's wings the following year. If you do the math, you'll see that Operation Desert Storm came three years later in which he flew his first tour of combat.

Continuing in operations, he progressed from GIB (Guy-in-Back) to flight commander, squadron commander, and finally group commander, logging well-over 3000 flying hours (of which 500+ were in combat). During his time at Baghram, he flew 57 combat sorties.

I can't do justice to his talk to the banqueters about the operations of the 455th E.O.G., so I won't try. But assuredly, it was inspirational and drew great applause from all those present.

As a token of our esteem and appreciation, I presented Col. Nelson with a copy of *The Wild Blue* autographed by all the veterans attending the reunion. In addition, I gave him a small model of a B-24J with the bottom of the vertical stabilizer and rudders painted yellow. I told him that it was for his desk- top to remind him from time to time that his service in Afghanistan was a worthy continuation of that which we all started in 1944.

Now To Business

The 2008 Reunion was different than usual in that there were no elections to be held. Our by-laws call for bi-annual elections, and since the current officers and directors were elected in 2007 at San Antonio, the Board directed their attention to other matters.

These essentially are two in number -- (1) shall we meet again in 2009, and (2) shall we continue on, or terminate the Association? The Board decided to recommend to the membership that we meet in 2009, but they had no recommendation on Question 2. The membership voted to meet in 2009 at a place and time to be determined later. They also punted on Question 2, postponing a decision 'til 2009.

Whatever the answer to Question 2, we'll need officers and directors to carry on the business of the Association, whether it be to terminate operations or to continue on.

The by-laws require that I name five members to be a nominating committee, which I expect to do in due course. I'd welcome suggestions on how to best deal with question 2, or on any other problem that any of you believes to be examined. My email address is rory@his.com; for snail mail write me at 400 Madison St #709, Alexandria, VA 22324.

See you somewhere in 2009 for more fun!

Have a Happy Holiday Season.

Rod Clarke
President, 455th B.G. Assoc.

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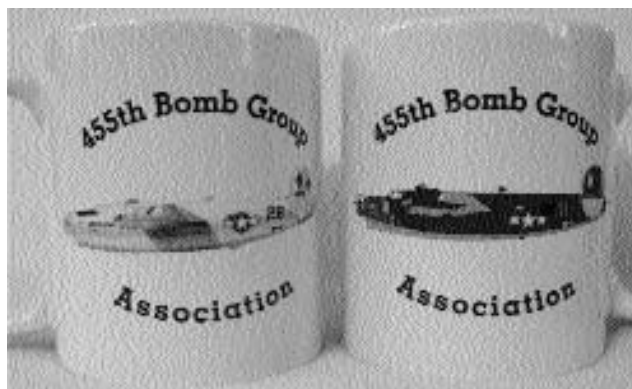
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Son, Lt. J. T. Ward (740)
Editor, *Cerignola Connection*



Available Now!

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Each 11-oz. mug sports two 455th BG aircraft:

One in natural metal finish and one in olive drab

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Order quickly to ensure processing for Christmas

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USAF ... the Finest (and Funniest) Fliers in the World

In addition to communicating with the local air traffic control facility, commercial aircraft flying through or near Iran are required to give the Iranian Air Defense Radar a ten minute "heads up" that they will be transiting Iranian airspace. This is a common procedure for commercial aircraft, and involves giving them your call sign, transponder code, type aircraft and points of origin and destination.

This conversation (on the emergency frequency 121.5 MHz) was overheard by a commercial airline crew while flying from Europe to Dubai. The conversation went something like this...

Iranian Air Defense Radar: "Unknown aircraft at (location unknown), you are in Iranian airspace. Identify yourself."

Aircraft: "This is a United States aircraft. I am in **Iraqi** airspace!"

Iranian Air Defense Radar: "You are in **Iranian** airspace. If you do not depart our airspace, we will launch interceptor aircraft!"

Aircraft: "This is a **United States fighter jet. Send 'em up!**"

Iranian Air Defense Radar: No response ... **total silence!**

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am trying to gather some information. I hope your readers can help.

My wife's granddad was a crew member in the 454th. He was killed in a crash on April 15, 1944. The event occurred near the airfield that was shared with the 455th.

In the publication "*Flight of the Vulgar Vultures*", the 743rd Squadron listed a chapter on "*Significant Events and Dates to Remember*".

One of the events was "Squadron ambulance crew performed rescue efforts for the first time at a crash scene 15 April, 1944." Though not part of the same Group, I wonder if they were responding to the crash of my wife's granddad aircraft.

Here is the question. Does the 455th Bomb Group have a roster that might have names of who was part of the squadron ambulance crew during this time?

Thank you!

Lloyd Croft

2000 Strathmoor Blvd.

Louisville KY 40205

502-235-1196

An Open Letter to 455th B.G. Assoc. Members

Dear Comrades,

After a very long siege and still hanging in there, I lost contact with my fellow members of the 455th Bomb Group.

I assumed that the 455th BG Association was no longer active. This assumption was based on gradual elimination of

members through life expectancy.

I'm 87 and working on my 2nd breath. All seems stable at this point... I'm still driving, performing with the area Symphonic Band (group of old and young musicians) and with SCORE part time.

The big questions are 1) is the 455th still active, 2) are they having their reunions every two years, and 3) if still active, is it possible to become re-instated within the Association?

On my last reunion in Dayton, there were some discussions about tying in with other groups to create numbers necessary for hotel requirements.

Some of the former members that I have been in contact with have flown their last missions, and that is why I question if the 455th is still active.

All the Best,

M/Sgt Frank I. Mastroleo - G-2

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

My late father, Lt. O.D. Blankenship, was a pilot on the "*TePee Time Gal*". I have some group photos of his crew. Unfortunately, I don't have any of his crewmembers names, except for his navigator.

If any of your readers have information about this aircraft or my father, please have them email me.

Thanks,

Ben Blankenship, son of

Lt. O.D. Blankenship (743)

Email: Golden5287@aol.com

On America's Military Heroes Who Made the Ultimate Sacrifice ... a timeless quote.

"Every name is a lightening stroke to some heart, and breaks like thunder over some home, and falls a long black shadow upon some hearthstone."

*Source: Gettysburg, PA.
newspaper, July 9, 1863
(four days after the famous
Civil War battle)*

NEW STOCK MARKET TERMS

CEO -- Chief Embezzlement Officer
CFO -- Corporate Fraud Officer
BULL MARKET -- A random market movement causing an investor to mistake himself for a financial genius
VALUE INVESTING -- The art of buying low and selling lower
P/E RATIO -- The percentage of investors wetting their pants as the market keeps crashing
BROKER -- What my broker has made me
STANDARD & POOR -- Your life in a nutshell
STOCK ANALYST -- Idiot who just downgraded your stock
STOCK SPLIT -- When your ex-wife and her lawyer split your assets equally between themselves
FINANCIAL PLANNER -- A guy whose phone has been disconnected
MARKET CORRECTION -- The day after you buy stocks
CASH FLOW -- The movement your money makes as it disappears down the toilet
INSTITUTIONAL INVESTOR -- Past year investor who's now locked up in a nuthouse
PROFIT -- An archaic word no longer in use

Final Flights

Capt. George Underwood (740)

passed away in Tulsa, OK, on July 24, 2008 at the age of 92. He was a retired lawyer in Tulsa. He was elected to the 455th BG Association Board of Directors from 2005 - 2007.

John LaGrotta (740)

took his final flight July 9, 2008 in Guerneville, California. John was born, raised and educated in New York. A devoted and loving husband and father, John is survived by his wife Marilyn, the LaGrotta-Zilavy family of Guerneville and the Day family of Virginia.

During World War II, he was a bombardier, escaped from behind enemy lines twice, and flew over 50 missions.

A lifelong member of the Amalgamated Lithographers Union, John was an artist of many mediums. He had showings and won numerous awards in New York, Arizona and Florida. His final showing, in California, opened on July 1, 2008.

His greatest wish was to see his wife cared for and his grandchildren educated. John believed that loyalty, hard work and love were the keys to a good life.

Frank C. O'Bannon

died on Feb 12, 2008 at the age of 92.

Albert Beauchemin (740)

of Adams, MA. died June 18, 2008. He served our country in World War II as an Armorer-Gunner on a B-24 Liberator, in the 455th Bomb Group, 740th Squadron. Flying from his base at San Giovanni airfield, Cerignola, Italy, he flew 25 missions.

He parachuted behind German lines into Bosnia on his sixth mission. Evading capture with aid of Tito's Partisans, he returned to resume combat with the enemy.

He and his crew survived a direct hit by a large caliber flak shell during an attack on marshalling yards in Vienna. He became a Prisoner of War on his 25th mission, parachuting from the stricken plane in Hungary.

Returning to civilian life, he was employed as a pharmacist.

He is survived by his wife Dolores, a son, a daughter, and three grandchildren.

Lt. James Cowden (742)

Dear Editor,

I wanted to comment on the passing of Lt. James A. Cowden (pilot, 742).

When we arrived in Cerignola, 1 May, 1944, we were the 1st replacement crew in the 742nd Sq., and got to be the "Old Men" before we finished our missions.

We started 27 Aug, 1944 with myself, Aimie Boucher (Engineer) and Chris Bakos (RO), and then followed shortly by the remaining crew

members, except for our ball gunner, John Washburn. He was shot down with another crew two weeks earlier.

After being a POW for a week, and a guest of the government for another, he returned to us and made the trip home with the rest of the crew.

When we arrived, our pilot was replaced for the first five missions serving as a co-pilot with another crew, while James [Jim] Cowden became our pilot until the crew had some combat time under their belts.

I was a little older than Jim. He was a good pilot, and at that time was just 20 years old.

Our first mission was 4 May, to Ploesti, with a repeat the very next day.

We had a couple of rough ones right off the bat.

Jim stayed with us for five missions. I still have a picture of the crew with him as the pilot.

I was fortunate a few years back to be able to get in contact with him, both in snail mail and online.

I'm so sorry to hear he is gone. I just hope his family knows the high regard those who flew with him had for his abilities, and for his calm demeanor under fire.

He was a real man, and we are honored to have flown with him.

Best Regards,
T/Sgt. David G Matheson (742)
USAF (Ret.)
Nose Gunner,
Mendenhall crew



WWII bombardier became missionary

Jacob DeShazer, a bombardier in the storied Doolittle raid over Japan in World War II who endured 40 months of brutality as a prisoner of the Japanese and then became a missionary in Japan, died March 15 at his home in Salem, Ore. He was 95.

His death was announced by his wife, Florence.

On April 18, 1942, crewmen in 16 Army Air Forces B-25 bombers, commanded by Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle, flew from the carrier Hornet on a daylight bombing raid that brought the war home to Japan for the first time since the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The raid resulted in only light damage to military and industrial targets, but it buoyed an American home front stunned by Japanese advances during the war's first four months.

Cpl. DeShazer, a native of Oregon and the son of a Church of God minister, was among the five-member crew of Bat Out of Hell, the last bomber to depart the Hornet. His plane dropped incendiary bombs on an oil installation and a factory in Nagoya but ran out of fuel before the pilot could try a landing at an airfield held by America's Chinese allies.

The five crewmen bailed out over Japanese-occupied territory



The New York Times

Jacob DeShazer was a Japanese prisoner of war, and later a missionary to Japan for 30 years.

in China, and all were quickly captured. In October 1942, a Japanese firing squad executed the pilot, Lt. William G. Farrow, and the engineer-gunner, Sgt. Harold A. Spatz, along with a captured crewman from another Doolittle raid plane.

Cpl. DeShazer and the other surviving crewmen from his plane, Lt. George Barr, the navigator, and Lt. Robert L. Hite, the copilot, were starved, beaten and

tortured at prisons in Japan and China — spending most of their time in solitary confinement — until their liberation a few days after Japan's surrender in August 1945.

Amid his misery, Cpl. DeShazer had one source of solace.

"I begged my captors to get a Bible for me," he recalled in *I Was a Prisoner of Japan*, a religious tract he wrote in 1950. "At last, in the month of May 1944, a guard brought me the book, but told me I could have it only for three weeks. I eagerly began to read its pages. I discovered that God had given me new spiritual eyes and that when I looked at the enemy officers and guards who had starved and beaten my companions and me so cruelly, I found my bitter hatred for them changed to loving pity. I realized that these people did not know anything about my Savior and that if Christ is not in a heart, it is natural to be cruel."

Cpl. DeShazer gained the strength to survive, and he became determined to spread Christian teachings to his enemy.

Upon returning home, he enrolled at Seattle Pacific College (now Seattle Pacific University) and received a bachelor's degree in biblical literature in 1948.

He arrived in Japan with Flor-

ence, also a graduate of Seattle Pacific and a fellow missionary in the Free Methodist Church, in late December 1948. A few days later, he preached his first sermon there, speaking to about 180 people at a Free Methodist church in a Tokyo suburb.

In 1950, he gained a remarkable convert.

Mitsuo Fuchida, the Japanese naval flier who had led the Pearl Harbor attack and had become a rice farmer after the war, came upon the DeShazer tract.

"It was then that I met Jesus, and accepted him as my personal savior," Mr. Fuchida recalled when he attended a memorial service in Hawaii in observance of the 25th anniversary of the attack.

He had become an evangelist and had made several trips to the United States to meet with Japanese-speaking immigrants.

Mr. DeShazer spent 30 years in Japan doing missionary work, interrupted only by a sabbatical to earn a master's degree at Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky in 1958.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by his three sons, two daughters, a sister, 10 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Editor's Note: The Doolittle Raid in April, 1942 was the first good news that the American people heard from the Pacific Theater after the stunning attack on Pearl Harbor on the Day of Infamy, December 7, 1941. The daring Doolittle Raid gave Americans a sense of optimism that the Axis powers could be attacked, and ultimately defeated.

The United States Army Air Corps would be the point of the spear! Thanks in large part to the bravery and skill of the men of the US Army Air Corps, the Axis forces were defeated in less than four years.

Who is your real friend?

This really works !

If you don't believe it, just try this experiment ...

Put your dog and your spouse in the trunk of the car for an hour.

When you open the trunk, who is really happy to see you??

Can You Help?

Dear Editor,

I am Olah Andras Pal, a Hungarian historian. I wonder if you could please send me a copy of the photograph of the crew of Capt. W. C. Riddel. The photo was on page 22 in the Spring, 2008 issue of *Cerignola Connection*.

The eight members of the crew (2nd Lt. Dunecack, 2nd Lt. Bridgeman, Sgt. Lasser, Sgt. Guidroz, Sgt. Collins, Sgt. Bingham, Sgt. Seaman, Sgt. Calvanese) crashed with their plane near Pusztavam, Hungary on 27 July, 1944 (MACR#7140, 42-94993) – an event I am researching at the moment and would like to include in my future book about the air war over Hungary during WWII.

There are two other photographs on page 22, taken of 2nd Lt. W. R. Hiatt, who was the bombardier on the above-mentioned plane. Thank you.

Yours faithfully,

Andras Pal Olah
Hungarian historian

Editor's Note: *I forwarded the requested photos to Mr. Olah a few days later via email. Here is his response:*

Dear Craig,

Thank you. I received the photos yesterday. In return, I would like to share some information with you, along with a few photographs. My research partner, Nandor Mohos, sent a photo to *Cerignola Connection* of the remains of the plane which the crew in the picture you sent flew in. The photo can be found on page 23 in the Fall, 2006 issue of your newsletter.

Nandor and I are researching the 15th AAF's July, 1944 raids against Hungary (especially the July 2, 14, 27, 30 missions). The July 27 mission is important to me because, three years ago, I met one of the survivors of the mission.

Lt. Robert Emick (741) came to Hungary, and we visited the crash site of his plane together. I attached two photos, in the first one you can see Mr. Emick and me at the crash site on Sept. 18, 2005. The other one was taken of Nandor, my brother and me on May 12, 2007 at the same spot.

I also attached the list of the crews on the mission that day (July 27, 1944).

During that mission, Lts. Dunecack, Potucek, Parish, Gates and Gulbranson's aircraft crashed. Except for Lt. Gulbranson's plane, we have already identified and visited the other planes' crash sites in Hungary.

Unfortunately I do not have photos of Parish's and Gulbranson's crews. I found a picture of Lt. Gates plane (41-29266, nicknamed "*Doughty Dragon*") in the *Cerignola Connection*'s Spring, 1996 issue, on page 4.

One final request ... Could you please send me the email address for Mr. Gus R. Seefluth (742)? I tried to send him an email, but it did not get through due to a bad email address.

Thank you and Best Wishes,

Andras Pal Olah



27 July 1944.

SUBJECT: Crews Completing Mission on 27 July 1944.

TO : All Concerned.



	SHIP #470	SHIP #938	SHIP #360	SHIP #989
P	LT RIDDEL	LT WENDENHALL	LT KELL	LT STENGL
CP	LT REYNOLDS	LT FLEMING	LT HALL	LT LOOMAN
N	LT RINA ✓	LT TAYLOR ✓	LT PICKERILL ✓	
B	LT ARTHUR ✓	LT WEIGER ✓	LT NELSON ✓	LT BASLER ✓
	FRONTZ	BAKOS	AGNEW	MORRIS, J.P.
	BEARS	BOUCHER	LOTE	SCHROYER
	KINCAID	O'NEIL	OLELASH	CRAMER
	CEKLYNSKI	WASHBURN	REDEL	GRAY
	CUNNINGHAM	BUDMAN	ULSH	HAUSLEY
	LAZENBY	MATHESON	NOVAK	MARSHALL

	SHIP #993	SHIP #497	SHIP #560	COMBAT TIME
P	LT DUNEKACK	LT FARLISH	LT SWANNER	
CP	LT OWENS	LT BAUGH	LT DITCHETT	
N	LT BRIDGMAN ✓	LT BRINLEY ✓	LT DONELAN ✓	TARGET
B	LT BLATT ✓	LT SEEFLOTH ✓	LT DRUMMOND ✓	
	CALVANESE	BALAOVEC	ROSA	
	SEAMAN	MASON, J.F.	BEHN	
	COLLINS	VESTAL	MURRAY	
	LASSER	LINN	LIDDLE	
	BINGHAM	HARRISH	HOEY	
	GUILDROZ	BETHAM	THEODORE	
	JAMES (F)			

741ST BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (H) AAF
4. 18 BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) A
A.P.O. No. 520 U. S. Army

27 July
(DATE)

LOADING LIST

A/C NUMBER	266	DESTINATION	T/O
PILOT	Lt. Gates	TOP TUR GNR	Sgt. Luster
CO-PILOT	Lt. Schwiegart	WAIST RIGHT	Sgt. Maxwell
NAVIGATOR	Lt. Enick	WAIST LEFT	Sgt. Wienstein
BOMBARDIER	Lt. Saleck	BALL TUR GNR	Sgt. Miller
RADIO	Sgt. Porterino	TAIL TUR GNR	Sgt. Mello

A/C NUMBER	499	DESTINATION	T/O
PILOT	Lt. Higenbotham	TOP TUR GNR	Sgt. Alford
CO-PILOT	Lt. Pearson	WAIST RIGHT	Sgt. Netter
NAVIGATOR	Lt. Gerselle	WAIST LEFT	Sgt. Hutchings
BOMBARDIER	Lt. Dimattio	BALL TUR GNR	Sgt. Wapartian
RADIO	Sgt. Tell	TAIL TUR GNR	Sgt. Bales

A/C NUMBER	257	DESTINATION	T/O
PILOT	Lt. Rosenberg	TOP TUR GNR	Sgt. Pell
CO-PILOT	Lt. Hesimer	WAIST RIGHT	Sgt. Jones
NAVIGATOR	Lt. Pehler	WAIST LEFT	Sgt. Kleinhaus
BOMBARDIER	Lt. Nelish	BALL TUR GNR	Sgt. Huyek
RADIO	Sgt. Cornell	TAIL TUR GNR	Sgt. Gedy

A/C NUMBER	517	DESTINATION	T/O
PILOT	Lt. Lackner	TOP TUR GNR	Sgt. Buffington
CO-PILOT	Lt. Hersman	WAIST RIGHT	Sgt. Genroy
NAVIGATOR	Lt. Fishbein	WAIST LEFT	Sgt. De Lozier
BOMBARDIER	Lt. Scott	BALL TUR GNR	Sgt. Dixon
RADIO	Sgt. Bauer	TAIL TUR GNR	Sgt. Strickland
		Foto	Sgt. Pascavage

A/C NUMBER	359	DESTINATION	T/O
PILOT	Lt. Zabawa	TOP TUR GNR	Sgt. Teeter
CO-PILOT	Lt. Weidner	WAIST RIGHT	Sgt. Farrow
NAVIGATOR	Lt. Gilson	WAIST LEFT	Sgt. Crew
BOMBARDIER	Lt. Culver	BALL TUR GNR	Sgt. Jensen
RADIO	Sgt. Rowden	TAIL TUR GNR	Sgt. Bruce

A/C NUMBER	644	DESTINATION	T/O
PILOT	Lt. Kafka	TOP TUR GNR	Sgt. Baly
CO-PILOT	Lt. Asa	WAIST RIGHT	Sgt. Shaffer
NAVIGATOR	Lt. White	WAIST LEFT	Sgt. Vestal
BOMBARDIER	Lt. Kajawa	BALL TUR GNR	Sgt. Otto
RADIO	Sgt. Mahlen	TAIL TUR GNR	Sgt. Chapestian

Looking on the Bright Side

I've sure gotten old!

I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement, new knees fought prostate cancer and diabetes.

I'm half blind, can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine, take 40 different medications that make me dizzy, winded, and subject to blackouts.

I have bouts with dementia. Have poor circulation; can hardly feel my hands and feet anymore.

I can't remember if I'm 85 or 92.

I have lost all my friends.

But, Thank God,

I still have my driver's license!

**A Suggestion from a
455th BG Association
Associate Member**

Dear Editor,

May I, as an associate member of the 455th BG Association, offer this sample of a letter to the President of the United States, and to influential Congressmen?

I have felt it within my heart for all of these many years that the men of the 15th AAF were absolutely deserving of this honor. They were not given their due along side the men of the 8th AAF.

Sincerely,
Robert E. Hilgendorf
(Brother of S/Sgt Marshall
William Hilgendorf)
743rd Bomb Squadron
455th Bomb Group

Dear Mr. President /
Congressman

I am writing on behalf of the countless members of the bomber crews who so gallantly served our country in the 15th Air Force during WWII. These brave men were tasked with completing 50 missions out of Italy to bombard vital areas of the German industrial complexes, including the Ploesti oil fields, and the ball-bearing plants in mainland Germany.

Upon the completion of these extremely dangerous assignments, they were allowed to return home with the praise of all Americans who recognized their accomplishments.

However, the 8th Air Force was tasked with 25 missions, and at the completion of their assignments, they were

awarded the "Distinguished Flying Cross" (DFC).

Granted, the 8th AF was met with more resistance, due to the logistics of the German Luftwaffe being nearer to them. Also, ground "anti-aircraft" batteries were in place within the German areas of bombardment.

The 8th AF crews fully deserved this honor.

However, when we compare the valor, the sacrifices, and the loss of lives between the two Air Forces, it is apparent that the performances of the 15th AF surely equaled that of the 8th AF. There were, in fact, some missions which took them to similarly strategic and well defended areas. The 15th AF crews were met with equal resistance of Luftwaffe and anti-aircraft fire during many of their missions.

I'm sure you will agree that those brave airmen of the 15th AF, by virtue of their sacrifices and glorious performances, are just as deserving of the "DFC" as the heroes of the 8th AF.

Since so many years have slipped by since WWII, most of these gallant warriors are no longer with us. However, there are still many 15th AF veterans who are enjoying life, not complaining about this inequity.

I believe it is far overdue that we give recognition to those remaining 15th AF veterans, as well as KIAs during the war and those who have taken their final flights in the decades since the war.

May I suggest that our grateful nation recognize any 15th AF airman who completed 50 missions be awarded a "DFC"?

Also, we should award those who lost their lives in the line of duty a posthumous "DFC".

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I look forward to your response.

Respectfully yours,
*Signed by proper person
within the 455th BG Association*

WHY VETERANS REUNITE

"I now know why men who have been to war yearn to reunite. Not to tell stories or look at old pictures. Not to laugh or weep.

These comrades gather because they long to be with the men who once acted at their best; men who suffered and sacrificed, who were stripped of their humanity. I did not pick these men. They were delivered by fate and the military.

But I know them in a way I know no other men. I have never given anyone such trust. They were willing to guard something more precious than my life. They would have carried my reputation... the memory of me. It was part of the bargain we all made, the reason we were so willing to die for one another. As long as I have memory, I will think of them all, every day.

I am sure that when I leave this world, my last thought will be of my family and my comrades... Such good men."

Author unknown

Dear Editor,

My father, Norris T Boswell, S/N 16162334, was a member of the 455th Bomb Group, 742nd Bomb Squadron from December 11, 1942 until September 19, 1945 and was stationed at Cerignola Air Base in Italy from September 18, 1944 until April 28, 1945 where he completed his 35 combat missions as a flight engineer.

He was very fortunate in that his aircraft was not shot down, and they suffered no loss of the crew.

My Dad is still alive (83 years old) and lives in Gadsden, AL. My mother passed away in 2004, and since that time Dad has had some time to look back over his life and his time in the Army Air Corps.

Several years ago (1987), I did an intensive search to find the rest of the air crew that he served with. I found that all but one of the crew was still alive. Dad had the chance to talk to a few of the guys, but never had the opportunity to meet with any of them.

Dad had given me several keepsakes from his time in the service, including his leather Vulgar Vulture group patch and his 455th Bomb Group patch. He also gave me a ceramic in-laid engine emblem from one of the Pratt & Whitney engines from the B-24 he flew on. Unfortunately (and something that makes my stomach churn to this day), my home in Prattville, AL. was burglarized in 1996, and the thief(s) took my jewelry box that contained the patches and

emblem along with a couple of photos of the flight crew and their B-24.

There were multiple copies of the photos, but the patches and the engine emblem are irreplaceable. The really sad thing is that these items meant nothing to the thief(s) and probably ended up in a dumpster or on the side of the road somewhere.

I would have gladly given the stolen items away with no questions, if only I could have gotten the patches and the emblem back.

I am asking for your help in finding out if there is anywhere that I could get another original Vulgar Vulture and 455th Bomb Group patch to replace the stolen ones.

My Dad's sister gave him a leather flight jacket a few years ago just like the one he was issued during WWII. I'd love to be able to put a couple of the original patches on it for him.

My dad and I would be happy to have the opportunity to speak with any of the fellas that may have been associated with the 455th, in particular those from the 742nd Squadron.

Dad's address is:
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256-442-5974.

Best Regards,
Blake E. Boswell
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**These personal ads,
printed in a Florida
newspaper, show that
seniors DO have a great
sense of humor!**

FOXY LADY: Fashion-conscious, blue-haired beauty, in 80's, slim, 5'-4" (used to be 5'-6"), searching for sharp-looking, sharp-dressing companion. Matching white shoes and belt a plus.

LONG-TERM COMMITMENT: Recent widow who has just buried fourth husband looking for someone to round out a six-unit plot. Dizziness, fainting, shortness of breath not a problem.

SERENITY NOW: I am into solitude, long walks, sunrises, the ocean, good food, music. If you are the silent type, let's get together, take our hearing aids out and enjoy quiet times.

MEMORIES: I can usually remember Monday through Thursday. If you can remember Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, let's put our two heads together.

MINT CONDITION: Male, 1932, high-mileage, good condition, some hair, many new parts including hip, knee, cornea, valves. Isn't in running condition, but walks well.



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A True Pilot

Son: "Daddy, when I grow up,
I want to be a pilot!"

Father: "I'm sorry, son. You
can't do both!"

The Milk Run

by George Campbell (740)

February 19, 1945.

At our morning briefing, we were told that we were to bomb a heavily defended target in Austria.

It was a bright cloudless day as we departed the Cerignola airstrip. The B-24 went lumbering down the runway - loaded to the hilt with full gas tanks, a full load of bombs, and a full crew.

As we cleared the ground at the end of the runway, we hit the prop wash of the plane which was just seconds ahead of us and the left wing dipped perilously close to the ground. The cockpit crew leaned to the right, trying to counteract the dipping wing as the pilot and copilot fought to level the aircraft.

There was nothing unusual about the take off. It always was the same - the prop wash, the dipping wing, and the struggle to become airborne. I believe that if there had not been a deep valley at the end of that runway, many of our missions would have ended before they started.

We raced to join the other B-24s in formation - climbing to cruising altitude. There was no real fear of the mission - the anti-aircraft guns, or possible enemy fighters. We had flown that mission before and survived. I guess we all as young men thought that we were indestructible.

Not long into the flight, we were informed that our

primary target was "socked in" - that is, cloud covered. We were directed to strike our secondary target - a shipyard in Pola, Italy. Even though targets did not bring fear upon us, the news that we were to bomb Pola with only twenty-seven anti-aircraft guns, as opposed to the primary target with over three hundred guns, raised a sigh of relief. It was going to be a "milk run" - simple, close to our home base and not heavily defended. But since the target was near at hand and we had not reached our bombing altitude, our group leader had us circling just off the coast to gain the proper altitude. Meanwhile, the anti-aircraft gunners were making adjustments, too.

One of my jobs as aerial engineer was to lie on the flight deck to make sure the bomb bay doors were open and to see that all the bombs dropped. As we began the bombing run, I took my position and reported bomb bay doors were open. The sky beneath us was clear and blue, but as we got closer to our target, the sky beneath our plane got as black and solid as a macadam runway.

Shell fragments were ricocheting off the bombs and in the interior of the bomb bay. It was like being in a barrel with stones rattling around you.

As we cleared the target area, I reported that the bomb bay doors would not close. At the same time, the belly gunner Henry Molica reported that he had been wounded.

Immediately, the pilot and I made our way back to

render first aid to Henry. Since the catwalk on the B-24 is narrow, both the pilot and I left our parachutes in the cockpit area in order to more easily negotiate the narrow pathway.

I recall while making that trip, holding onto bomb racks to keep from falling out of the airplane, my feelings of insecurity. I had made that trip many times carefree when the bomb bay doors were closed, but having the doors wide open was scary.

I didn't know at the time that those open doors would help us to survive.

When we got back to the ball turret area, we removed Henry from the turret, cut his clothes off, and began to give him first aid.

Suddenly, his face became twisted in terror. He began to point over my shoulder, unable to speak, paralyzed by fear. I turned around to see what was wrong.

The center section of the wing was on fire. A gas line or a gas tank had been ruptured and shorted radio wires had ignited the vapors.

I immediately climbed up on the wing and began to beat out the fire with my hands, calling to fellow crewmen to get the fire extinguisher. But there was none.

Someone had taken it. They called it "*two-hand requisitioning*". Their airplane needed it so they borrowed it. There was a lot of that type of "requisitioning" going on back then.

If a plane was grounded for any reason, it became a treasury of parts for any plane needing a part. So I continued to beat at the flames with my bare hands to no avail; seeing in my mind the explosion sending us all into space with no parachutes - no way to escape.

We couldn't leave our wounded companion even if we had parachutes.

As I battled the fire, expecting the explosion any minute, everything I had done wrong in my life went zipping through my mind in just seconds, like fast rewinding videotape. Not one good act. I felt doomed.

And then Jesus came! I sensed a presence beside me. It was the Lord. He reminded me that He had called me to ministry at my conversion as a young boy. I responded that I remembered, but pleaded, "The war came and I - I - well, you understand, Lord."

He then said, "None of you (meaning the crew) will perish this day." When the fire finally went out, I took charge of shutting down the electrical and radio systems so that the fumes did not re-ignite.

It was then I realized that the open bomb bay doors probably helped prevent an explosion by allowing air to rush through the airplane dissipating the fuel vapors.

We limped back to base, landing safely although ending up off the runway for lack of enough hydraulic brake pressure.

The ball turret gunner was immediately taken to the hospital. After hundreds of shots of penicillin in the butt, he was restored to health.

All of us returned home safely to family and friends.

I had wanted to be a pilot - the *glory*, the *prestige* - but I failed to make the grade. I then was assigned to mechanic and gunnery schools, and the rest is history.

The Lord had wanted me to be on that plane - for that moment - that through me He could save nine men from disaster. It was the Lord, not me, that saved us that day.

I was later to become a minister, serving several churches for over thirty years. When I shared this story at a church youth camp, one little boy listened intently. After the session was over, he came to me still wide-eyed and asked, "Did you survive?"

By the Grace of God and the expertise of pilot Roy Kirkland and copilot Glen Pratt, we survived to serve in another war in Korea.

Submitted in honor of Roy Kirkland's crew by:

George W. Campbell
T/Sgt., 740th Squadron
455th Bomb Group



Crew:

1st Pilot - Lt. Roy Kirkland
CoPilot - Lt. Glenn Pratt
Bombadier - Lt. Ed Drabik
Radio man - Stan Muscial
1st Engineer - George Campbell
Asst. Engineer - Dan Glidden
Armorer - James Middlesworth
Waist Gunner - Sam Contrelli
Belly Turret Gunner - Henry Molica

Pictures From

Reunion, 2008 Louisville, Kentucky



Janet & Russell Crocker (742)



Ed Riggs (740)



Eleanor & Robert Emick (741)



Tony Corsello (741),
Mr. and Mrs. Stan Vogelfang (741)



Round Table Discussion
in the Hospitality Room



John Smoot
Playing the Keyboard



Carl Barr (743), Julie Summerfield, Ed Riggs (740)



Rob Haley, Julie Summerfield, Carl Barr (743)



Four Generations of Charles VanDoren (743)



Henry Paris (743) being Interviewed



25 members of the VanDoren family



Trading Stories

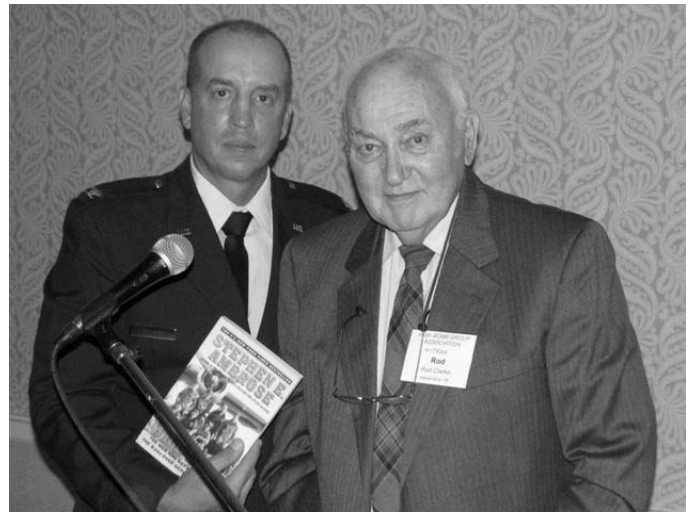


Saturday Night Banquet

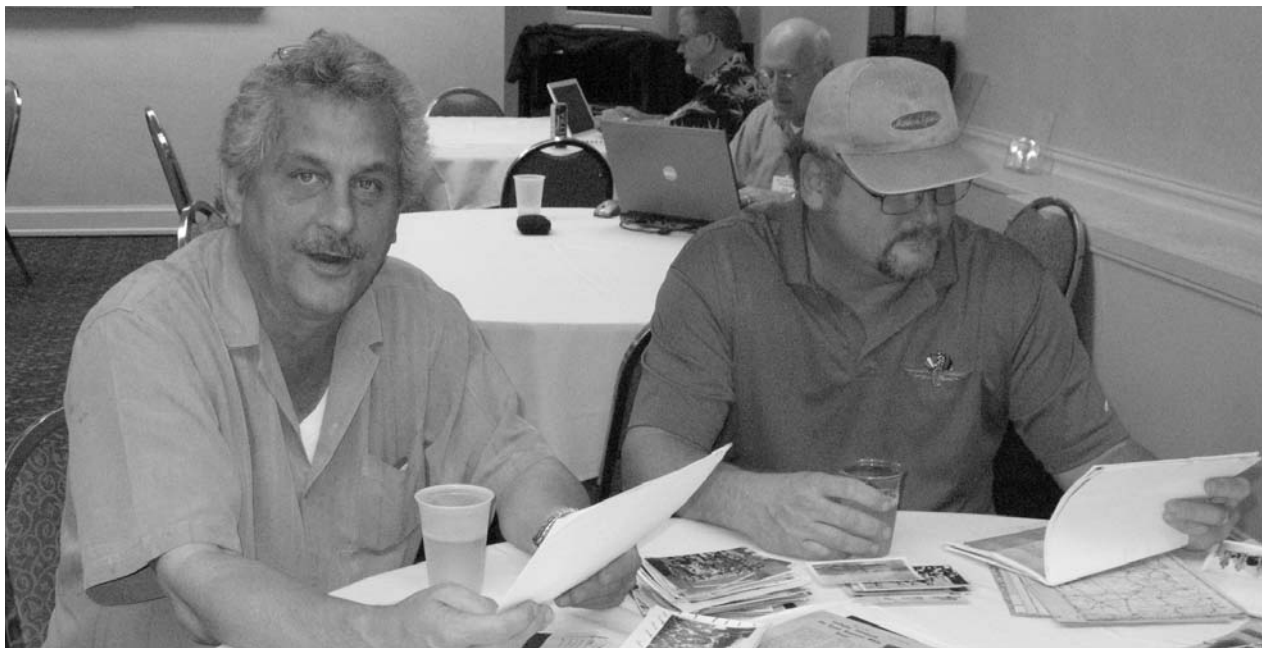




Tony Corsello (741)



Speaker Col. Eric Nelson and 455th BG
Association President Rod Clarke



Sons of the late Raymond Beauvais (741)



Sing Along with
John Smoot



Hospitality Suite Conversation



THE B-24 LIBERATOR HAD A NUMBER OF FIRST

(Sources: *LIBERATOR: America's Global Bomber* by Alwyn T. Lloyd,
and the *International B-24 Liberator Club*)

Altogether, 19,256 Liberators of all types and models were built. Included are the Navy single-tail Privateers. It is surpassed in overall world production by only five other aircraft. All of those were single-engine aircraft and built over a period of time of at least 10 years...not the four years for the B-24. The Liberator was adapted to more roles and missions than any other US aircraft of World War II. There were 22 variants of the B-24, not counting several one-of-a-kind aircraft. In all there were 57 different models and series differences.

Liberators served in every theater of operation during World War II. With over 19,000 aircraft built. Five separate facilities were set up for production. They included: Consolidated, San Diego (California); Consolidated, Fort Worth (Texas); Ford, Willow Run (Michigan); Douglas, Tulsa (Oklahoma); North American, Dallas (Texas). By 1944, the production line at the Ford, Willow Run facility was turning out a completed B-24 every 58 minutes! Also by 1944, the Consolidated-Vultee payroll included more than 101,000 workers in 10 states, operating 13 manufacturing, modification, research, and operating divisions. Over a million people worldwide were involved with the B-24 and PB4Y.

- It was America's first mass-produced airplane.
- It was the first production bomber with a nose wheel.
- It carried a greater payload than the B-17 – 8,000 lb. vs. 8,800 lbs for the B-24.
- It had a greater range than the B-17, 3,400 miles vs. 3,700 miles for the B-24.
- It was faster than the B-17 – 160 mph vs. 215 mph for the B-24.
- It was the most complex aircraft to ever be placed into mass production.
- It was built in greater numbers than any other US aircraft in history.
- It was built in greater numbers than any other multi-engine airplane in the world.



What is a Veteran?

They are men and women who, for many reasons, donned the uniform of our country to stand between freedom and tyranny; to take up the sword of justice in defense of the liberties we hold dear; to preserve peace, and to calm the winds of war.

Your mothers and fathers, your grandparents, your aunts and uncles, your neighbors, the shop owners in your community, your teachers, your favorite athlete, a Hollywood star, and your political leaders... each one could be a veteran.

But as much as they may differ by gender, race, age, national origin, or profession, they share a common love for our great nation; a love great enough to put their very lives on the line, if need be, to guarantee the way of life we enjoy today, and to secure that way of life for tomorrow's generations.

The title "Veteran" must be earned. It is a title endowed by a grateful nation on citizens whose shoulders were broad enough to carry the weight of our common defense.

It is a title that speaks of courage and sacrifice in the face of mortal danger. It is a title that speaks of compassion and heartbreak in the wake of the terrible cost of war. And it is a title that speaks of love of country, and of a belief in America's goodness, and our strength.

In each of America's struggles, heroes in uniform emerged to inspire and spur us on to victory. Our veterans' steadfast resolve to stand and fight for the American way of life is a constant reminder that the righteousness of our destiny overarches the anguish of our losses.

America's servicemen and women, who became our nation's veterans when they set their uniforms aside and resumed their civilian lives, distinguished themselves through their willingness to risk life and limb in defense of the freedoms we all cherish.

Those who have served our nation in uniform are the best people our society has to offer. We owe them our full support, and our **Sincerest Thanks**.





Dear Editor,

I am a Belgian citizen. I would like to thank all the brave American airmen who gave their lives or their youth for our freedom.

On November 15th, I spent the day in the American Military Cemetery of Henry-Chapelle, and met some American veterans of the Battle of the Bulge.

A few weeks later, I was in the American Military Cemetery in Neuville-en-Condroz, Belgium, and took the photo shown below.

I appreciate all the soldiers and airmen of the American military in WWII.

Best regards,

Joël Van Doren

jv022925@euphonymet.be



WWII U.S. Airman's Body Found in Hungary

The remains of a U.S. airman, whose plane was shot down over Hungary in World War II, have been recovered from wreckage left unexcavated in a rural area for 63 years.

The remains of Staff Sgt. Martin F. Troy were found among the wreck of a B-24H "Liberator" bomber in the village of Nemesvita, about 110 miles southwest of the capital Budapest. They will be returned to the United States.

The location of the wreckage has been well known since the time of the crash -- seven of the bomber's 10-man crew bailed out, and the survivors gave an account about where it went down. They said Troy had likely died. But no one has gone back to thoroughly search the site since.

Troy, a native of Norwalk, Conn., was the only member of the bomber's crew who had yet to be fully accounted for. Though the identity of the remains must be confirmed by DNA testing, officials said there was virtually no doubt they belonged to Troy.

"After 63 years of being listed as '*killed in action, body not recovered*,' this airman's family can finally experience closure," U.S. Ambassador to Hungary April H. Foley said at a ceremony to officially hand over the remains to the U.S.

The recovery was carried out by the U.S. military's Hawaii-based Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, or JPAC,

which identifies and recovers American soldiers killed in conflicts around the world.

Tens of thousands of people from some two dozen countries were known to have been killed during the war in Hungary, which was invaded by Nazi Germany in 1944. The country was then under communist rule until 1989 and would not have allowed an American military team in to search the crash site.

The wreckage was deemed "unrecoverable" in 1945 by the American Graves Registration Unit, because of its location. The bomber crashed into marshy land, creating a crater some six yards wide by 18 yards long which was covered by 2-3 feet of water.

"The site of the crash had been heavily salvaged over the years ... probably during the war," said anthropologist Bradley Sturm, the only civilian on the JPAC team. "Given the fact that there were tons of metal in that aircraft, there was hardly anything left."

He said Troy's bones were scattered around the crater caused by the crash, a few miles from Lake Balaton on privately owned land.

JPAC began making efforts to recover Troy's remains two years ago "because of congressional interest," said Marine Capt. George Murphy, the military leader of the JPAC team. One of the surviving crew members and other veterans lobbied for the JPAC mission. The original survivors from Troy's crew are all deceased,

Sturm said.

Murphy said JPAC's limited resources also held up the search for Troy's remains. The group has only five teams to search for about 80,000 Americans still missing from World War II.

Sturm said the excavation of the wreck took 30 days and an engine and three propeller blades were among items recovered from the bomber.

"There is a good chance that Troy died before the plane hit the ground," Sturm said. "There was a big fire involving a leakage in the oxygen system and another crew member was badly burned trying to get to him."

Troy was the tail gunner on the bomber nicknamed "*Miss Fortune*," which was returning from a mission in Germany to its base in Italy. His aircraft and three others flew into bad weather and were shot down by German gunners over western Hungary on June 30, 1944.

JPAC will attempt to return Troy's remains to his family, if they can be found. He could be buried at Arlington National Cemetery, outside Washington, D.C.

Lt. Gen. Jozsef Hollo, director of Hungary's Military History Museum, said there was information about another 30 American soldiers killed in Hungary during World War II whose remains had yet to be recovered.



A MESSAGE FROM 455TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR GREG RIGGS

I thoroughly enjoyed our reunion in Louisville. The down side was that some of the long-time regulars were unable to join us this year. The up side of that was getting better acquainted with folks I may not have spent as much time with otherwise. I never tire of interacting with the members of our Association.

Charles Van Doren had his son, grandson, and great granddaughter with him at the Saturday evening dinner. If I recall correctly, Laura, the great granddaughter, is sixteen years old. There were at least twenty-five people at the dinner who fell into the categories of second-, third-, or fourth-generation. This has become a very interesting and enjoyable aspect of the reunion.

Our president, Rod Clarke, did an outstanding job arranging for a speaker. Colonel Eric Nelson, former 455th Operations Group commander, shared with us a collection of accounts about the men and women of the current 455th. Two things came through loud and clear. First, the foundation of patriotism and service established by the original 455th members is still alive and well. Second, today's young service members are well-trained, thoroughly committed professionals. It was enlightening to me just to watch the people in the room from the vantage point of the head table. Every eye in the room remained riveted on Colonel Nelson throughout his talk, and there was a line of people after dinner seeking even more information. Thank you, Eric.

There was much discussion, both formal and informal, about future reunions. No official position was established. However, it was my sensing that our next reunion may very well be that last one. We had 27 veterans in attendance this year. The remaining 40-plus in attendance were family members. Next year, we will have to make a decision. If next year turns out to be our last year, you will certainly want to be there and be part of an historic event. If a decision is made to have further reunions, we want you there to be part of the decision process. Either way, come!

I wish I could tell you where the next reunion will be, but that will simply have to wait for the spring issue of the newsletter. The leading candidates right now, in no particular order, are Indianapolis, Oklahoma City, and Omaha. Each is centrally located, of reasonable climate and altitude, and had much to offer in the way of tour possibilities. Much of the decision will depend upon which location can meet our requirements. Clear your calendars now for October 2009, and plan to join us.

As usual, I want to add a word or two about Association membership. If you pay your dues annually, you will see a two digit number above your name on the mailing label. That number indicates the last year for which you have paid dues. Please don't fall behind. In 2008, we had 47 names removed from our roster for failure to pay dues. Even if we decide next year to discontinue reunions, you will want to receive the newsletters. A lifetime membership costs only \$60 and removes the burden of annual membership renewal. For those of you who continue to send in your dues checks on time, and for those of you who are faithful in sending change of address notices, I thank you. Such things simplify the administration of the Association and save us money on newsletter postage.

Have a Happy and Safe 2009 !

Greg Riggs, Executive Director, 455th Bomb Group Association

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